



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, March 21, 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**

### CABINET MINISTERS

| <b>NAME</b>                   | <b>CONSTITUENCY</b>        | <b>PORTFOLIO</b>   |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Hon. Sandy Silver</b>      | Klondike                   | Premier<br>Minister of the Executive Council Office; Finance   |
| <b>Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee</b> | Riverdale South            | Deputy Premier<br><br>Minister of Health and Social Services; Justice  |
| <b>Hon. Nils Clarke</b>       | Riverdale North            | Minister of Highways and Public Works; Environment   |
| <b>Hon. John Streicker</b>    | Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes | Government House Leader<br>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 |
| <b>Hon. Ranj Pillai</b>       | 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   |
| <b>Hon. Richard Mostyn</b>    | Whitehorse West            | Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board   |
| <b>Hon. Jeanie McLean</b>     | Mountainview               | Minister of Education; Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate  |

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>Kate White</b>    | Leader of the Third Party<br>Takhini-Kopper King |
| <b>Emily Tredger</b> | Third Party House Leader<br>Whitehorse Centre    |
| <b>Annie Blake</b>   | Vuntut Gwitchin                                  |

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Monday, March 21, 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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am wondering if I could ask all of my colleagues to please welcome several folks here for our tribute today. Je vous présente: Manon Moreau, sous-ministre, DSF; André Bourcier, directeur, DSF; et Nancy Power, gestionnaire, communications et politiques, DSF.

Also, from l'AFY, we have: an old colleague, Edwine Veniat, vice-présidente; Edith Bélanger; Pamela Battiston; et Cynthia Labonté. Also, from Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, we have: Marc Champagne, directeur général; et Jean-Sébastien Blais, président, Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, who just recently, I think, in honour of International Francophonie Day, wrote an article in France about the Yukon and what a great place it is to visit and live. So, if we could please welcome them all.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like my colleagues to help me welcome some folks here today for the tribute. From the Human Rights Commission, we have Birju Dattani, who is the executive director of the Human Rights Commission; we have Vida Nelson, legal counsel of the Human Rights Commission; and we have Keely Bass, who is the newest member of the Human Rights Commission. Welcome to you all.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would like to ask my colleagues to help welcome some guests here today for a ministerial statement later on in the Order Paper. First, Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice chancellor for Yukon University — welcome; Blake Buckle, associate VP, Internal Relations for Yukon University — welcome; Brooke Alsbury, early learning coordinator and instructor for Yukon University; Laurie Parker, early learning practicum coordinator and instructor, Yukon University and chairperson of the Yukon Child Care Board — welcome; and Maggie Powter, instructor and advisor for the professional diploma pathway program at Yukon University — welcome.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome a number of representatives of environmental groups in the Yukon. From Yukoners Concerned, we have Spence Hill;

from Raven Recycling, we have Heather Ashthorn; and from For Their Future Yukon, we have Peggy Land. I would also like to welcome two wonderful environmental activists, who I am lucky to have as constituents: J.P. Pinard and Sally Wright.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming Mary — I totally blanked on your last name. Mary Amerongen is responsible for making sure that we have a lot of literature around environmental causes and steps forward, and, of course, Tom Parlee is also here in the Chamber. Thank you for coming.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of International Francophonie Day

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Bon printemps, Honorable Président. Je suis fier de me lever pour rendre hommage à notre communauté francophone au lendemain de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Cette journée phare est au cœur des festivités des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie. Les Rendez-vous, qui se déroulent tout le mois de mars, sont une occasion privilégiée de célébrer et de promouvoir la richesse de la francophonie canadienne qui est enracinée dans l'identité de notre pays.

Nous avons plusieurs raisons de célébrer au Yukon. Non seulement parce que le français est bien présent dans nos rues, nos écoles et nos commerces, mais aussi au sein de notre gouvernement. Je veux reconnaître le travail du personnel de la Direction des services en français qui appuie les efforts des ministères de servir et d'informer les Yukonnais et les Yukonaises en français. Grâce à nos actions concertées, nous avons pu fournir des communications en français plus rapidement que jamais face à la crise de la COVID-19.

À la lumière des progrès accomplis cette année, le futur des services en français s'annonce radieux. Cette année, le thème de cette vingt-quatrième édition des Rendez-vous de la Francophonie est «Ces traditions qui forment les identités». Comme l'une des traditions canadiennes-françaises les plus prisées ici est la cabane à sucre, j'invite avec plaisir mes collègues à manger de la tire sur la neige ce jeudi, de 14 h à 15 h, au CSSC Mercier. Cette activité s'ajoute à la quinzaine d'activités organisées au Yukon. Vous pouvez retrouver la liste sur le site Web de l'Association franco-yukonnaise et dans les pages du journal l'Aurore boréale.

Honorable Président, je tiens à souligner le travail remarquable des organismes, des artistes et des entrepreneurs francophones qui contribuent à bâtir un Yukon prospère où il fait bon vivre. Je salue également toutes les personnes qui participent activement à la vitalité de notre communauté francophone et qui choisissent, chaque jour, de vivre et d'apprendre en français.

Bons Rendez-vous de la Francophonie.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 20 as International Francophonie Day. The francophone community in the Yukon is stronger and more vibrant than ever. While the Yukon population continues to grow, so does that of the francophonie people.

Our French immersion stream of education has increased in popularity so much that there are two schools offering French immersion education. I understand that an additional kindergarten class was added at École Whitehorse Elementary School to accommodate this growth and to maintain a steady stream of students through to graduation.

Students are settling in well at CSSC Mercier. I was fortunate to join in a tour of the new school early in the school year. The new school is beautiful and allows French first language education to flourish.

According to a Statistics Canada census, 14 percent of the Yukon's population speaks both French and English. With the number of kids moving through French immersion, that number is sure to grow. Currently, around five percent of the population identifies as francophonie. I'm sure we will see that number rise as well in the future.

French programming and bilingual government services have also been on the rise in the last decade, thanks to the good work of the French Language Services Directorate. These services have been expanding over the last number of years. I understand that during the 2020-21 year, the directorate translated 5,801 documents — an average of 483 documents a month.

On top of translation services, government employees continue to take advantage of the French language courses offered. The directorate is busy, and we thank them all for all they do.

L'Association franco-yukonnaise, in addition to the numerous programs and services offered to the francophone community, also offers French second language courses for adults.

Les EssentiElles is dedicated to representing the interests of francophone women in the Yukon and works on numerous projects and campaigns to promote awareness for community and women's issues.

I would like to give our thanks to AFY and Les EssentiElles for their continued dedication and work on behalf of the francophone community.

Salamat po.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Merci Monsieur le président, je suis fière de prendre la parole au nom du NPD du Yukon pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

La Journée internationale de la Francophonie est célébrée partout sur la planète. Aujourd'hui, l'Organisation internationale de la Francophonie a 88 États et gouvernements membres. Dans le monde, plus de 320 millions de personnes sont francophones. Il s'agit de la cinquième langue parlée dans le monde.

Au Yukon, la francophonie occupe aussi une place importante. Nous célébrons d'ailleurs notre propre Journée de la francophonie yukonnaise, le 15 mai. Avec fierté, le Yukon a le 3e plus grand pourcentage de gens qui parlent le français et l'anglais au Canada, après le Québec et le Nouveau-Brunswick. Les touristes francophones qui visitent le Yukon sont souvent surpris par le nombre de francophones qu'ils rencontrent ou par les services en français qu'ils peuvent obtenir à différents endroits.

J'aimerais en profiter pour reconnaître la contribution de l'Association franco-yukonnaise. Depuis plusieurs années, l'AFY offre des programmes, des cours, des activités dédiées à la population francophone et francophile du Yukon — en plus de l'accueil aux nouveaux arrivants, l'aide à l'arrivée dans un nouveau pays et un nouveau territoire, mais aussi des initiatives culturelles et artistiques, et j'en passe.

En terminant, comme à chaque année, je veux conclure cet hommage à la Journée de la Francophonie en adressant un merci tout spécial à mes professeurs dans le programme d'immersion grâce à qui j'ai appris cette belle langue qu'est le français.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to pay tribute to the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. On this day in 1960, 69 people who were peacefully demonstrating against apartheid were killed by South African police. This tragic event is known as the Sharpeville massacre. In response to this act of violence, the United Nations declared March 21 the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

It is an important day intended to raise awareness about how racism devalues individuals and denies their basic human rights based on race or ethnic background. Mr. Speaker, we in Canada are not free from the challenges of combatting racism. We have faced the continued discovery of thousands of unmarked graves at former residential schools across the country — graves of children.

We have also seen a sharp rise in racially motivated violence, especially against Asian and Moslem peoples and communities. The continued discovery of unmarked graves of indigenous children has renewed trauma for generations of indigenous peoples and brought the horrific actions of Canada's past into the world spotlight.

In response to worldwide mistreatment, indigenous peoples developed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, or what is also known as "UNDRIP", a framework for indigenous peoples' individual and collective rights which speaks to the minimum standards for the survival, dignity, and well-being of indigenous peoples of the world.

The role that our leadership and government can play is absolutely crucial and is evident as we ensure that our workplaces, schools, and gathering places are inclusive and free of racial discrimination. National reports, including those of the

Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, have identified comprehensive actions that can be taken to address racism against indigenous peoples here in Canada.

As well, movements such as Black Lives Matter have highlighted the need to address systemic racism in our country and our territory. Educating ourselves on the histories and cultures of black, indigenous, and people of colour and speaking up when someone makes a racist comment are important steps to addressing inappropriate and damaging behaviour. To be an ally means that we actively promote inclusion for communities that face discrimination. This is not done solely through words; to be truly an ally requires us to recognize that our role is one of support and action.

The Government of Yukon is committed to combatting systemic racism and taking action against the racism that continues to affect Yukoners and Canadians alike. I am pleased and proud to speak to this important issue today.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker.

I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition in recognition of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is observed annually on March 21. I would like to start by acknowledging that we have the fortune to meet and support one another today on this beautiful land that is the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. We all know that First Nation individuals have long been facing the inequalities that we are standing up against today.

It was on this day in 1960 when 69 people were killed and over 180 were seriously wounded by police when police opened fire on a peaceful demonstration against apartheid "pass laws" in Sharpeville, South Africa. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was proclaimed in 1966 by the United Nations General Assembly, which called on the international community to work to end racial discrimination. Unfortunately, there is not some standard metric by which we can measure whether the steps we take are contributing toward eliminating racism.

Different ethnic groups continue to experience different levels of discrimination. We still see general racism and hate crimes. We see religious and cultural discrimination. It is an ongoing challenge throughout the country and the territory. Every Yukoner has a role to play in ending racism. It starts with an individual and family unit and a goal of ensuring inclusion and respect are taught at home. We must encourage our children to embrace our differences. We want the next generation to live in a Yukon where they are free to express their beliefs, traditions, and fully embrace their cultures without worrying about discrimination, racism, or violence.

Let us celebrate the increasing diversity of the Yukon. I encourage members of this House and all Yukoners to stand up to racial discrimination and to ensure that tolerance, respect, and inclusion are practised within your homes and throughout the community.

As the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said: "Let us work to eliminate messages of hatred – the concept of 'us' and 'them'; the false attitude that we can accept some and reject and exclude others simply for how they look, where they worship or who they love."

*Applause*

**Ms. Blake:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to support the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The UN called for meaningful and safe public participation and representation in all areas of decision-making to prevent and combat racial discrimination. As much as we in the Yukon want to believe that racial discrimination is not a part of our community, it is still alive and well across systems and structures of our society and intersects with other forms of discrimination.

Racial discrimination is entangled in many of our systems in the Yukon. From health care to justice to climate action, the decisions that each of us make in this impact racialized Yukoners in unique ways. For those of us who are racialized, we witness this kind of discrimination daily. For those of you who are not, it is your responsibility to challenge your assumptions and your biases to make sure that your decisions are making our community better, healthier, and safer for everyone.

This year's theme is "Voices for action against racism". As leaders in our communities, I am reminded of just how loud and powerful each of our voices is. We each represent our own ridings and we represent all Yukoners. To truly end racial discrimination, we need to ensure that the people in charge reflect our society.

Today, I encourage each of us to look inward and ask ourselves important questions: Are we representing everyone in our communities? Do our communities, departments, and social circles reflect today's Yukon? What do we need to do today to ensure representation?

Salamat po.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a *Yukon News* story that shows the Yukon Party and its leader's support for rent controls.

**Ms. Tredger:** I have a letter from the Premier of the Yukon to the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change responding to the recommendations.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees? Are there any petitions?

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 10

**Ms. Tredger:** I have the following petition for tabling which reads:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

That: The Yukon Government has declared that we are currently in a state of climate emergency and so has committed to reducing Territorial Green House Gas (GHG) emissions by 45 percent over 2010 levels by the year 2030, in order to take responsibility for our part in helping to limit global warming to below 1.5 degrees Celsius; and

That: The Auditor General's 2017 Yukon report stated that: the government's climate action commitments and progress reports were "weak, with many lacking milestones or completion dates," also that the government "did not systematically assess the risks associated with climate change before it defined its commitments"; and

That: The Yukon's 2021 State of the Environment report found that between 2009 and 2019, Greenhouse Gas emissions had increased by 24 per cent; and

That: GHG emissions from the mining sector constitute a significant and varying proportion of the Yukon's emissions which could easily make it impossible for the Yukon to reach its emissions target; and

That: The scope, complexity and urgency of this necessary 45 percent reductions target is unprecedented and affects the future of all Yukon residents, yet is still lacking are specific commitments to successfully identify and narrow the knowledge gap regarding all current sources of GHG emissions, in order to enable and prioritize well-informed decision-making;

Therefore, we the undersigned respectfully request that the Yukon Legislative Assembly urge the Government of Yukon to commit to each of the following essential steps:

1. starting immediately that the government will establish a policy to ensure that whenever capital decisions are being considered from across all government sectors and industry for all items worth over five hundred thousand dollars, a complete analysis of multi-phase GHG emissions from all up-front and operational activities expected, will be included. To avoid conflicts of interest and to ensure objectivity and accuracy, all such analyses will be completed by qualified professionals from private companies independent of government, legislative body, or development proponent;

2. Such complete, multi-phase GHG emissions analyses for pre-approved projects will also be completed and made public when associated funds are due to be released;

3. The Yukon Government will set an emissions cap for the mining industries by December 2022 similar to the cap being set by the Federal government on the fossil fuel industries; and

4. Whenever GHG emissions analyses have been completed, the data will be entered into a publicly accessible database for purposes of transparent accountability and for yearly progress reviews.

Mr. Speaker, this has been signed by representatives of a number of environmental organizations in the Yukon,

including CPAWS Yukon, Yukon Conservation Society, Yukoners Concerned, Raven Recycling Society, For Their Future Yukon, and a number of individual Yukoners.

**Speaker:** Are there any further petitions to be presented? Are there any bills to be introduced?

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 304: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Introduction and First Reading

**Ms. Tredger:** I move that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that a bill, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now introduced and read a first time.

*Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 304 agreed to*

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the continued transition away from fossil fuels by investing \$2.1 million toward zero-emission vehicles, including rebates and charging stations, in this year's budget.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House supports the work of the Dawson Regional Planning Commission.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Les EssentiElles to establish sustainable core funding for staff and provide flexible and predictable project funding beyond 2022-23.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to support the development of communications infrastructure in rural Yukon, including working with the private sector to expand cellular phone coverage to people without service in rural areas including Grizzly Valley, Deep Creek, Fossil Point, Fox Lake, Ibex Valley, Silver City, and Junction 37.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Medical Association to create the position of a Yukon territorial medical director that will be tasked with leading the advancement of the transformation of Yukon's health system.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to rescind its response to the recommendations of the Youth Panel on Climate Change and accept all of their recommendations.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Early learning childcare

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Every child in the Yukon deserves to have access to high-quality, affordable care that promotes early learning opportunities and builds a strong foundation for when they begin school. The Yukon's universal childcare system aims to do just that with access to high-quality, affordable, flexible, and inclusive early learning and childcare supports. On Friday, alongside the Government of Canada and Yukon University, I announced a new accelerated education pathway for early learning childcare educators, also known as "ECEs".

With \$217,000 from the *Canada-Yukon Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*, the new professional diploma pathway program will support early childhood educators with an individualized plan to complete the required training to achieve the full level 3 status. This status is the highest credential for early learning childcare educators in Yukon. Another \$120,000 from the agreement will enhance course offerings for rural communities.

We know that when preschool-aged children have access to high-quality early learning and childcare experiences, they have a better chance of succeeding on their educational journey as young adults. These individualized plans will support educators by providing the flexibility that they need to continue working and providing care for Yukon children while having the time needed to complete the required coursework and practicums to get their full level 3 status.

We have identified a cohort of 100 educators in licensed programs in the territory who are eligible for the accelerated upgrade, and I hope to see them take advantage of this opportunity when the program begins next month.

By providing additional training opportunities for ECEs in the Yukon, we are delivering on our commitment in the *Putting People First* report to increase accessible training opportunities that support early learning for Yukon children. This only builds on our government's historic investments in early learning and childcare.

The Yukon's universal affordable childcare program offsets the cost of childcare by up to \$700 per month per child and ensures that fully qualified early learning childcare educators receive over \$30 per hour, the highest minimum wage for ECEs in the country.

By investing in early learning and childcare, we are making life more affordable for Yukon families and providing Yukon children the best start on their educational pathway. This is an exciting and transformative time for early learning in the Yukon, as we know that each educator who takes advantage of

this opportunity will, in turn, pass on benefits to hundreds of Yukon children in their care.

**Mr. Dixon:** It's a pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to respond to this ministerial statement.

The statement by the minister is essentially a reprint of the press release that went out on Friday. I did have a chance to review it over the weekend.

We are certainly happy to see this investment from the federal government in training and development for early childhood educators, as we know that ensuring access to well-trained educators is a critical component of our early learning system.

Further, the recruitment and retention of ECEs has been a real challenge for the system as well.

While this statement is about a very specific initiative, I do have some broader questions about the training of ECEs.

Beyond this one-time investment in accelerating level 3 equivalence to fully credentialed level 3 status, what is the vision for early learning post-secondary education more generally? Does the minister anticipate working with Yukon University to create a degree program for early learning in the Yukon?

It seems to us that there is a real opportunity for the Yukon to explore this and to become leaders in this field. I should note that this was a part of the Yukon Party's 2021 platform.

I would also like to know if the minister is considering working with the industry to review the credentialing system for ECEs. I have heard from some in the industry that the current system of levels 1 through 3 is somewhat limiting and that there should be a review of the system to encourage ongoing professional development and advancements in education. I would like the minister to provide a response as to whether or not that type of review is being considered.

I would also like to ask the minister to consider working with Yukon University to ensure that the physical space at the Ayamdigut Campus is sufficient for the ELCC program. Is the government considering providing support to develop a more comprehensive teaching lab for the ELCC program?

I would also like to ask the minister whether this program will become permanent or if it's just in place with the funding provided in 2022. We know that we need more ECEs in the Yukon, so it would be very helpful if the minister could also offer some sense of how the ELCC program will be expanded to meet this demand over the coming years.

Finally, the recruitment and retention of ECEs is particularly challenging in rural Yukon. With regard to the 100 ECEs identified in its first cohort, can the minister tell us how many are from rural Yukon? As well, it would be great if the minister could expand on her indication that there will be funding provided to Yukon University to enhance course offerings for rural communities. If the minister could expand on that, it would be very helpful.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to receive this information from the minister but do hope that she can express some of the plans to address the broader challenges that the

ELCC system faces and provide a more forward-looking vision for the government's intent and plans to meet those challenges.

**Ms. White:** This past Friday was indeed an important day for Yukon children. Representatives of the Yukon government, the federal government, and Yukon University got together to announce an accelerated pathway for early childhood educators in the territory.

We agree that increasing the quality of early childhood education in the Yukon will have positive, lasting benefits for every Yukoner. For too long, educators moving to the Yukon have struggled with having their education recognized — some being classed lower than experience should put them and others left challenging courses at the university year after year, taking away valuable time that they should be spending in their classrooms.

We're thrilled to support any program that will allow children in the Yukon more access to highly trained educators, and it's fantastic that more early years professionals will be able to receive their level 3 qualifications, but the learning shouldn't stop there.

When will Yukon government implement mandatory professional development for early childhood educators? Why is it that Yukon government is holding and supporting public school teachers at a different standard to those who educate our youngest learners?

The childcare centres that take the initiative upon themselves to further educate their employees are left struggling to find professional development options that are in line with their needs. Going forward, it's important that we continue to listen to early years professionals and to what they need and that we continue working with them in striving to offer Yukon children the best opportunities possible.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you very much for the comments and questions that have been posed here today. I am excited to be talking about early learning and childcare and the investments that have been made. These are historic investments, Mr. Speaker — investments that we have not seen in Yukon's history. We know that investing in our children at this early age will bring great results and are really very much connected to our overall outcome strategy in terms of how we educate and support our early learning childcare in the Yukon.

This is why, when we invest in educators, in our children, and in schools, we are in turn investing in the territory and Yukoners. I definitely am looking forward to later debate in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker, where we will get deep into early learning and childcare in the Yukon.

Today, I'm really happy to be celebrating this milestone. That is why our government has been really focused on providing ECEs with the support they need to provide the best quality of care and education for all Yukon families. We know that — through additional learning opportunities, a diversity of languages and cultures, and other culturally inclusive programming in early learning years — children will have a strong sense of self and a foundation of learning as they enter the school system.

I would like to take the opportunity — and we will get a lot of answers to questions that folks posed here today because we will have a lot of time to debate this during this Sitting. I also wanted to bring some focus to another announcement that we had made last October. We announced cultural enhancement funding that will provide licensed early learning and childcare programs and ECEs in the Yukon with access to \$800,000 in cultural enhancement funding for the development of culturally rich early learning programs and environments.

These programs could include Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, learning, and being as well as outdoor experiential learning opportunities and education on francophone and other diverse language cultures.

Another announcement that we had made recently around our Canada-Yukon agreement — we have entered into, this summer, an agreement with Canada that will bring \$54 million, which is a new investment into early learning and childcare with our investment from Yukon.

Another new program that we announced earlier was the early learning and childcare benefits funding program. The new program is providing up to eight percent of staff wages for employers to select and offer a comprehensive benefits package that meets the needs of ECEs. Over \$800,000 in funding will be available to early learning licensed childcare providers and programs in the Yukon to provide benefit packages to ECEs, including operators currently offering benefits for their employees. This funding will become available on April 1.

I am really happy to have been able to speak about this important initiative and our investments from our government.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: School replacement

**Mr. Kent:** So, last week when asked which school in Whitehorse would be replaced next year, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told media — and I quote: "I am not going to be providing the big reveal." Instead, he indicated that this would be done by the Minister of Education. However, last week, the Minister of Education refused to answer which school would be chosen. So, can the minister first tell us: At this stage, has she made a decision about which school will be replaced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I am happy to stand again this week to talk about our government's investments in schools and our learning environments for our young people. We continue to work with the school communities on planning for their short-term, medium-term, and long-term facility needs. We are pleased that the work is underway on two new schools now — Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. Government of Yukon, as I have stated a few times now, does have a five-year capital plan that includes school replacements and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for years to come. We are continuing always to work with our partners and school communities.



I have made it a point to meet with school councils across the territory and work with all of our school communities. We do have \$200,000 in our capital budget that has been identified for the 2022-23 main estimates for preliminary consultation and initial design of an existing aging Whitehorse replacement school.

**Mr. Kent:** Again, the record in Hansard will reflect that there was no answer to a relatively straightforward question about whether or not the minister has made a decision yet on which school will be replaced.

Last week, the Minister of Highways and Public Works made it very clear to media that the decision rested with the Minister of Education. He said that while he had personal opinions, it wasn't his call. He said — and I quote: “The Minister of Education may well ask for input, but ultimately she and perhaps the Premier will make the decision as to which schools.”

I am going to ask my question again, and it is a very simple one: Has the minister made her decision yet on which school in Whitehorse will be replaced next year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the supplementary question. I have indicated that we do have money in our 2022-23 budget for a Whitehorse replacement school. We are continuing to work with our partners and do our due diligence to make a decision around this replacement. It is an important investment, and it's really great that the Yukon Party is now interested in infrastructure development around schools. This was not their focus when they were in government. It is one of our focuses.

We are going to continue to work with our partners and we will be making that decision in an informed way with evidence-based decisions. We will make that announcement in a proper way and not on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. We will do that with Yukoners overall and find a very proper way to do that.

I am happy to keep answering the question that the member opposite brings forward, but it seems like it is the same question.

**Mr. Kent:** While it's clear that the minister didn't directly answer that question, I guess what we can infer from that response is that the decision on which school will be replaced has not been made.

So, again, we've heard from parents in a number of school communities since we raised this last week. They would like to know if their school is being replaced and, if it is, where it will be located. The minister's colleague has said that she may ask for input.

So, my question for the minister is: Will she consult with the affected school communities, and when will she finally make the decision on which school will be replaced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I believe I have said repeatedly that we're working with our school communities. I have had discussions with them. I have talked with school communities across this territory and, for sure, in every conversation I have had — infrastructure, capital upgrades, renovation projects — replacement of schools has been a major topic in many of those discussions.

We do know and we are committed to replacing one of our schools in Whitehorse. When we look at these decisions, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of considerations and we are, again, making our decisions based on evidence and modern considerations as well. Education in the Yukon is very dynamic and we're in a really changing time, so we make our decisions, of course, partly on building age, seismic mitigation considerations, programming needs, and, of course, enrolment growth.

I will continue to build on this. If we want to have more questions, I'm happy to answer.

#### **Question re: Dawson City recreation centre**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The Government of Yukon's five-year capital concept lists a new recreation centre for the City of Dawson. According to those documents, work is set to begin this year.

Can the Minister of Community Services tell us how much is budgeted for the new recreation centre in Dawson City?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It's great to be on my feet this afternoon talking about all of the recreation facilities that we're building across the territory, one of which is for Dawson City.

I had a great conversation with the mayor just last week about the community centre. I have had many conversations over the last couple of months about this facility. We have been up in Dawson talking about it. I believe that the City of Dawson is finalizing the needs assessment for a new recreation facility. We currently have the project scoped out in the five-year capital plan, and as soon as we have proper estimates for the cost of the building, I will certainly come back to this House and let them know how much it is going to cost.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** This weekend, a city councillor from Dawson City expressed concern around a lack of support from the Government of Yukon with respect to a new recreation centre in that community. According to them, the community of Dawson would like their new rec centre to contain a year-round swimming pool.

Is the government going to support this request? If not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have been working very hard with the community of Dawson — both the previous mayor and the current mayor of Dawson City — on their recreation facility. I know that the facility is an integral part of the community. I actually toured the old facility just last winter, and it certainly is in need of repair and replacement. We are working very hard with the City of Dawson to make sure that they have the best recreation facilities. We're working very closely with the community. They will identify the needs, as seems fit, and we will do our best to give them the facility that they want and that will meet the needs of the community into the future.

I'm really happy to be talking about all the investments that we are making across the territory. This is but one; there are plenty more where that came from. Our government is working very hard to make sure that the citizens of this territory have recreation facilities in every community, because every community matters.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister tell us the total estimated budget for a new recreation centre in the community of Dawson City, and how much will come from the Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There are a lot of hypotheticals in that question, Mr. Speaker. We are working very hard, as I said in my previous answers, with the community of Dawson on their new recreation centre. We are going to do a proper estimate of the facility once it has been properly scoped out. We hope to get that facility started this year. That's the plan.

I have spoken — as I said — as late as last Friday with the Mayor of Dawson about the recreation facility in that community. He is very excited about it. Once we have a proper estimate, we will then go forward.

I do know that we have put in a request to the federal government for funding for this program. It will be on 75-cent dollars. I believe the application went in for \$21 million. We're going to see how much the actual facility costs at the end of this. That submission went in a while ago.

We will actually work with the community. I know that the Mayor of Dawson has been talking about coming up with money for this from the municipality — that is the City of Dawson.

I know that the Yukon government is going to be working very, very closely with the community of Dawson to get them the facility that they deserve. It has been a long time coming, Mr. Speaker. I'm really happy to see this facility going ahead very, very soon.

#### **Question re: Youth Panel on Climate Change recommendations**

**Ms. Tredger:** It has been almost six months since the Youth Panel on Climate Change made their groundbreaking recommendations to this government. The youth pointed out all kinds of ways that this Liberal government is falling short on climate action. The government responded by saying that they're already doing the recommendations. I tabled that letter today.

So, let's start with a few of those recommendations: The panel called for free tuition at Yukon University, a ban on corporate donations to political parties, and veto power for self-governing First Nations.

Has the minister implemented any of these recommendations?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, I wish to thank the Youth Panel on Climate Change for their recommendations to us. I believe that I, the Minister of Environment, and possibly the Premier have all stood in this House and said that what we would do is prioritize the recommendations that came from the youth panel that would directly affect our goals of reducing emissions in the territory by 45 percent, and that's our climate lens. That's what we stated that we would do in *Our Clean Future*, and that's what we're doing.

When I received the recommendations from the Youth Panel on Climate Change, we said exactly that to them as well — that we would prioritize those recommendations that would

help us in reducing our emissions and make life more sustainable here for our young folks.

I can let the House know that we have been working through the next intake for the Youth Panel on Climate Change where they will build on the work of the first one. I will be happy — myself or the Minister of Environment — to present those announcements shortly. I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. Tredger:** Young people already know that they will have to bear the consequences of government inaction for years to come. In the letter that I tabled today, they were told that it's too complicated to implement some of their recommendations.

I would like to remind the minister that he is just that: a minister. He has the power to take real climate action if he wants to.

The Liberals could stop accepting corporate donations right now. The Liberals could respect First Nation consent on extraction right now. The Liberals could make tuition free at Yukon University right now.

If the minister really believes that we are in a climate emergency, why isn't he implementing all of the youth panel's recommendations right now?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I do believe that we are in a climate emergency, and I appreciate that every member of this Legislative Assembly has agreed with that statement. That is why we are prioritizing those recommendations that will have an effect on addressing the climate emergency. That is the whole point with all of the things that we try to do — whether it be responding to a pandemic, or whether it be dealing with flooding, or whatever the issues are that we are trying to address here in the territory as a responsible government. The point would be that we should prioritize those things that have the greatest effect, and that is what we said to the young folks when we met with them early on, before they presented their recommendations to us. That is what we said to them when they presented their recommendations to us. That is what we will continue to say, because we do care about them and we do want to shift our energy economy. It is incredibly important. That is why we are investing so much in shifting our energy economy through this budget. There is a ton here around that, and it is really important that we make that prioritization around what is going to have the greatest effect to shift the energy economy to a more renewable, sustainable energy future.

**Ms. Tredger:** In the letter replying to the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, they acknowledge the climate the panel talked about — shifting our relationships with the environment — and that is bigger than any one area. For the first few panels on climate change, the government was so happy to use their work to make it look like they were taking action on climate change, but the panel saw through this government's shallow action. They called for serious changes across the board. This government wasn't expecting that.

In response to these brave, well-researched calls to action, this government sent a pointless letter and hoped that the panelists wouldn't read it too closely, but they have. This is their future at stake, and they can see how much this government doesn't want to listen.

When will the minister start working on all of the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change's recommendations instead of sending letters of excuses?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As indicated by the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, our focus with respect to *Our Clean Future* is the reduction of greenhouse gases by 45 percent in 2030 from 2010 levels. We, of course, are listening to the youth and to all Yukoners.

But these are exciting times, Mr. Speaker. You will know that we have the grid-scale battery project, and we have very promising negotiations taking place in Atlin. We will electrify the Yukon highways much ahead of the days that we said we would. We said we would do it by 2027; we will likely have that done much sooner.

We will work with the federal government to ensure that there is electric connectivity between Dawson Creek and Watson Lake. In my capacity as Minister of Highways and Public Works, we will identify the large public structures in the Yukon that will benefit the most from retrofits and that will meaningfully reduce greenhouse gases as well and provide, of course, a brighter and healthier economy and a brighter Yukon for youth and for all Yukoners.

This is an exciting time. We are taking action.

#### **Question re: Transportation between communities**

**Ms. White:** The *Yukon Community Travel Project Final Report* states — and I quote: “People need transportation to access the activities that contribute to their physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing.”

Costs of living are skyrocketing, and there are many reasons why a person may not have access to a private vehicle. We're in a mental health crisis and access to transportation is so important to make sure people can access the supports they need. Whether that's clinical counselling, addiction services, health care, spending time with friends, or getting out on the land, it all contributes to the health of communities.

Does the minister recognize that affordable access to transit between communities is not just a matter of convenience, but of mental health and wellness?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to rise today to talk about our communities and access to transportation. Here in the territory, we have a road network that is the envy of many of the other territories.

We have lost, in recent years, access to a bus service — for example, Greyhound. That has been a national issue — one that a lot of jurisdictions are dealing with. In my past capacity as Highways and Public Works minister, we dealt with this on a national level.

These are thorny questions; there are no two ways about it. We have to make sure that we have good transportation throughout our communities.

We have companies up in Dawson — Husky Bus and others — that are starting to move into that sphere to actually provide transportation to people who are coming into Whitehorse from other communities. I am really hoping that those private individuals and companies fill the gaps that we

see throughout our territory in terms of transportation. I am happy to talk about this more in the future.

**Ms. White:** We hear the government talk on a regular basis about supporting local businesses and supporting folks staying in their communities. There is no better time to start talking about rural transit than right now. Not only would we be supporting the local economy and a green future, but we would also be allowing folks to age in place and raise their children in their home towns. Just imagine the benefits that this would have on mental health and affordability in rural Yukon. Just imagine this road network that the minister highlighted being utilized to support community connectivity.

Will the minister commit to working with Yukon First Nations, municipalities, and local businesses to implement an inter-community transit plan that exists outside of the existing routes?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that it is work that we have been undertaking. In the last session of the Legislative Assembly, the Department of Economic Development worked very closely with Liard First Nation on an initiative to ensure that they have the right infrastructure, which was the funding of a van that they were using to move their citizens in and out of Watson Lake to Whitehorse. We have continued, when possible, to support the private sector in these endeavours. As many folks know, there are a lot of First Nations that have invested in these types of infrastructure.

I haven't seen the report. I haven't had the opportunity to work with Economic Development on that, but I think that it is a very valid concern and idea to take a look at what is being proposed — working with Community Services and the Department of Economic Development through our community development fund when we have that opportunity to support either self-governing First Nations or other First Nations or community groups. These are great solutions.

Of course, we have heard in Faro as well from the mayor about a week ago speaking publicly about how citizens are supporting each other in ensuring — especially with seniors on a fixed income who don't have access to vehicles — that they are coming together. These are all valid things that we should be looking into.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate highlighting the work done by First Kaska and the Husky Bus, I am talking about other rural communities. In what may be the least shocking news you will hear today, we are living in a climate emergency. We are facing unprecedented levels of change in our climate, and action needs to be taken now, not later.

The government's own *Our Clean Future* report states — and I quote: “... will make it easier for Yukoners to use clean forms of transportation, reducing fuel costs for individuals, families and businesses as well as greenhouse gas emissions.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, electric cars are great, but they are not an option for everyone. One of the fastest, most effective ways to make a difference would be reducing the need for individual folks to drive.

When will the government implement a territory-wide community transportation plan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think it is important to note, as the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Environment noted just moments ago, that we are working to support the electrification of our transportation for vehicles across the territory. A fast-charging station has gone in at Watson Lake. We have ones going in all along the Alaska Highway, the north and south Klondike, and the Mayo Road and to Ross River as well on the Robert Campbell Highway. Of course, that will work for vans and buses just as well so we can have electric buses and electric vans in the future. That is coming.

Of course, we encourage at all times carpooling and riding together. We're investing in the City of Whitehorse public transit system. We're investing in active transportation. We are giving rebates for electric vehicles, including e-bikes. That won't get you from one community to another, but it will help you get around in your community.

There are all sorts of ways in which we are investing in a transportation system of the future that uses renewables. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to answer further questions as they come.

#### **Question re: Rural solid-waste transfer stations**

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, rural Yukoners have noticed a trend under this government. They are ignored and disrespected by the Liberals who are more and more focused on the city. Take transfer stations, for example. Without consultation and without concern for the opinions of rural Yukoners, this Liberal government has decided to close several rural transfer stations. This will force Yukoners outside of Whitehorse to drive further to dispose of their waste.

Will the minister do the right thing and reverse his decision to close transfer stations?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am really grateful for the question this afternoon because I haven't had many conversations about waste management recently, and it's an important issue for the territory; there's no doubt about it. Waste management is a critical piece of environmental stewardship. It's a critical piece toward our fight against global climate change, and it's also a critical piece to our municipalities starting to manage the waste problem that is throughout the territory and throughout North America. It is one of the largest issues that we are facing.

People are throwing out a lot of stuff. When we came into office — my colleague has talked about this before — municipalities came to this government and said, "You have to do something, please." So, we came up with the plan that we are currently enacting. Phase 1 is done, and phase 2 is in process. What that essentially says is that we are going to manage our waste facilities in a way that most jurisdictions in the country already do, but we don't. So, we are taking that approach. We are going to have people at the gates of the municipal landfills who will manage them. We will make sure that we know what is going into them, and we are going to close those waste facilities that are like holes in the bucket where people can throw their waste without any oversight, without any due diligence. That is the plan, and we are going to continue with it.

**Mr. Istchenko:** This government's disrespect for rural Yukoners has gotten so bad that even the Yukon's Ombudsman has weighed in and found that this government has created processes that make decisions impacting communities without representation from those who are actually impacted. The Ombudsman has even made it clear that this poor approach to governance by the Minister of Community Services, in their words, is unfair.

So, will the minister stop showing contempt for rural Yukoners and actually start consulting and listening to them?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I really have to reject the underlying heart of the message that we just got from the Member for Kluane. This government has been listening to Yukoners since we were elected to office and we are continuing to do this. I know that my colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, did extensive community tours — in some cases, with the Premier — to all of these communities and talked to them about the issues that matter to them, and I know that I have followed in his footsteps to do exactly the same thing. I am going across the territory and listening to the communities from Mayo to Burwash and Destruction Bay, to Kluane, and to Watson Lake. I have been to virtually every community and I am hearing what people had to say. I have heard the concerns about the closure of these very small landfills, these sorts of sites on the side of the highway. But in order to make sure that our environment is taken care of in the future and in order to make sure that everybody is treated fairly and equally, we are going to close those municipal landfills.

Now, I know that the Yukon's solid-waste management was not sustainable under previous governments, and I am happy to talk about this more in the future, but we are listening to Yukoners.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It's becoming more and more clear that the communities and the municipalities are rejecting the combative and hostile approach of the Community Services minister. His aggressive and confrontational style ends up burning bridges and pushing people away. We saw it in the fall when the minister had to make the unprecedented move to pause his better building legislation because he forgot to consult with the municipalities. We are seeing it now as the territory's Ombudsman has had to come out and slap the minister on the wrist for not actually consulting with rural Yukoners.

Can the minister tell us how he is going to change his approach so that he can start working and listening constructively to rural Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have to say right off the hop that, once again, I really have to vehemently disagree with the perspective of the Member for Kluane. We are listening to Yukoners. I have listened to rural Yukon. I have listened to the municipalities. I heard from them on our community tours. I have taken their information back, and we are working to make sure that their concerns are addressed even as we act to make sure that we are managing waste facilities across the territory in a manner that reflects what happens in most of the rest of the country — if not all of the rest of the country — and actually modernizes and helps municipalities. As I said, they came to us

when we first came to office and said, “Please, please, can you bring some order to this chaos?” We have done a lot of work to do that.

I will say that this is part of a broader plan to improve solid-waste management in the territory. We are implementing the recommendations from a report developed with the Yukon government, the Association of Yukon Communities, and the City of Whitehorse. I hear again and again the Member for Kluane saying that we are not listening, but the Yukon Party is proving not to be a reliable source of information. They simply are not. I think that it’s time that we start to get the message out that, yes, we are going to modernize our facilities and, yes, we are listening.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 3, standing in the name of the Hon. Richard Mostyn.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Things are moving so quickly this afternoon. I move that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 3, entitled *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So many binders, so little time. I would like to begin by thanking each of the honourable members who have risen to speak on Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*. As stated before, the time to act on climate change is now. We have had an awful lot of discussion about climate change in this House over the last several years — certainly even quite a bit this afternoon.

The very purpose of this bill is to make changes to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* and the *Municipal Act*, and that sounds really kind of dry. But what the changes to those two pieces of legislation will do is allow the creation of an energy-efficient retrofit program through which Yukoners have access to funding repayable through an annual local improvement tax.

That is, Yukoners will get a very good rate of interest, and the loans will be assessed against their properties, managed by municipalities that elect to sign on — or, in some cases, in unincorporated communities, the Yukon government — and will allow them to make improvements to their homes that will reduce their reliance on high-priced fossil fuels. It will make them cheaper to run. It will create employment throughout our rural Yukon communities and Whitehorse. It will lessen some of the load on the grid, and it will lower our greenhouse gas

emissions, which is something that we have been talking about all afternoon. It has been a focus of ours. We have declared a state of emergency.

So, this program to get the retrofit program going has been an absolute priority for my predecessor in this role and for me as well.

I’m very happy to have brought this piece of legislation before the House and to have it now in third reading. Again, I’m very grateful for both opposition parties for their support of this bill at second reading.

I’m also thankful that municipalities worked with the territorial government on how to administer the program and make it available to as many Yukoners as possible. Municipal partnership will be key to the program’s success.

I worked very hard, as did my predecessor in this role, to work with municipalities to identify — and we heard about the administrative burden that this program might place on municipalities. We talked about it. I wanted to understand what that administrative burden is. So, after the last session of this Legislature, we went out and worked with the municipalities on this. We actually came to a very good understanding from the municipalities — almost a forensic analysis of what some of the administrative pitfalls of such a program might be — and we worked with them to address those concerns.

Now, why are we doing all this? Well, as outlined in *Our Clean Future* — that’s a nation-leading climate change plan that this government drafted a few years ago to deal with our climate change problem — 2,000 residential, commercial, and institutional buildings will be retrofitted by 2030. Now, these retrofits will reduce energy, as I have said earlier, and greenhouse gas emissions while saving Yukoners money on utility bills. We’re actually doing our part to lessen our reliance on fossil fuels.

Smart electric heating systems will be installed in 1,300 homes that previously relied on fossil-fuel heating. Biomass heating systems will be installed in an additional 20 commercial and institutional buildings. This is work that my current colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, is undertaking, and we’re working with Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services to make sure that this is a reality.

So, we’re working on many fronts to reduce our carbon footprint and change the way that this territory operates in terms of heating its buildings and houses. An important part of reaching the targets laid out in this nation-leading climate change action plan that we drafted is to provide funds to approximately 1,000 residential and commercial property owners to begin retrofits that will actually reduce their reliance on fossil fuels, reduce the draw on the grid, and put more money in their pockets — insulate them a little bit from the inflationary pressures that we’re seeing in the fuel industry today.

So, the creation of the better building program will be enabled by these act amendments, which will allow us to put these loans against the property taxes, have them administered through municipalities, and actually, through that process, offer Yukoners a very, very good interest rate on these

improvements, which will help save them a little bit more money and actually facilitate the creation of more retrofits.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, be debated in the House for a third time. I will cede the floor to my colleagues.

**Ms. White:** Today I am speaking to Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*. There are two things. I recognize that this legislation is enabling legislation to allow municipalities to be able to collect money for what will be a program that is hopefully being created as we speak and available to Yukoners in the future.

Some of the conversations that we had in Committee of the Whole debate were actually issues that had been highlighted by the communities themselves, the municipalities themselves, on whether or not that program will actually reach the full potential. I am hopeful, based on the debate that we were able to have in this Chamber, that some of those points have been made to those folks who are behind the scenes and creating this upcoming program.

In just discussing events of last fall, the one thing, again, that I will say is that I thank my colleagues from the government for recognizing the importance of putting a pause on a program that has so much potential to do good, as opposed to plowing ahead at that point. I am eternally grateful to municipal leaders who did go back to that drawing board with government officials to work on how this program could be rolled out and how municipalities and non-incorporated communities could participate without being adversely affected.

Again, I just want to thank the president of AYC, Gord Curran, for his willingness to have those conversations with me last fall. I would like to thank every mayor of every municipality who spoke with me honestly about their concerns and their hopes for the future last fall, and I would really like to acknowledge and thank Mayor Cabott, Mayor Irvin, and Mayor Kendrick, who sat on the government table to get us to this point. They worked with the Minister of Community Services and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to get us to “yes”.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there is real potential here. Again, I support climate action, and this is a path toward that. I am happy to be here today in celebration and in support of this bill because, in the fall, it was touch and go for a while. I thank the Minister of Community Services for trusting me and for taking it back and doing that work. I’m supportive and look forward to when the program is finally rolled out.

**Mr. Hassard:** I’m pleased to rise today to speak about Bill No. 3, *Act to Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021)*, which, of course, is known as the “better building program”.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this legislation comes from a good place and has a good goal. Of course, providing assistance with the provision of energy retrofits to reduce our greenhouse gases is a cause that we do support.

That being said, despite the good goal of this legislation, its legacy and storyline have been tarnished by the poor leadership by the Minister of Community Services.

You will remember, Mr. Speaker, that this piece of legislation was first tabled in the fall by this minister. However, the minister completely dropped the ball on the drafting of that legislation. He was drafting legislation on the fly, and he forgot to consult with those actually impacted by this legislation — writing it on the back of a napkin, making it up as he goes.

Really, this is a trend of this minister — careless, doesn’t pay attention to detail. He isn’t concerned with coming up with good policy. As a result, he completely dropped the ball on this legislation initially and tabled a flawed, incomplete, and, to be honest, defective piece of legislation. It’s really too bad because, as a result of the minister’s carelessness and inattention, the legislation almost died on the floor of this Legislature.

Municipalities that are impacted by this legislation came out in the fall to let their Legislature know that the minister had not consulted them, to let us know that the minister had ignored them, and to let us know that the minister had overlooked a bunch of very legitimate concerns.

Because the minister failed so badly with this piece of legislation, it was delayed by half a year. Instead of passing in the Fall Sitting, it has been sitting in limbo while the minister finally does the consultation that he should have done months ago. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that this is completely unheard of — a government tabling their marquee piece of legislation and then failing to get it passed. This Legislature even had some very undemocratic principles built into the Standing Orders known as the “guillotine clause”, which this government frequently uses to ram their agenda down the throats of Yukoners.

But the minister failed so badly at this that he embarrassed his party, his government, and Yukoners so that, for the first time in a very, very long time, a government bill failed to pass this House. Mr. Speaker, I think the last time this happened was when the Liberals voted against their own bill to change the electoral boundaries, in effect killing their own bill, which was a first in our Westminster system of parliament.

What is notable here is that, whereas when the Liberals killed the electoral boundaries bill because they knew that the redistribution of boundaries would have cost them the government, in this case, the Liberals had to throw this bill into limbo because —

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

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think that we are on the third reading of Bill No. 3. The member opposite is talking about other legislation on the floor, which I don’t think has anything to do with Bill No. 3, so I just think that it’s not the topic that we’re on.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** First of all, the Government House Leader failed to cite a Standing Order, which he should know better. Secondly, I would point out that my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, was talking about the government's failures in consultation in the process regarding this piece of legislation and then, as a comparison, drawing an analogy to their failures on other pieces of legislation. I don't believe that there is a point of order; I think that it is a dispute between members.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** It is not a point of order. It is a dispute among members.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, whereas when the Liberals killed the electoral boundaries bill because they knew the redistribution of boundaries would have cost them the government, in this case, the Liberals had to throw this bill into limbo because of the lack of attention to detail by this minister.

The minister's inattention and carelessness has unfortunately had negative impacts on Yukoners and the climate. The better building program, which should have been going by now, has been sitting on the shelf while the minister tries to clean up the mess and actually finish his homework.

Let's walk through a few of the failures of the Minister of Community Services on this file. There is currently a legal requirement for the minister to consult with municipalities prior to proposing amendments to the *Municipal Act*. Just to quote from section 11 of the *Municipal Act*: "The Government of the Yukon must consult with the Association of Yukon Communities on any direct amendments that a Minister proposes to this Act." Yet despite this legal requirement to consult communities, the AYC confirmed that they did not occur when this piece of legislation was brought forward last fall.

Now, we're not shocked to hear that this minister didn't consult on this piece of legislation. This is the MO from this particular minister. He plays fast and loose with important pieces of legislation, and Yukoners are negatively impacted as a result. So, you will remember, Mr. Speaker, that this minister thought he could bully his way through this problem initially, even though he ignored communities and did not consult with them and really just flat out failed at his job. He started playing brinkmanship with municipalities. Several times, he announced that he was going to bring this bill forward for debate and vote in the fall, but, each time, he blinked and backed down as he realized that this piece of legislation was going to die — again, something unheard of from a government.

Then the minister started to frantically call and apply pressure to other municipal representatives — in effect, Mr. Speaker, trying to bully them into agreeing with him. Now this "go it alone" approach has resulted in several letters from various municipalities indicating to the government that, while they support the concept of the program, they wanted the government to actually consult with them on the design of the program before getting rammed through.

We've seen the Association of Yukon Communities, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Mayo all send letters last fall raising a number of concerns and asking for this to be deferred. We've seen a strongly worded letter from the previous Mayor of Whitehorse — who, as happenstance, also ran for the Liberals in the last spring election — outlining the City of Whitehorse's concerns with the Liberal government's approach and lack of consultation.

These are important concerns to reflect on, as the delivery of the program proposed within this legislation is largely reliant on the municipalities to deliver. They are essential partners, and the success of the program depends on them being comfortable and having their concerns addressed.

Mr. Speaker, a strong partnership does not start with one level of government refusing to consult with the other until the eleventh hour. A strong partnership will not work when the Minister of Community Services made disparaging remarks about the concerns of municipalities in the Legislature in October that he was later forced to apologize for. This is entirely the approach — and failures — of this minister that has led this legislation, which should otherwise have been a slam dunk, to teetering on the brink of failure last fall.

The only thing saving this bill is that the minister finally was shamed into admitting that he messed up and into going back to the drawing board to fix this flawed work. The minister's willy-nilly approach to this — all was evident this spring when he was forced to start rewriting the legislation on the fly here in the Legislature. While we are glad to see some of these mistakes rectified, rewriting the bill on the floor and making it up as you go isn't the way toward good policy.

The fact of the matter is that the minister tried to ram through a piece of legislation in the fall that even he now admits was poorly designed. Imagine if his bullying tactics had worked in the fall; Yukoners would now be stuck with a patchwork of legislation that was incomplete. Of course, this is something that could have been completely avoided had the minister done his job in the first place.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is a marquee and defining piece of the Liberal government's agenda, and its failure to pass last fall represented a stunning indictment of this minister's combative and vindictive approach. The most unfortunate part of this is, as I have stated, that all municipalities —

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

### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

I am listening to the member opposite give his presentation at third reading, and he is referring to my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, as "vindictive" and "combative", and I think that these are insulting terms. So, to make sure, I quote — I am referring to Standing Order 19(i). I don't think that we need terms like that in referring to people. I think that it is fine to present the facts as the member opposite

sees them, but he is characterizing the minister, which I think is not appropriate here today.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I don't believe that there is a point of order. In fact, the language that my colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, is using is actually milder than some of the language and insults that have come from the Minister of Community Services in the past, so it is a bit rich to hear the Government House Leader call a point of order on this.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** I would caution members to stick to the topic and to temper their remarks when speaking about other members.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, as I was saying, the most unfortunate part of this, as I've stated, is that all municipalities and the opposition parties agree with the concept of the better building program. If the minister had done the proper consultation last year to address the outstanding concerns of the municipalities, then he would have had them all onside.

Now, we are glad to hear the minister admit that he was careless and that he bungled this file and that he was willing to go back to the drawing board and do his homework. This is what municipalities have asked for because they had concerns. These were legitimate concerns and should not be so easily dismissed by the Minister of Community Services since this is the minister responsible for fostering good relationships with the communities.

This should have been an easy win for the minister. Instead, through his actions, the minister caused a delay of many months related to this legislation while straining relationships with our municipalities. That being said, in the fall, we indicated that we would oppose this bill until such time as the minister did his job and actually listened to communities. He has reluctantly done that.

Despite this reluctance to consult and play well with others, we are happy to support the bill now that the communities are on board. Perhaps there is a silver lining to the minister's initial failures here. The minister and his Liberal colleagues take this whole debacle as an important lesson. They can no longer bully Yukoners into just agreeing with him —

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** The Minister of Highways and Public Works, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Referring to Standing Order 19(i), which is the use of abusive or insulting language, including sexist or violent language, in a context likely to create disorder.

At some point, Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully request that we have a look at whether "bullying" itself ought to be language that is commonly used in the Assembly. It certainly has a — well, it's an insult. Of course, that's not the end of the analysis, with respect, but perhaps it is engaging in

dishonourable behaviour so as to bring the conduct of MLAs into some disrepute.

MLAs are deemed to be honourable. Mr. Speaker, perhaps it is a close call, but in my view, I would ask you to consider this use of "bullying" in our Chamber.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I don't believe that there is a point of order. In fact, it's odd that the Minister of Highways and Public Works rose on a point of order under 19(i) to complain about insulting language and then actually may have broken that order himself in the comments that he directed back toward my colleague.

To me, I think that this is just a dispute among members. From my perspective, the language being used by my colleague is not actually any stronger or more insulting than that which we have listened to on many, many occasions from the Minister of Community Services and a number of his colleagues.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** The temperature of the debate is rising with members using language that is likely to cause disorder. I caution all members to temper their remarks. Members should not break Standing Orders when calling a point of order.

Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had almost wrapped up when the minister called that point of order. I will hopefully get through my last 15 seconds without any more.

As I was saying, the government needs to rethink their approach of ignoring rural Yukon and municipalities and start working with, and listening to, Yukoners.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm going to rise. I wasn't planning to rise to talk at third reading, but I'm happy to rise and to correct the record on a few issues.

The first one is how often we as ministers in this government have travelled to and spoken with and talked with communities. The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin will know that there are a couple of times that I've been to the community of Johnsons Crossing where I alerted him when I was going to be there and let him know I was going to be there, as a minister, and set up meetings to talk with his community and to hear from them and to consider their perspectives and to try to work with them on this issue — on this bill that we have in front of us — Bill No. 3. When I was in the role of Minister of Community Services, I travelled extensively to communities to talk to them. In fact, in about the year before the last territorial election, I think I ended up in weekly meetings with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities — albeit phone meetings, because we're in COVID — and in virtually every one of those meetings, we discussed better buildings. The suggestion that we did not engage with the Association of Yukon Communities is incorrect.

I know, as well, that the Minister of Community Services continued with that. When he gets to his feet in closing debate today, he can talk about how often, but I suspect it was at the



same frequency of weekly meetings with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities.

We've always made it a goal to be at the Association of Yukon Communities' quarterly meetings. We have always made it a goal to travel to municipalities and talk with folks directly. There has been a long engagement on this very bill, and from the start, municipalities here in the Yukon were worried about how they would be able to carry out the local improvement charge collection. Now, when you look at this bill and it talks about this program that we're planning to bring in, everywhere else across the country, it is handled by municipalities altogether. Here, it will not be.

Here, it will be the Energy Solutions Centre and the Energy branch of Energy, Mines and Resources that will do the work of doing an audit on a home to see whether there is the opportunity for improvement, making recommendations about how to improve that house, assessing the types of savings that the homeowner would receive, if they had a suite of choices, working with them to select that suite of choices, and following up with them to make sure that there is an audit afterward.

The part where the municipalities come in — not everywhere — in unincorporated Yukon, it will be the territorial government again — is in collecting the local improvement charge. The worry that our municipalities had was because of a program that the folks from the Yukon Party brought in, which was the rural well program. They asked municipalities to take it on, and municipalities said yes. Did they go through and do this level of engagement and change? Not that I'm aware of, but I don't know; maybe they will let us know.

When the Yukon Party brought in that change, we talked with municipalities and they told us that they were concerned about the burden that it would place on them. Please, let's get it right, that when we're talking about better buildings, most of the work will be happening at the Energy Solutions Centre.

Another thing that the member opposite talked about was how this bill failed, but it actually didn't. The Minister of Community Services chose not to bring it forward to Committee of the Whole, in respect of trying to allay the concerns of the municipalities. That concern was around support on collecting the local improvement charge. Having done that work and getting here, did that result in a change to the legislation? No, it did not.

There was a request from municipalities to change the timeline by which dollars were remitted, but it was not around support or dealing with the burden that was going to come to municipalities through that engagement. The Minister of Community Services — and I was asked to be part of it, because now I'm responsible for the Energy Solutions Centre — we did sit down with municipalities and work through it, and we got to a solution.

Again, that's all policy work. That's not change to the legislation. In other words, what we were saying in the fall was that here's an act that is enabling, that doesn't force a municipality to come on board, and we will work with them. It was the members opposite who decided and stated that they would not vote for the legislation, and they clearly

demonstrated that at second reading. That is why we decided to pause.

I think it's for the better, but if people are going to say that there was a season missed — come on. On our side, we were saying that we can go ahead; we can do that negotiation with municipalities in the meantime, which was what we had always said when we met with the Association of Yukon Communities' president weekly. We said, "Hey, let's sit down and do this work."

I agree with the member opposite when he states that this is a good program and when he states that municipalities believe this is a good program. They do think it is a good program.

Municipalities, early on, asked us to consider something other than local improvement charges, and we did. We went and spoke to the Yukon Housing Corporation. We saw whether we would be able to do it through a corporation of the government. What we found was that we would not be able to get the same really low interest rates for Yukoners. We believed that was important.

There were a couple of other reasons that we felt that it wasn't as strong, but that was the main one — that we could get better rates for Yukoners if we went through the local improvement charges. The challenge, of course, was that local improvement charges sometimes lead, in other instances, to people concerned with paying back their loan. The beauty of the better building program is that Yukoners are choosing it because they are going to get a break on heating bills, because that's the whole point. That will allow us to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through insulating a building.

I am glad that we are here today. From the perspective that I have, we have always been working with municipalities on this. I am glad that we have a policy agreement in place with municipalities now. I'm glad that it will be reviewed after the first couple of years so that we can refine it.

No side in this — and I thank the mayors who were there at the table, and I thank the Association of Yukon Communities — no one is trying to make this a way in which to do anything but cover the costs that are there for municipalities or the Government of Yukon in unincorporated areas. It's really about making sure that this is the best program that it can be for Yukoners, and it is a good program. I'm looking forward to it.

I thank the members opposite for supporting the bill now. I appreciate the work that has been done with the Association of Yukon Communities, and I look forward to getting this program up and running, including through the Energy Solutions Centre.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is my honour to close debate on Bill No. 3 this afternoon. It is a very, very positive step for the territory. It is a very, very good day for Yukoners. In the run-up to last fall, I had lots of talks, as my good colleague has spoken about this afternoon, with municipalities and municipal

leaders from across the territory, both in my community tours and on the phone beyond that. I have also had conversations with the chambers of commerce, which were very supportive of this program. I have had conversations with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Yukon Conservation Society, and the Yukon Federation of Labour. There has been lots of support for this program because they understand how important it is for the territory, and they were supportive of it.

We did hear, of course, some of the trepidation on behalf of municipal leaders to the program — much of it generated, as my colleague has said this afternoon, because of lingering problems from the rural well and electrification program, which is a program that was brought to municipalities by the former government. So, they said: “We are just not getting compensated for the hassle of this program, and we really want you to do better.” From my very, very beginning conversations with municipalities across the territory as I toured the territory, I heard about the capacity issue within municipalities and how they were being pushed to the max. The world is getting a little bit more complicated, for sure — not only because of COVID, but just because of the growth in the territory. A lot of that pressure falls on municipal governments, the very first level of government to interact with the public, and they are feeling the strain. I heard that in all my conversations, and I reassured them. I said: “I really do want to make sure that you are made whole, that you are not left holding a bag that you cannot carry, as may have been done in the past. I want to make sure that I work with you.” This is an important program and Yukoners are looking for ways to make their houses more affordable to run.

We’re looking for ways to power the territory more efficiently. We’re looking primarily because we’ve declared a climate emergency to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Declaring an emergency means taking action. I mean, we’ve heard again and again at climate change summits — we’ve held many of them over the years, and young people around the world are saying, “Enough talk; it’s time for action.” So, yes, I push hard because I think it’s time to have action. I think we have to work through some of the work to make sure that we actually get to action on climate change. I’ve said that to the municipalities, and I’ve said that to my colleagues in the House and here as well — that we really have to move. We are moving. I think that’s a really good message for the territory.

That’s the positive, and it is very positive. We’re going to build a program that will allow Yukoners to access money at a very affordable rate so that they can improve their houses and hopefully, in practice, reduce their dependency on fossil fuels, reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, and maybe save a couple of bucks over time that they can put to other things. That’s all good.

We’re doing it efficiently through municipalities and local improvement charges, which, as my colleague has said, is a practice that’s seen across the country, but it’s better here in the territory because it’s going to be run through the territorial government and municipalities understanding that there are capacity issues in the territory. The territory is going to do some of the heavy lifting on behalf of the municipalities, and we’re

going to fund them for it, which is what we talked about for several months earlier this year. The work, of course, of Mayor Kendrick, Mayor Cabott, and Mayor Irvin on this file with my colleague and me has been really, really exemplary — and the working group, all the staff, and the administration and the CAOs of municipalities across the territory. They actually did an amazing job compiling, I believe, a document in excess of 76 pages that laid out some of the administrative concerns. It was really helpful, and they actually put on paper and gave life to some of the concerns that I was hearing in the abstract. That was very helpful.

So, I heard that it was an administrative burden. I asked what it looked like, and people got down to work and actually identified what some of those concerns were. That allowed us to come to an agreement. That was work that I had always committed to right from my very first days in this job.

I am going to get to the Leader of the Third Party in a minute. I really do appreciate her diligence on this file and her commitment to changing the way we work in the territory to improve the territory so that we’re not as dependent on fossil fuels and we are actually reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. She has been very clear on that. My colleagues in the Official Opposition — not so much.

It’s actually hard to pin down where the opposition sits. I mean opposition with a capital “O” — the Official Opposition, Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition. It’s hard to pin them down because, on paper in the last election, they said that they support carbon pricing — today, not so much. I can’t figure it out. Before the election — not so much. You can’t pin them down. It is not reliable. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, my good colleague, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, was wrong — wrong in so many ways. That’s okay. You get used to it after a while.

The information flow out of the opposition is not reliable. I will say that it is great to have him in this House today. We have sparred for several years, and he is a great opposition politician, I have to say. I always enjoy it when he takes to his feet, but I wasn’t sure if he was still going to be with us. Almost a year ago today, there were 100 people standing outside of the Legislative Assembly calling for action and calling for them to recall a couple of members from the Yukon Party, including the leader. I hope —

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

#### **Point of order**

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Pursuant to Standing Order 19(b), the member is speaking to matters other than what is under discussion. I would also note that this is particularly rich considering two of his colleagues called a point of order under Standing Order 19(i) regarding insulting language. The language coming from the Minister of Community Services just now is far stronger, far more insulting, and far less in keeping with the decorum of this Assembly than anything that came from anyone on this side earlier on.

I would suggest that he be asked to rein in his comments and to speak about the matter that’s actually under discussion.

**Speaker:** On the point of order, Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, earlier today, we allowed comments from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin talking about the minister and characterizing him. I think that this then opens it up to allow us to characterize the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. I have not heard any insulting language. In fact, I heard him say that it was —

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard my colleague say that he respects his role and he talked about him. He's now presenting facts that occurred here a year ago and has not used insulting language.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** There is no point of order. It is a dispute between members.

I would caution members to temper their remarks. I would also remind members to stick to the topic.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, as I was saying, I'm glad to be speaking with the opposition on this matter this afternoon. I'm trying to ascertain where they sit on this. I think that today they support it, and I'm very glad. I think that's a great thing. They didn't support it last year; they do this year. They didn't support carbon pricing before the election; they did during the election, and they don't now. I'm trying to ascertain where this all is.

I don't know. It's difficult for anybody — it's unreliable. You just don't know where the opposition sits from one day to the next.

I will say, though, that there were a lot of words from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin. Some of them were familiar. I guess they say that "Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery", and I take that in the spirit in which it was intended.

But, as I said, they were wrong. I want to just bring that home. I think my good colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, lit on this, but I'm going to put a hard line underneath it.

This legislation that is before us today, Bill No. 3, is the same legislation that was before us in the fall, with one notable exception. There is an amendment that we passed through this House during Committee that was put forward by municipalities and that I committed to and that I wanted to make sure that we could get it done, and actually, the good folks in Justice and the good folks in Community Services worked very, very hard to make that amendment happen. It took an awful lot of work, but we knew how important it was for municipalities, and it is important that we listen to our municipalities and hear what they have to say. And it is important that we honour them by making this very subtle, fairly small change that took a lot of work so that they feel some comfort with this piece of legislation, and it actually makes it easier for them, in the wake of the rural well and electrification program, that they have a little bit more time to pay the bills. I appreciated that, and I asked the departmental officials to do it. They weren't sure if they could get it done, but they did, and I am very, very happy for that, because it took a lot of work on

behalf of the civil service to make that amendment, and that is the only change in this legislation. It has not been tweaked. It wasn't a failure at the beginning — quite the opposite, actually.

This bill gets the changes done that will make it easier for the territory to administer — it allows the territory to administer these types of programs in unincorporated communities, and it will allow municipalities to opt into the program, which has always been a centrepiece of my approach to municipalities, both when I was Highways and Public Works minister and when I am Community Services minister. They represent their constituents. They are elected representatives in another order of government, and they have every right to make the choices they need. Far be it from me to impose on them an action that they don't want to take. So, it is an opt-in, just like the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* was an opt-in.

Over the last little while, I have had regular communication with the mayors of rural Yukon. I am going to continue that practice. I value their input as much as I do the First Nations' in the territory. I have said many times that you cannot do this job if you're not in touch with the First Nation leaders, the municipal leaders, and the business leaders. You need to be in touch all of the time so that you have the best information to make the decisions. That doesn't mean to say that we are always going to agree, but we are always going to have the context in which our decisions are made, and that is very, very important to me. It's very, very important. It is why we are here representing our constituents. It is why the opposition provides such a valuable service, because they, too, are presumably bringing the views of their constituencies to the floor of the House.

We got into a bit of negativity there, and I didn't want to do that this afternoon. I really didn't, because this is an important bill for the territory. I had hoped that we wouldn't have to have all this rigmarole, but we are here, and I think we have touched on that and dealt with it. I will say that the Leader of the Third Party — I do appreciate her support for this initiative. She has brought her concerns to the table, as I've said. She worked with me on this and worked with the municipal leaders as well. I think that this is important. I think that what we have now is a bill that is going to serve the territory for many, many years to come. It will improve 1,000 homes in the most affordable way we could find.

My good colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, worked very hard and came up with a plan to deliver a program that was done as efficiently and as cost-effectively as possible for Yukoners. I think that is vitally important, as we take action on climate change and the state of emergency in which we live.

So, here we are. I think that it is a great day for the territory. I think that it is a great day for Yukoners. It's a good day for municipalities. It is certainly a good day for me and, I hope, for my caucus colleagues. I think that it is a good day for the Third Party. I sort of gleaned that it might even be a good day for the opposition itself, despite the tirade we heard earlier.

I actually am looking forward to having the vote. I look forward to hearing how it goes this afternoon on Bill No. 3, *Act*

*Amend the Assessment and Taxation Act and the Municipal Act (2021).* With that, I will take my seat.

**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.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 3 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 3 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 203: *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — continued

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

### Department of Economic Development — continued

**Ms. White:** I welcome the officials back to the Chamber today. I am hoping, based on the minister's assertions that there is a superstar in our midst in pulling these numbers together, that we will have that chance.

I was just mentioning to the minister how grateful I am for Hansard because being able to seeing the numbers written down, as opposed to the ones that I had written myself — I had mentioned the other day that the average wage in the territory was just under \$24, but I saw that he said it was \$24.67, which is much closer to \$25 than below that.

So, where we left off on Thursday last week, the minister had just told us that the hourly wage in the Yukon is just under \$25 an hour, and I have to say that, even at that point on the 17<sup>th</sup>, it was enough to knock me over. One of the questions that I had left off with — so I will just go back to that — is: When the minister says that the average wage is just under \$25 an hour, but 2,000 individual employees applied and were accepted for the wage top-up program, can the minister start by telling me how many employees there are in the territory? One of the reasons why I am asking is, knowing that Yukon government is the single largest employer — and then we have other big employers as well. We have the City of Whitehorse, organizations like Air North or Northwestel.

When we talk about an average wage of being just under \$25, I am just trying to get an idea of the number of people who earn less than that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I don't have it at my fingertips — the numbers from the private sector — but I think that it is important to say that the number that we have provided at the average rate is just from the private sector. That is not considering First Nation governments, municipal governments, or the Government of Yukon. We do have a good sense of what the total of working Yukoners is, and we know how many folks are actively out there looking. We can come back and get you that number, but this is specifically from the private sector.

I would just ask the member opposite as well — the other question that we still had pending was: What was the percentage or what was the number of folks? We have it in actually hard numbers and percentage of individuals when they had the top-up — how many people were trying to get the top-up — essentially, I think the question was focused on that total

top-up. The max top-up was \$4 an hour — and how many people completely maxed that out? I can touch on that now. We have it here. The officials were on it.

I will start with the top-up question. I think it was a great question because, out of the 100 percent of the people who actually received that top-up, 59 percent of the individuals used the whole \$4. The number is actually 1,678 people. Then, if you look at the \$3 per hour, you're now at about 20 percent of the folks, at 569 individuals. I'll just do the last two categories: At \$2 per hour up to \$2.99, in that range, 331 is the number for employees at about 11.6 percent; and then \$1 per hour up to \$2 is 211, or 7.4 percent; and then less than \$1 was 56 employees, or two percent. The total number of people was 2,845.

I dug in a little bit this morning once I got the numbers. What's interesting is that, if you take into consideration the 59 percent and you cross-reference that against the occupations, what you will find, without having to dig too much, is that most of those individuals are in the type of employment where there are gratuities pretty consistently provided.

So, when you go back and take a look, you will see that it's mostly accommodation and food services at about 19.8 percent, and then the next one was food and beverage stores at about 15.6 percent. The one number, I guess, that jumped out and had a pretty strong percentage was for general merchandise stores. That would be a place where I think you normally would not see a gratuity provided, but there were about 307 people total who worked there and 105 of them were using that whole \$4. About 99 of them were using the \$3 to \$4. If you want to take a look, I think that would probably read into your question.

Then I will go back to answer that last question.

So, the number of payroll employees in the Yukon in the third quarter of 2021 was 18,495 — which is the highest it has been in the previous four quarters, and that was an increase of about 1,200. That's our total amount. We would have to go back and extract that.

Our numbers have gone back up. If you look at our latest numbers, even in the last month, we added another 200 individuals to the labour market.

Hopefully, that answers the question. If there is a bit more data that you want us to extract, we can go back. We might not have it today, but we certainly can bring it back to you at another time.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister and his officials for that.

What I can do is that I will send a letter to the department so we don't have to lob these numbers back and forth, but I do appreciate it.

The other one — well, actually, just before I go on, I think there is going to be a broader conversation in Canada if we think that people accessing services should be responsible for paying wages.

The minister talked about gratuities. I lived in Australia, and in 2006, I worked as a bartender for \$19 an hour. There are no gratuities in Australia; it's all included.

We've seen really great examples of restaurants in North America that have changed to a model where they have increased their prices by 20 percent. They removed any

obligation of gratuities, and it has gone well. So, there is the possibility, but I think that, as a society, we have to make a decision as to whether or not we think that people should be paid the lowest amount and it should be people accessing that service who pay higher.

I guess I would point out that not everyone has worked in the service industry. Not everyone tips very well. If you're surviving based on the generosity of the people you serve, then you hope that they have worked in the service industry, in my experience.

One of the other questions that I just wanted to follow up with was about the sick days. How many folks accessed the paid sick leave program? Can we break that down a little bit?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, approximately 1,400 employees have accessed the program. The average number of days paid per employee is 5.04 days — so just over five days.

I will go through some numbers based on some of the different phases that we're in.

As of February 28, 2022, a total of just over 1,400 people — 1,407 people — have received \$1,656,339 in paid sick leave through the rebate created in March 2020 in response to COVID. We don't have to break down each quarter; that is the total. The health care and social services sector, which includes daycares, is the largest user of the program. I think that we can all make those connections. It is at 24.9 percent of the funding to date. The retail trade has been about 23.2 percent of funding to date, and the construction sector is 13.4 percent of funding to date. They are also significant users of the program.

I want to be respectful to the team that pulled these numbers together. To give you a bit of a breakdown, which I find interesting, just in the communities — without getting into the numbers, I will just give you the percentages: 0.4 percent went to Carmacks; 1.1 percent went to Dawson City; 0.8 percent went to Haines Junction; 0.1 percent went to Keno City; 0.5 percent went to Ross River; 1.1 percent went to Watson Lake; and 96.1 percent was used in Whitehorse. Again, that is from that total, which is a total allocated of \$1,656,339.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. I will just repeat one part that I think was important, especially for anyone who is concerned about what paid sick leave might look like. Knowing that there is a maximum amount of 10 days that an employee could access and understanding that the average was 5.04 days — so that's an indication that, although people could have accessed more, they were taking what they needed. That has been my experience. I owned a coffee shop. I had people who were off sick when they were sick, but they were there the rest of the time.

With that, I look forward to general debate in Committee of the Whole on the 2022-23 budget. I thank the officials for the help in deciphering these programs. They can look forward to a letter coming through the minister just so I can see those in writing. I thank the officials for their time today.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you to the members opposite. I just want to again take an opportunity to truly thank the folks who are with me today, our Deputy Minister, Mr. Ferbey, our director of Finance, Ms. Fricke, and all the individuals who have been supporting both of them. We have asked a

tremendous amount from individuals. I think you can see by the detail today that they have done an exceptional job from start to finish, as we went through the last two years. I truly feel what an opportunity and honour it is to be able to work with a group of people who did the work that they undertook.

I just want to touch on one point to the House. What becomes difficult when you're building public policy is that there is not a lot of room for error. When it does occur, because of the arena that we work in, it tends to be highlighted immensely. It becomes something that is political. All of us do it.

The reason that we were successful was because we took risk, and that's where we were out in front of the rest of the provinces and territories — by taking that risk.

I have to say that I think that the House has been very — opposition parties have been very respectful and have given some space on this, because they know that it moves quickly. I think, just to the overall public service, when we can give that room, it really does lead to creativity and innovation, and you can move more quickly than governments normally do. I think it has showed, having the public servants who have had that strength to go for it, and also the confidence in their own colleagues has led to some very good work and programs that were rolled out.

It's not always the case, and so it's really — as much as it was difficult for all Yukoners, one of the bright spots was to watch people be able to work so quickly and so effectively and in turn really support an economy and keep us in a very strong position moving forward.

Again, thank you so much to both of you and to the rest of your team for doing incredible work.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines of Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member of Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**  
**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$4,477,000 agreed to**  
**On Capital Expenditures**  
**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$4,477,000 agreed to**  
**Department of Economic Development agreed to**

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

**Executive Council Office**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am pleased to introduce the supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office for the fiscal year 2021-22. Today I am joined by my Deputy Minister of the Executive Council Office, Stephen Mills, and by Assistant Deputy Minister for Intergovernmental Relations, Kate Durrand. Thank you both for being here.

The Executive Council Office, as you know, is a central agency within the government. It is responsible for providing leadership and guidance to the other departments and other agencies as well. The department shares expertise and information — helping to build capacity — and also to ensure coordination right across the organization to support effective public governance. The department also leads the government's efforts toward reconciliation and is at the forefront of our government's commitment to improve the relationship with Yukon First Nations.

As well as this work, the Executive Council Office has been working very closely with the Department of Health and Social Services, since the COVID-19 pandemic started, to provide Yukoners with the most up-to-date public health information as quickly as possible.

I will provide folks with an overview of two items in our supplementary budget estimates for 2021-22. First in the department, our commitment to strong relationships with the First Nations, and this is in ECO under Aboriginal Relations. We are working with First Nations to address the harms caused by a long history of inequality and discrimination and to achieve meaningful changes and tangible benefits for all Yukoners through a range of environmental, economic, and social projects.

The ongoing level of collaboration that goes on between the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nation governments, through initiatives like the Yukon Forum, is unprecedented. The 2021-22 supplementary budget includes an increase of \$1,145,000 for the Aboriginal Relations division. This funding is to support consultation and engagement,

bilateral negotiations, and also the implementation of final self-government agreements.

On June 30, 2021, our government joined the Daylu Dena Council and the Liard First Nation for the demolition of the Lower Post residential school. The ceremonial demolition was a very important step on our path forward for reconciliation. This marked the beginning of our investigations of all former residential school grounds in the Yukon. This increased budget will help Daylu Dena Council to provide a portion of the demolition ceremony costs for the former residential school of Lower Post.

The additional budget will also support a Yukon Forum commitment to fund a committee to identify and locate burial sites associated with residential schools. This transfer to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation is to set up the committee that will focus on the Carcross residential school site. The transfer is part of a multi-year agreement of \$5.6 million cost-shared between the Government of Canada and Government of Yukon. We want to continue to learn from the past to build a stronger and healthier future on a government-to-government level, as well as for every Yukon resident.

Throughout the pandemic, I, along with the Yukon chief medical officer of health and the Minister of Health and Social Services, have been regularly updating Yukoners via Facebook livestreams on the public health situation, so additional funding here will help to support the costs of these public briefings, news conferences, and additional COVID-19 services.

Recently, we announced the plan to lift all remaining COVID-19 health measures in the territory if health indicators continue to trend in the right direction, so a little bit of history and forward-looking thinking there.

On March 4, 2022, there were no longer limits on the size of gatherings, events, or capacity at venues. Bars and restaurants were able to return to normal operations. As of March 18, the Government of Yukon removed the requirement to wear masks and the requirement to show proof of vaccination to access designated sites. On April 4, our government will be lifting the vaccine requirements for most employees.

We are moving safely in a promising direction. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. We still need to be prepared and budget accordingly for COVID-19 situations if they worsen or if we're faced with another public health crisis, for that matter. Throughout the pandemic, we've taken a lot of measures and a measured approach to protect the health and safety of all Yukoners. This funding will support the territory's continuing recovery and associated expenses for research and supports to address the widespread impacts of COVID-19 in the territory.

We want to evaluate Yukon's COVID-19 pandemic response and continue to help keep Yukoners safe and ultimately thriving.

With that, I look forward to answering any questions that the members opposite have about the 2021-22 supplementary budget for the Executive Council Office.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the Premier's opening remarks there. I won't have many questions in the supplementary and

will instead reserve the bulk of my questions and comments with regard to the Executive Council Office to the mains.

Today, though, I would very briefly like to ask the Premier one question, just because it came up to me recently. I would like the Premier to explain what the government's current position is with regard to the duty to consult unsettled First Nations in regard to asserted rights that exist within the traditional territory of a First Nation with a final agreement and self-government agreement.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I just want to clarify. Was he talking about First Nations with self-government agreements or the ones without? As we know, there is a different federal act that would pertain — but just clarifying that. My official and I had two different opinions on what he was asking about.

**Mr. Dixon:** What I'm seeking is the government's position with regard to the duty to consult unsettled First Nations with asserted aboriginal rights that exist within the traditional territory of a settled First Nation.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** So, again, it does get a little bit more complicated when we're talking about First Nations that are either transboundary or ones that have not signed on to the *Umbrella Final Agreement* when it comes to consultation. A good example would be the Liard First Nation. We've been working together to identify and to advance shared interests and priorities, including capacity development, consultation, hunting — also a renewed government-to-government relationship. Interestingly enough, conversations with Kaska about self-determination have been advancing as well.

So, when it comes to lands that are important, with overlap with First Nations that are drawing down on self-government agreements through that process, we absolutely have a duty to consult with the First Nations that are in an overlap. We will continue to go down that path.

There are also issues with the British Columbia-based Kaska initiatives and issues. There will be a little different lens there, more so based upon some of the jurisdictional problems or issues that would be coming from them living in a line that we, the colonial government, see in British Columbia compared to Yukon. But we are absolutely committed to advancing the reconciliation of all Kaska-based bearing groups, and we will continue to engage directly with each of these First Nations on a case-by-case basis, whether it be the Dease River First Nation — it would be an example of a rights-bearing group from BC — or when it came to Liard First Nation, Ross River Dena Council, or even White River, for example.

Again, this question could go into a whole bunch of different areas. Maybe I'll ask the member opposite for something more specific as far as a particular thing that we're negotiating on.

We could talk about the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, as well, which is a conversation that is happening right across the country for First Nations that are still on the *Indian Act*. Knowing that we are continuing to support Canada's commitments to that declaration — the final and self-government agreements of Yukon and 11 First Nations there — there are a lot of obligations that the federal government needs to communicate, let's say, when it comes to

ensuring that the sanctity of the Canadian, constitutionally protected UFA and how that exists in the context of this international group's commitments and also the federal government's commitments there.

I am not sure what particular example the member opposite would be wanting more information on, but if he could ask about a specific example, I could talk about what we have done to date with consultation.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office?

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order No. 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,182,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

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

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,182,000 agreed to*

*Executive Council Office agreed to*

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

**Department of Education**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to rise today to speak to Bill No. 203, Vote 3, in Committee of the Whole. I am very pleased to rise in the House to talk about the supplementary budget and the *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

In 2021, we continued to face unexpected challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic, but we're fortunate to live in such a

resilient and diverse community. Despite these ongoing challenges, much important work has been completed over the last year. This supplementary budget reflects how the department is working to achieve many of its key priorities, including continuing to support learners through the COVID-19 pandemic, expanding universal childcare, and responding to the review of inclusive and special education. The budget also notes our continued work to support reconciliation and signifies our commitment to investments 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 \$3.163 million in operation and maintenance expenditures and a decrease of \$301,000 in capital expenditures. Thank you very much for the opportunity, of course, to rise and speak about the important work of this department and the resources that are needed to support learners at all ages.

I will first start by speaking a little bit about the capital budget — 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.

In respect of these capital projects, I will provide a bit more detail. The Government of Yukon and the Kluane First Nation are taking next steps 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 Kluane First Nation. Due to delays from COVID-19, there is a budget surplus this period of \$85,000. Design work is definitely well underway, and we're engaging with the community on design options, and these are expected to be finalized this spring.

We're pleased, of course, that Kluane First Nation has now identified a preferred site for the school and that our officials continue to work together to move this project forward. There is a budget decrease of \$920,000 in the Selkirk parking lot project, primarily due to project delays. This 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 stamped concrete at the Lewes Boulevard bus drop-off at CSSC Mercier. The net impact on these internal transfers on the overall budget is zero.

Operation and maintenance in terms of just general — there is a total increase of \$3.163 million in operation and maintenance. The primary driver of the increase in O&M is the 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, including yearly salary increases totalling 5.35 percent over three years for teachers, 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 such a key role in supporting students to be successful at school. They have done an incredible job adapting and being flexible during the pandemic. I certainly hold my hands up to all of the educators and definitely take the opportunity every chance I have to tell them this and to express that on behalf of Yukoners — the incredible job that they have done. The collective agreement increases in this 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 together, with a view of supporting Yukon educators and students. These increases amount to \$1.56 million for Schools and Student Services and \$44,000 for First Nation Initiatives. We are glad to have finalized this agreement to continue to support school staff in the essential work they are doing to continue learning and keeping 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 CFS due to increased enrolment and school operational costs.

Another major driver in the O&M budget increase that we're asking for is a universal childcare program. The new universal childcare program focuses on key areas of affordability, accessibility, and quality. Yukon's universal early learning and childcare program is designed to provide rich early learning experiences and environments and views children as capable and 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, for the program costs, we are seeking an increase of \$1.3 million. Investing in early childhood 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 inching up on the one-year anniversary, and we are really proud of the work that has been done. 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 parent fees, reduces operational and administrative expenses, and supports program needs; and childcare operational funding — formerly the direct operating grant — which supports high-quality learning environments, increases wages of early childhood educators, and supports operational costs.

Starting on April 1, 2021, Yukon families began automatically saving up to \$700 per month per child who are registered full time in participating licensed childcare programs. These savings are also provided on a pro-rated basis for children attending programs that are part time. The Yukon early learning childcare funding program helps to support the reduction of parent 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 transitioned to universal childcare, providing a total of 1,979 spaces for children. This investment in high-quality early learning and childcare is paying off, of course. We are very proud of this work, and this increase in budget is due to more parents choosing to access this program. That is good news for families and for young Yukoners who have access to quality learning environments for critical early years.

I would like to close by acknowledging the tremendous work that the Department of Education and our partners have done to support all Yukoners and Yukon communities this fiscal year, despite the continuous challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The department has been steadfast in its work to make meaningful changes for learners and families across the learning continuum. This will improve outcomes and help us all to not only recover from the pandemic, but thrive in doing so.

I would like to thank the staff of the Early Learning and Child Care unit and all of the operators of the early learning and daycare programs in Yukon for your combined effort to ensure that quality, affordable early learning environments remain open and available in Yukon to Yukon families and to Yukon communities; also, the staff of the Schools and Student Services branch, whether they are based in K to 12 schools or in the central administration building, for your commitment to the calls for action stemming from the review of inclusive and special education, while continuing to keep the schools open and available to students across the territory; also, the staff of the First Nation Initiatives branch for their work to renew and enhance partnerships through education agreements with Yukon First Nation governments that solidify our joint commitments to support the educational success of Yukon First Nation learners of all ages; and also, the staff of the Policy and Partnerships branch, who collaborated with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the First Nation Education Directorate to establish the Yukon First Nation School Board. This is a significant milestone that will address long-standing barriers and create new opportunities to realize success for Yukon First Nation students and all Yukon students.

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation for the work and dedication of our many partners in education and gratitude to the acting chief medical officer of health and her staff for their tireless efforts to help us keep Yukon learning environments safe for staff and students. As the world around us 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.

I would like to welcome Deputy Minister Nicole Morgan and director of Finance, Andrea McIntyre, to the Legislature today to assist in this debate. I will now end my opening comments and look forward to the discussion today. Thank you.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for her opening remarks and join her in welcoming her officials to the Legislature here today. Like many of my colleagues, the majority of my questions will be during the debate on the 2022-23 mains.

However, I do have a handful of questions for the minister with respect to the supplementary estimates that are before us here.

I would like to thank the officials as well for the briefing documents that they provided to us with respect to this. They were very easy to read, go through, and use to help to develop some questions.

I want the minister to take a look at the COVID-19 response that's in the supplementary estimates here. Obviously, voted to date was \$3.617 million and then the addition of \$250,000 in this budget — I understand that's for enhanced cleaning in daycares. I'm just hoping that the minister can give us a bit of an update.

When you look at the vote by allotment for the COVID-19 response, there is \$1.407 million for personnel. I'm wondering if the minister can provide us with a breakdown of that line item — if the personnel were teachers, paraprofessionals, or centralized at the department — and if she could provide some sort of a breakdown of that.

Then I'm also curious if the federal support dollars that were announced, I think, in the fall of 2020 — if that money has run out and if this is the last budget year that we will see that support from the federal government.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm happy to rise to speak about the funding that's in the supplementary budget around the enhancements and the additional resources that were needed for our COVID-19 response. Again, I will just start by saying a thank you to the chief medical officer of health for working so closely with us during the pandemic — and continues to work with us on an ongoing basis as we move into this next stage.

In terms of the breakdown of the additional resources, there were an extra 23 teachers and there are an extra eight custodians who make up part of that additional amount that the member is asking about.

**Mr. Kent:** The other part of that question was if the federal dollars have run out — those federal support dollars that were announced, I believe, going back to the fall of 2020 — and if those have been expended.

Then, with the numbers that the minister gave — 23 teachers and eight custodians — is she able to provide a breakdown of which schools they were deployed to? Is there a Whitehorse breakdown as opposed to how many were sent to community schools?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** In terms of the previous question around the federal dollars, yes, those dollars have now run out. We actually had approximately \$4.2 million for the safe return to school fund, and we have spent \$4,497,000, which makes up our additional request here today.

In terms of a breakdown of the additional resources, we will bring a return back with the breakdown. I do not have all of those details with me right now, but I will bring those back to the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that commitment. I will look forward to getting that breakdown. Of course, the minister knows that today was — for many if not all Yukon students — the first day back after the March break. I believe that on Tuesday of last week, there was a letter sent to parents, guardians, and staff with respect to continued mask use.

I'll just quote briefly from that letter. It says — and I'll quote: "For the time being, mask use requirements will remain in place. Students and staff must continue to wear masks in all indoor school settings, including classrooms, hallways and on school buses. Maintaining mask use requirements in schools will allow the Chief Medical Officer of Health to monitor the impact of returning to school on COVID-19 cases in the territory before considering easing this measure."

So, as the minister knows and as the Premier, I believe, said during ECO debate today, the mandated mask usage came off on Friday of this week for designated spaces, I think it's called, or public areas — with some exceptions, of course, and hospitals and continuing care facilities being some.

What parents who have reached out to me over the past week or so have been wondering is — we recognize that the government says that they are making the decisions based on science. What is the chief medical officer of health looking for in order to consider easing this measure in the classrooms?

We have heard a number of concerns from parents about other health impacts from wearing masks for their kids and developmental impacts. So, again, that's the question for the minister.

What exactly are she and her cabinet colleagues looking for from the chief medical officer of health to ease this measure? Does she have any idea of a timeline for reviewing it or perhaps coming forward with an announcement about it?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think I will start by just talking about our commitment to ensuring students are successful at school during the pandemic, while also ensuring that the health and safety of students and families — ensuring their health and safety have been considered as one of our top priorities.

In terms of a little bit of background, folks know that, on March 2, our government announced the path to ease COVID-19 restrictions over the next coming weeks from there, and that is where we are today. As we anticipated back on March 2 or thought toward this time that we're in now, we talked about watching the trend and ensuring that it's going in the right direction, which it is, which is why we did lift the restrictions and the state of emergency.

We have always been working closely, since the beginning, with the chief medical officer of health to always reassess and update the health and safety in our schools and to reflect them in our guidelines. When we went into a state of emergency — back into the state of emergency in November, we added additional guidelines for all schools. It included masking; it included halting all interschool sports and gatherings.

In terms of the mask use requirements, based on the recommendation from the chief medical officer of health — has asked us to keep these requirements in place and have students continue to wear masks in indoor settings, including classrooms, hallways, and school buses. Maintaining this is a precautionary measure that the chief medical officer has recommended to us.

We will continue to monitor children as they return to school from a two-week period of being away and not necessarily in a controlled setting, as we have for our schools.

While mask use remains in place for the time being, we are encouraged that we will be able to ease public health measures in our schools soon. This week, as you have indicated, schools returned, and we continued on with the mask use. We have lifted the guidelines and changed them to allow for a return to interschool activities so that students can participate in sports and recreation events — including arts, drama, and other activities — with students from other schools.

We will continue working with the chief medical officer around the mask-use aspect of this. If the COVID-19 situation continues where we are currently, starting on April 19, after the Easter weekend, schools will be able to return to out-of-territory field trips. I think that, in my answer to you today — I mean, I can bring back more detailed information from the chief medical officer of health if you wish, but I believe — we have been working with the chief medical officer and YCDC all through the pandemic and continue to monitor with our system of surveillance, which is a public health way of monitoring schools, to see if there are any indications of higher percentages of students being away due to sickness. These are all measures that we have had in place. Folks are well-practised in it, and we will continue monitoring that on a daily basis, which is what is happening now, to determine impacts and patterns of student absenteeism.

If the member wishes, I can bring back more detailed information from the chief medical officer of health, but I think that, given my answer today, it is very much precautionary at this point.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that. I think that would be helpful if she was able to bring back some additional information from the chief medical officer of health, because this letter that went out last week left a lot of parents sort of wondering what the metrics are when it comes to monitoring the impact of returning to school on COVID-19 cases. What exactly are the chief medical officer of health and the Cabinet looking for when it comes to active cases or new cases or the test positivity rates? I think that the individuals who have reached out to me who have these concerns would appreciate that from the chief medical officer of health. Then, if there are any dates or timelines that she could give with respect — because, again, in that letter, it says — and I quote: “While mask use remains in place for the time being...”, and I will close the quote there. It is part of the broader letter, but I think that people are trying to get a sense for what “the time being” is and how long this may be in place and what metrics the CMOH is looking for when considering easing this measure.

Just a couple more questions, Madam Chair, for the minister before I turn it over to my colleague. It was earlier this calendar year that the minister announced that the 10 teaching positions at the Department of Education — I think they are itinerant teachers — who are deployed to schools that have additional needs would now be deployed to schools with primarily First Nation students. Has that work started, or are we expecting that this fall? And if so, have those 10 teaching positions been deployed to those schools or those First Nation programs that require them?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I’ll just go back a little bit on this — not too far back. I just wanted to indicate that this certainly has — this recommendation came to me from some of the work that’s happening around inclusive and special education. This new 2022-23 reconciliation staffing, from the staffing allocation, is from the *Staffing Allocation Handbook*. For the 2022-23 school year, achievement equity has been placed by reconciliation staffing, as recommended by the community of inquiry, stemming from the review of inclusive and special education.

Reconciliation staffing is a small step to recognize the systemic inequities and colonialist practices that have negatively impacted Yukon First Nation and other indigenous students. It reallocates the 10 FTEs of achievement equity staffing to recognize schools based on two factors: those that have significantly above average populations of Yukon First Nation or other indigenous students and those schools where multiple First Nations are represented.

This was, again, an early recommendation from one of the communities of inquiry. This indicates our commitment to this process. It will be in place for the 2022-23 year.

**Mr. Kent:** I will perhaps have some more questions for the minister when we get into the main estimates for 2022-23.

Just a couple more questions here. With respect to the First Nation School Board and the funding, obviously the referendums happened at the end of January, and there were a number of schools that have decided to join the governance model of the First Nation School Board. I’m curious if the minister is able to share the status of negotiations around funding.

Is it going to be a similar funding model to what CSFY currently has in place? Is it a per capita student funding arrangement? Is there anything that the minister can share?

I’m sure negotiations are probably ongoing at this point, but anything the minister can share would be helpful.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I believe this is the first time that I’m able to rise to really speak about the First Nation School Board in a debate this Sitting. I want to just hold my hands up to all of the work that has been done. I think it definitely started a long time ago — almost 50 years ago. Our government — when we came into governance, the previous Minister of Education worked closely with Yukon First Nations to look at a number of options. Ultimately, it was decided to build a framework for the First Nation School Board, which is all found within the act. Yes, it is the way that the francophone school board is structured under the act. We have not changed anything within the *Education Act* to accommodate this framework agreement. On January 27, seven school communities, including eight schools, voted in favour of being governed by the First Nation School Board starting in the 2022-23 school year.

Moving forward with the school board is a historic step where Yukon First Nations and their citizens reclaim greater responsibility for the administration and management of education programs for students and their communities.

I was very honoured to stand with chiefs on February 14 to celebrate this milestone on the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Together*

*Today for Our Children Tomorrow.* As the Minister of Education, I am continuing to collaborate with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the First Nation School Board Interim Governance Committee in the exercise of my oversight authorities as we go forward.

I will also, of course, continue to work on a government-to-government basis with individual First Nations on their educational priorities for their citizens. The Department of Education will continue to work collaboratively with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the technicians around the establishment of the First Nation School Board. I have agreed to establish the Interim Governance Committee to move forward with governance and funding arrangements. The committee includes the following members, who bring a wide variety of experiences and perspectives on Yukon education: Dr. Alyce Johnson, Erin Pauls, Jocelyn Joe-Strack, Mark Wedge, and Melanie Bennett.

Again, the First Nation School Board trustee elections will happen in November 2022 — I'm really looking forward to that — but in the interim, it was necessary to put an interim body in place to do a tremendous amount of work in a very short period of time to be ready by August 2022 to have the schools that have ratified to be under the First Nation School Board ready to do just that. We have a team of technicians working very closely with the interim governance. Funding is, of course, a high priority.

One of the things that I will say, of course, is that, like the francophone school board, the staff in all First Nation School Board schools will remain Yukon government employees and remain under the collective agreement. School infrastructure will remain under the responsibility of Yukon government and the responsibility specifically of Highways and Public Works to maintain, as we do now with all schools.

I will perhaps stop there. There are a lot of details and a very aggressive action plan that is underway right now, which is why it was necessary to put in place an interim governance body to be able to bring the work up sooner, rather than waiting into several months after the ratification. So, we're very happy to be working collaboratively and pretty much in lockstep with the Chiefs Committee on Education on how to make this First Nation School Board a reality.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that response. As I said, I will have more questions when we get into the main estimates. I thank the officials for attending here today, and I will turn it over to my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Chair, and I just have very few questions in the supplementary budget because I have lots of questions when we reach the mains.

One of the things that was included in some of the changes was a decrease of \$920,000 to the Selkirk parking lot. There was lots of discussion — including motions by me ahead of the last territorial election about postponing any decision around the Selkirk Street parking lot — around real concerns that families actually had highlighted. If the minister can let me know the status of that engagement or consultation process, I would appreciate it.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I thank you for the question regarding the Selkirk parking lot. As I had stated in my opening remarks, the \$920,000 in the Selkirk parking lot project — there are a number of reasons for the delay and I will get into that. But the money has been re-profiled, which is a common type of practice, because we do have a number of needs with infrastructure throughout all of our school communities.

So, \$504,000 was re-profiled from this to the Hidden Valley modular classroom and Selkirk Elementary School and \$200,000 to another project at CSSC Mercier on the concrete bus drop-off.

In terms of the project itself, a design for the parking lot reallocation was shared with the school community. However, after considerable — and not all positive — feedback, the department decided to re-engage with the community on the overall scope and design of the project. Education staff continue to engage with the school administration and with the school council to understand their needs. I have met with the school once already and will be meeting with them tonight to have further discussion about this and other areas of interest.

This is definitely a priority project for the Selkirk school council and the school community. It is one that I have heard about since taking on the position, and it is really a high priority for us to get the project done. I know that Highways and Public Works is the lead on this in terms of our government. However, we are also working with the City of Whitehorse as a partner in completing this project.

When you talk about complexities, our Highways and Public Works department is also working on different projects within that area, and there are a lot of complicated types of issues there — one of them being the storm sewer and connection with the Gadzoosdaa parking lot. There are a number of factors within that educational area, and we are working closely with the school community to ensure that we are getting it right and that we are investing in a project that will meet the needs of that community.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. I appreciate the comment that some people were unhappy with it, but it came straight from the school council at the time — their concerns. So, I look forward to hearing how that develops. I will put in a pitch that, based on our climate emergency, it is important to consider active transportation and the ability for students to safely reach their school, and I look forward to hearing more about that.

Madam Chair, we know that we have the main votes coming forward, and I have no additional questions for right now and look forward to further debate under the mains. I thank the officials for being here today.

**Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried**

**Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 3, Department of Education, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,063,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$301,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,762,000 agreed to**

**Department of Education agreed to**

**Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

**Department of Health and Social Services**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am very pleased to rise this afternoon to discuss the 2021-22 supplementary budget for the Department of Health and Social Services.

The first thing I would like to do is to welcome Deputy Minister Michael Hale, who has joined me here today, and thank him for his attendance and support during this process.

I would also like to note thanks to the department staff and officials who worked diligently to ensure that we have a budget that supports all Yukoners.

We have an opportunity here today to note that the supplemental budget with respect to Health and Social Services relates almost entirely, or entirely, to COVID-19 and our response. The COVID-19 response O&M budget second supplementary for 2021 would total, and does total, \$29,973,000. This is an increase of \$5 million over the 2021-22 main estimates that have been voted to date for the COVID-19 response.

The recoveries, which are critically important to Yukoners, related to the COVID-19 total and bring a total budget of

\$16,208,000 in total recoveries. We fully expect that the COVID-19-related costs will decrease in 2022-23, and let's hope that is sooner than later.

The \$29,973,000 for the COVID-19 response for 2021-22 is aligned with and guided by the document *Forging Ahead: The Yukon's Continuing Response to COVID-19*. The *Forging Ahead* goals are to protect vulnerable populations and to enhance the well-being of Yukoners.

In addition, I would like to note that vaccinations have been, and continue to be, our best defence during this pandemic. Vaccines are safe and effective. The opportunity to reinforce that for Yukoners is critical.

While the demand for vaccines is now slowing, our territory-wide vaccination efforts do continue, and we continue providing booster vaccinations to those Yukoners who received their second doses six months ago or longer. We will continue to provide first and second dose vaccines to all Yukoners ages five and above.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Deputy Chair, 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 Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole?

**Chair's report**

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, 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 document was filed March 18, 2022:**

35-1-52

Recommendations on climate action, letter re (dated March 8, 2022) from Sandy Silver, Premier, to Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change panelists (Tredger)