



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 7

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, May 20, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.

SPECIAL SITTING

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2021 Special Sitting

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

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, May 20, 2021 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 38, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is identical to Motion No. 30, which was adopted by the House yesterday, May 19, 2021.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to invite to the Assembly today for our tribute on Asian Heritage Month: first of all, Lillian Nakamura Maguire and Charlotte Hrenchuk from the Hidden Histories Societies Yukon; Alfred Au from the Chinese Canadian Society; as well as Jocelyn Curteanu, city councillor for the City of Whitehorse.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome special guests here today for the tabling of the Yukon Child Care Board annual report: Amy Ryder, who is the chair of the Yukon Child Care Board, and Sophie Partridge, the administrative assistant for the Yukon Child Care Board. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Asian Heritage Month

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Asian Heritage Month.

Since 2001, Canadians have celebrated the achievements and contributions of Asian Canadians during the month of May.

This year's theme, "Recognition, Resilience, and Resolve", recognizes the diverse experiences of Canadians of Asian descent and calls for an end to the discrimination that many still face.

I understand the social and legal discrimination that so many have faced, across Canada and here in the Yukon.

As a councillor with the City of Whitehorse, I had the honour of working with Lillian Nakamura Maguire, who is here with us today, and Heather MacFadgen, who developed the first anti-racism bylaw north of 60. I have to say that it was accomplished because of the guidance of Lillian and her persistence and years of work until that point. Credit is due to Lillian's work.

It is important that we speak out against anti-racial sentiment as it has no place here in the Yukon. That work was then carried on by Jocelyn Curteanu, who is here with us today. In the next term of city council, that work was taken on and was implemented by Jocelyn, and now we are seeing in the paper this week that there are calls. It was almost a decade ago, but it seems just like yesterday. Now that important work is coming back, and we are seeing the city looking to bring that work back.

I want to recognize the resilience of the Asian communities in Yukon today — strong families and strong connections.

I would like to read a powerful poem that was written by Asian Canadian artist Christopher Tse, titled the PSA *Eyes Open*, which was produced for Asian Heritage Month. This poem has really been spread across the country. My colleague from the NDP will finish it off.

We both prepared a bit on this, and so I'll read you the first part of the poem:

We have never been a loud people
Our elders always taught us that actions speak louder than words so we learn to keep our heads down, keep our grades up, keep our kin close, keep our mouths shut.

I wonder?

What is does to a people when they stay quiet for so long, do they forget their voice?

The sound of their stories? The resilience of language?

When you are no longer in your Mother Land, does your mother tongue still sing of home?

What work songs lifted our spirits as we built the railroad?

What prayers did we whisper as they sent us to camps in the mountains to meditate on all the ways we don't belong to this country?

So we stayed quiet.

As they burned our Chinatowns down and spit on our grandmas at bus stops, we stayed quiet.

As they laughed in our faces and told us, go back where we came from but they've mistaken our silence ... for compliance.

Looked on our meekness, as weakness.

See we are not the submissive stereotype that's been depicted on silence, on us.

They've gotten it twisted.

Silence is golden.

As are we.

A gradient of yellow to brown, every Korean Town and Little Saigon – an act of defiance.

Every hunchback elder – a humble giant.

Silence is grace in the triumph. Is peace in the riot?

Silence is bold.

A force.

It is the brewing calm before the coming storm, and now the sky is splitting open and the rage is pouring forth.

So this is for, every kid who's tried to pull their nose bridge to make it taller, everytime they mocked our eyes are smaller.

This is for our elder — both alive and remembered.

For their lessons – the tough and the tender.

For our full names – past and present.

May they be pronounced. May they be respected.

For every chink in the national fabric, every nip in the winter wind of prairie towns and northern hamlets, coast to coast on stolen land.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: [*Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable.*]

I am pleased and proud to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Asian Heritage Month. Let us recognize and celebrate the different cultures that make up Yukon's rich cultural fabric.

Asian Heritage Month is an opportunity for all Canadians to learn more about the many achievements and contributions of Canadians of Asian descent who, throughout our history, have done so much to make Canada the amazing country we share today.

I would like to thank the Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon for hosting a screening of the film *Tsumugu*, or *Weaving our Stories*, last night in honour of Asian Heritage Month. It was a collection of language and cultural stories meant to be passed along to the next generation, and it was absolutely beautiful. I encourage you to check out this short film, which is available on YouTube.

I was happy to take part in the panel discussions and to share some of the history of the Canadian Filipino Association — how we came to be and how we celebrate our culture here in the Yukon. We spoke about some very important topics that can be felt among all Asian cultures. We spoke about the importance of standing up to Asian racism and actively working to end discrimination. We spoke of challenges facing ethnocultural minorities in Yukon. One such challenge is the continuation of our languages.

[*Member spoke in Tagalog. Text unavailable.*]

We must make a point of speaking our native languages at home with our children, as many find that English may be easier. It is important to ensure that future generations can carry on the language, in addition to culture and tradition.

In past years, we have been able to hold large multicultural celebrations to share language, culture, and traditions with all Yukoners.

Zoom is not the same, and we look forward to the day when we can come together once again to celebrate in food, dancing, drumming, singing, and more. We look forward to once again being able to gather, eat, laugh, and dance and share the beauty of all of our cultures with one another again.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Asian Heritage Month. We, in Canada, are not immune to racism or hateful acts. In the last year, there has been an ugly rise in Asian hate.

Asian Heritage Month has never been more important than it is right now. This year's theme is "Recognition, Resilience, and Resolve". It speaks to the discrimination that people of Asian descent in Canada have experienced, ranging from subtle biases to overt violence. It honours their contributions, their diverse stories and experiences, and the ways they have persevered through adversity. It is also a call to action. It asks all Canadians to come together to fight anti-Asian racism and discrimination.

We need to learn more about the many triumphs and contributions of Canadians of Asian descent. We also need to learn more about our own biases and prejudices, and we need to turn that understanding into actions that celebrate and make our country safer for our Asian communities.

It was very exciting last week to watch the video that my colleague mentioned, *Eyes Open*, go viral. It's a powerful video, and I really encourage everyone to watch it.

I would like to finish off the end of it here:

We are here

We've been here

From take out joints and internment camps

To internships and graduation caps, we are strong, we have pride, we fight, we fall, we rise and to the ones who say we don't belong? It's them who should open their eyes.

Applause

In recognition of Vadzaih Choo Drin, Caribou Days

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise to pay tribute to Vadzaih Choo Drin, which translates as "Big Caribou Days" — and I apologize for any mispronunciation that may have just occurred. This annual festival in Old Crow happens over the May long weekend, with festivities honouring the connection between the Vuntut Gwitchin people and the Porcupine caribou herd. This great creature is foundational to the culture and way of living for the Vuntut Gwitchin every day of the year, since time immemorial.

Caribou Days began just over 20 years ago to coincide with the herd's return to their summer calving grounds. Unfortunately, the early months of the pandemic last year forced the cancellation of the 20th anniversary festival. However, we are happy to see it back this year, even if it is with

a slightly reduced size and capacity. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it is open only to Old Crow residents, Vuntut Gwitchin citizens living in the Yukon, and invited guests, but even with the smaller community-focused gathering, I am certain that it will be a memorable weekend.

There are still lots of activities, like food preparation, feasts, a craft sale, an antler-decorating competition, jigging, and, I am quite sure, a lot of fiddle music. That sounds indeed like a great time.

It is my sincere hope that others will be able to attend, once again, next year to celebrate this majestic herd and its unbreakable connection with the Vuntut Gwitchin people.

I would also like to take this special opportunity to confirm our government's commitment to the protection of the Porcupine caribou herd's sacred and sensitive calving ground on the Alaskan coastal plain. To the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation community, but particularly the elders, my sincere gratitude for sharing your priceless traditional knowledge and wisdom.

Mr. Speaker, I — as so many others in Yukon — admire their timeless relationship with the Porcupine caribou herd. Indeed, I look forward to the opportunity to travel to Old Crow in the future.

I would like to end with a comment that I recently noted from an Old Crow youth: "Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation people live in the northern part of the Yukon. We live our lives much like the caribou. Caribou is our main source of food. Therefore, if we need healthy caribou, we need to take care of the land. We take care of the land. Caribou takes care of us."

As the Minister of Environment, this quote serves to remind me of my duties and responsibilities, not only toward Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation persons but also to all Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party to pay tribute to Vuntut Gwitchin's 20th annual May long weekend Vadzaih Choo Drin celebration, which translates into "Big Caribou Days".

This community celebration began in the year 2000 to honour the annual spring migration of the Porcupine caribou herd and the culture of Vuntut Gwitchin. Each spring the Porcupine caribou herd journeys to their calving grounds in the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, which is also recognized by the Gwich'in Nation as "Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit" which translates into "the sacred place where life begins".

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge provides pristine wilderness, rich with the freshest waters, the greenest pastures, and vast open lands for animals and birds from all over the world to come and have their young. Since time immemorial, the Gwitchin have relied on the Porcupine caribou herd to sustain our culture and traditional way of life, which shapes our spiritual connection to our homelands and our existence in the world.

The migratory route of the Porcupine caribou herd continues to be deeply embedded across the traditional

territories of the Gwich'in Nation, which spans from the Northwest Territories, Yukon to Alaska.

The Porcupine caribou herd also carries a vital role in the rights of passage for the Gwitchin. It is from the caribou that young girls are taught how to be caretakers, raise their children, and provide for their families as they learn, from a very young age, how to prepare a variety of food and clothing. It is also from the Porcupine caribou that young boys are taught how to provide for the community and to be land stewards as they form their lifelong relationship with the Porcupine caribou herd.

The Porcupine caribou are a part of our lifeline from the time we are in our mother's womb until long after we are gone. Caribou Days also brings attention to history, advocacy, and educational efforts of the Gwich'in Nation as we continue to be a global voice for permanent protection of the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge from oil and gas development.

In 1988, the Gwich'in gathered in Arctic Village, Alaska, where we were mandated by our elders to be a united voice in opposing any threats of oil and gas development in the coastal plains of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. This responsibility continues to be passed on from the very elderly to the very young. The Gwich'in people continue to stand united to see permanent protection of the birthing grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd to ensure sustainability of our culture and our way of life. The Porcupine caribou herd holds a strong presence in every aspect of the Gwich'in people's existence.

Each spring, the Vuntut Gwitchin remind everyone of the importance of connection and belonging as we celebrate who we are as a people. We wish the community of Old Crow success as they prepare for the celebration happening this weekend.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have for tabling the Yukon Child Care Board annual report 2020-21, which is required under section 4(11) of the *Child Care Act*.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of a detailed list showing all projects and government initiatives that were delayed as a result of the unnecessary snap election.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Montessori School and the Yukon Teachers' Association to establish a pilot project for a publicly funded Montessori program in a Yukon elementary school.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to address traffic issues in Whistle Bend and along Mountainview Drive in light of the upcoming construction of the new Whistle Bend school.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize that democracy matters, and a pandemic should not be used as an excuse to avoid public consultation or democratic oversight.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to appoint a bid committee to begin planning to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games and start planning for the development of necessary infrastructure to accommodate hosting.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to enhance traffic safety along the Alaska Highway in Porter Creek by installing a turning lane in front of Super A and installing pedestrian-activated crosswalks.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with appropriate levels of government to lobby for the Yukon's required access to tidewater via Skagway and Haines, Alaska and Stewart, BC.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support local initiatives and events that promote and recognize one of Yukon's oldest industries — trapping — including but not limited to:

(1) UnFURled, organized by the Yukon Trappers Association and the North Yukon Renewable Resources Council;

(2) the Alsek moose recovery program administered by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Alsek Renewable Resources Council; and

(3) the Dawson Fur Show, organized by the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to recognize the importance of ensuring that community libraries have the necessary resources to operate and pay staff a fair wage by working with community library boards to determine an appropriate increase to their funding.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a Yukon forestry strategy in consultation with Yukon First Nations and appropriate stakeholders to support value-added products for Yukon timber, including biomass energy production.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work together with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and the Yukon Energy Corporation on the protocol agreement regarding relicensing of the Āshèyi Mǎn (Aishihik Lake) generating facility and attempt to reach a mutually agreeable consensus on the proposed future operation of the dam.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to include in-centre hemodialysis when implementing the *Putting People First* recommendations.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to direct the Yukon Housing Corporation to immediately address the issue of bedbug infestations in seniors units that are impacting the health and mental well-being of tenants.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MOTION OF URGENT AND PRESSING NECESSITY NO. 3

(Standing Order 28)

COVID-19 vaccination verification measures — protection of privacy

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services, Minister of Justice, and the Auditor General to ensure that any measures used to verify the vaccination status of people crossing the Yukon border, beginning on May 25, 2021, protect the privacy of individuals and inform the public of how individuals' legal rights are protected by:

(1) immediately consulting with Yukon's Information and Privacy Commissioner on the details of the proposed measures;

(2) publicly releasing the legal and privacy analysis of the proposed measures conducted by the government and an implementation plan that demonstrates how individuals' confidential health information will be protected;

(3) providing information on what training on the protection of personal privacy has been provided to the private contractors staffing the territory's southern border;

(4) providing a detailed plan regarding the management and disposal of any records containing confidential health information; and

(5) providing information on how personal health information will be shared with or received from provinces, territories, and the federal government.

In speaking briefly to why this is a matter of urgency: The government announced new border control measures that are coming into force five days from now on May 25, 2021. We believe this matter is urgent and pressing because it is just days away, yet the government has not released details nor have they properly consulted with privacy experts.

Those measures relate to verifying the vaccination status of Yukoners and other Canadian citizens seeking to enter our territory. While the government has not called this a "vaccine passport", the intention of their proposal is substantively the same as that.

Yesterday, the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, Diane McLeod-McKay, joined other privacy commissioners from across Canada to issue a statement on vaccine passports.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Lake Laberge has brought a motion that he has introduced to the floor of the House, but he has clearly wandered into reasons for support of the motion and not for the reason that it is a pressing and urgent motion. He is to submit to you initially why it is urgent and pressing and you should make a ruling on that. Only then would he be permitted to go into the substance of the matter, which he has clearly wandered into in defence of this motion.

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

Mr. Cathers: I would suggest that the Government House Leader should actually read Standing Order 28. I believe I am fully within the range of that in briefly introducing the substance of the motion and the urgency thereof.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: There is no point of order, but the Member for Lake Laberge must keep his remarks brief.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I will, of course, keep my remarks brief, as you've instructed. The joint statement that was issued yesterday by the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner along with privacy commissioners across the country emphasized that, if a government is proceeding with such an initiative, passports or other similar documents must meet the highest level of privacy protection. That joint statement from privacy commissioners also outlines key issues

that need to be considered and principles that should be followed prior to implementation. It goes on to say, about vaccine passports and similar measures, that they: "... must be developed and implemented in compliance with applicable privacy laws."

The joint statement from Canadian privacy commissioners also specifically mentions the importance of consulting with privacy commissioners on the details of any such proposal prior to implementation. Despite this, the minister did not consult with the privacy commissioner, and yesterday, both she and the Premier were dismissive of the very idea of consulting with that official of this Assembly.

On top of the lack of public consultation, this government is now ignoring the importance of even consulting with privacy experts. May 25 is just five days away, and the government's announcement remains short on details. This has become common with the Liberal-NDP coalition by another name, including their haphazard plan for rent control where details were not announced until less than 24 hours before implementation. Now we are seeing it with respect to this plan to provide access to the private health information of Yukoners.

Speaker: Order, please. I asked the member to keep it short. I will now put the question.

The Member for Lake Laberge, pursuant to Standing Order 28, is requesting unanimous consent to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, the Premier told this House that the government will table rewrites of the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* within 16 months. According to the confidence and supply agreement with the NDP, they will also hold the pen on writing these pieces of legislation. Such massive changes in 16 months seem unrealistic.

So, can the minister tell us what consultation has already taken place on the development of these two pieces of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, our Liberal government is committed to responsible development and management of Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment, respects the rights and traditions of First Nations, and benefits all Yukoners. Mining and mineral exploration remain of central importance to the Yukon's economy and have contributed significantly to the territory's economic performance throughout the pandemic. We are committed to working with governments and industry to develop successor legislation.

What I can say, Mr. Speaker, is that the mineral development strategy came out last month and we will work through the development of that strategy, which will lead us toward successor legislation. We are looking forward to

working with the Yukon, with industry, with other governments, and with Yukoners in how we move from that strategy toward successor legislation.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the confidence and supply agreement that the Liberals have signed with the NDP, in this specific instance, doesn't mention the mineral development strategy. It only mentions that both of these pieces of legislation will be rewritten during the term of this agreement, which of course as we have mentioned will be 16 months.

At the briefing with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, we asked them about the government's commitment to table these pieces of legislation. In that briefing, officials told us that there are no new resources in this year's budget to support the development of these pieces of legislation.

So, can the minister tell us: If there are no resources in this year's budget to begin this work, then how can the Liberals be confident that they will have this legislation tabled within 16 months?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will check back with the department. However, what I just heard was that there were no "new" dollars. We tabled the budget in March. In that budget, we had already put dollars in there in which to work toward successor legislation to follow up from the mineral development strategy and we are looking forward to that work. That work was there in the budget that was tabled originally, and it is there now.

Mr. Speaker, there are many things that are not listed in the agreement with the NDP. For example, type 1 diabetes is not listed, and yet, in this House yesterday, we worked together to come up with saying, "Let's get a strategy." So, there is lots of work that we will do all the time in government and here in the Yukon. One of those pieces is the mineral development strategy, which clearly leads. It begins with a mining MOU with First Nations; it moves on to the mineral development strategy; and then it moves to successor legislation. I'm really happy with that work that's ongoing.

I had a great first meeting with the Yukon Chamber of Mines. Tomorrow, I believe, the Premier and I are heading to the Klondike Placer Miners' Association in Dawson, and we'll continue to work with industry because we believe they are an important partner on this path.

Mr. Kent: Yet the CASA that deals with rewriting these two pieces of legislation does not reference industry whatsoever. It also, as I mentioned, does not reference the mineral development strategy, but clearly there are amendments to the CASA that the minister has in mind already.

I would be curious how much is in this year's budget to rewrite these two pieces of legislation — in the budget that was tabled early in March before the early election was called.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to move on to an industry-specific question, though, which is that the Yukon Chamber of Mines has requested to be at the legislative drafting table for both of these acts. Will the minister grant this request?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, during the election, I heard the members opposite say that they supported successor

legislation, so now I'm curious whether they do or they don't. I look forward to hearing from them whether they do.

What I will say is that we clearly do support successor legislation, and we believe that mining is critical to the Yukon, and it's critical that we get mining right here in the Yukon. That means being environmentally responsible, protecting our social values, working with governments, and building our communities, and that's exactly what successor legislation will lead to.

I would be happy to get the dollar figure for the member opposite about how much has been budgeted. I don't have it here with me today.

What I will say is that we intend to work constructively toward this with industry. I don't believe that they will be at the drafting table — that's not usually the way this works — but what I will say is that we want to hear their concerns, their issues, and their input on how we can develop good successor legislation.

That's what we will do. We will work with them. I don't think that's stepping outside of the agreement that's in place, because I think the agreement is how to work together to build a better Yukon for Yukoners.

Question re: Mineral staking

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, we asked the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources a very simple question, and that was whether or not he supports free-entry staking. Yesterday he didn't have the chance to answer, so I would like to ask him again. Does the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources support free-entry staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just a moment ago, I said that the path is through the mineral development strategy.

I re-read the mineral development strategy this morning, looking at references to free-entry staking, and it says great things in there, and that is where we will work — through the mineral development strategy. We are not trying today — for me to sit there and preclude the work that is coming up with the public — engaging with industry, engaging with governments — about how to get from the mineral development strategy to successor legislation —

I am a little surprised that the members opposite have already grabbed a position from the past and are holding on to it. I look forward to hearing what they think about free-entry staking. What I believe is important is to use the mineral development strategy and to work with Yukoners toward successor legislation.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the opposition has been clear. We support free-entry staking. The question that I am asking the minister is: Does he support free-entry staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, sometimes here in this Legislature, the question is coming as though it is whether I, as a minister — my job as minister, Mr. Speaker, is to help shepherd this process. It is not about my opinion directly; it is about what I will do. So, let me state, directly, that I will support the work from the mineral development strategy, how we will work with industry and other governments, and how we will then develop successor legislation.

As I said today, I read through that strategy to look at what it said about free-entry staking. It talked about making it consistent with our treaties and case law. It talked about using land use planning and about where and where not to have free entry. It talked about the importance of free entry and that a modified free entry would still be important. Those are the things that are in the mineral development strategy.

What I am committing to on the floor of the Legislature is to work with Yukoners to go from the mineral development strategy to successor legislation. I think that is the path that we should take as this territory.

Mr. Dixon: The minister's refusal to answer that question, I think, seems to indicate that he does not support the free-entry staking system. If I am wrong there, I will offer the opportunity for him to clarify.

It's a simple question, Mr. Speaker. Yes or no — does the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources support free-entry staking?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I did answer the question, and what I answered was: I believe that we have this great thing, the mineral development strategy. I would like to thank the panel for all the work that they did to engage with Yukoners. One aspect of that is around free-entry staking. There are elements of it that are important, and I will acknowledge that. I think that we need to work together, as a territory, with our First Nation partners, with industry, and with the public to talk about how we modernize our *Quartz Mining Act*, our *Placer Mining Act*, and our *Lands Act*, and I think that this is the correct path.

I'm not here today to sit and predetermine which way it's going to go because I have an opinion. What I'm telling everybody here — what I'm telling the Yukon and the members opposite — is that I will work with the Yukon to help develop that new legislation, successor legislation, because it's time that we modernize our acts here. It's critical for the mining industry that they get clarity and certainty through successor legislation. I think that's the only way for the future here in the territory.

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker's statement

Speaker: With the rambling in the background, it's pretty distracting to me — on both sides — so if we could just keep it on the low. I'm trying to pay attention to the members who have the floor and are speaking, so let's keep it on the low there. It's really distracting me from paying attention to the member who has the floor and is speaking.

Question re: COVID-19 pandemic — support for vulnerable communities

Ms. Blake: The chief medical officer of health has recently eased restrictions for restaurants and bars, allowing for full capacity with minimum restrictions. Much of this is due to the Yukon's high vaccination rates and low active COVID cases. This is welcome news for all Yukoners.

At the same time, we know that, over the last year, many support services for Yukoners have had COVID restrictions placed on them. For example, capacity in the residential addictions treatment program was reduced to allow for COVID

protocols. We haven't heard of an easing of these restrictions yet.

In light of the current COVID situation in the territory, has the minister taken any steps to safely expand the capacity in the residential addictions treatment program and the detox centre?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member opposite for the question; it is an excellent one.

I have been working diligently with the chief medical officer of health over the last eight, nine days — however long I have had the honour of this position — and certainly before that period of time, with him and his office and team in other capacities. The chief medical officer of health spoke publicly with the Premier on Wednesday — so I guess that was only yesterday — and spoke about the coming recommendations, or the ones that he has made so far, and how they might be operationalized. He did say that there was further guidance coming from his office and that would affect other kinds of services.

Not to speak for him, but I will say that situations like the one mentioned in the question where individuals are living in close quarters together might well be later on the list of changes that can be safely made, but that is, of course, in the hands of the chief medical officer of health. There is more information to come about those kinds of services on behalf of Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: With the lifting of restrictions by the chief medical officer of health, other areas that continue to be more restrictive include the meals at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the number of emergency beds available. We know that people not staying at the shelter still need to pick up bagged meals for their supper. We also know that there are still others who are homeless and couch surfing.

Has the minister taken steps to safely expand services available at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter in light of the current COVID situation in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, that is a very good question on behalf of Yukoners. The services provided at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have in fact been affected by COVID, as have many services — long-term care facilities, visitation by families at those kinds of locations and others. The meal program is continuing.

With respect to the adjustments that were made last year during COVID, to provide meals outside of the Emergency Shelter for individuals who are not staying at the shelter but who need access to warm and nutritious food, that is continuing throughout May and continuing throughout the summer at least and probably into the fall. I will look at the end date for that, but certainly we will provide that service as long as it is necessary for Yukoners and our vulnerable population to provide them with safe and nutritious meals.

Again, on behalf of the conversations that we've been having with respect to the chief medical officer of health, these services and the lightening of the restrictions will — I think the chief medical officer of health has referred to them like an onion — be peeled back, layer by layer, on behalf of the safety of Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: Yukoners receiving home care services have also been impacted by restrictions during this pandemic. This

is understandable, given the health and activities of daily living supports provided by home care staff. Transporting clients in vehicles to appointments or shopping has been restricted, as well as other supports offered.

When is the minister expecting home care services to be safely expanded in light of the current COVID situation in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think this is an opportune time to remind Yukoners that the kind of advice — the guidance and the recommendations with respect to the restrictions on those services and when they may change — come from the chief medical officer of health. Once those recommendations are issued by the chief medical officer of health, and he and his team have issued guidance that is updated, then it becomes the responsibility of government to consider those and determine, if they are to be operationalized, how that would happen.

As a result, I can go back to the first answer that I had. I think that the services at home care have in fact been restricted in some ways for the safety and health of Yukoners. It is one of the services that the chief medical officer of health is currently looking at for the purposes of making changes if — and I say “if” — things go well as the changes being made on May 25 are, in fact, successful and that Yukoners abide by continuing to wear masks and continuing to self-isolate, if necessary, and continuing to be separated by two caribou, in light of Caribou Days, or six feet, for the safety of Yukoners going forward.

Question re: Dawson City capital projects

Ms. Van Bibber: I have a number of questions about projects in the community of Dawson. First, I understand that the Department of Education has money budgeted for a new portable for Robert Service School. Can the minister tell us what the plan is for providing a new portable for the school and when that project is expected to be tendered? Will it be ready for next year’s school year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. This is, in fact, one of the projects that we have underway, and we’re working closely with the community to ensure that we are hearing all of the opinions. I am actually going to be in Dawson City tomorrow to meet with the school, to meet with the First Nation, and to meet with the partners involved in education in the community. I am very much looking forward to this discussion.

We certainly will be talking about all needs for education in the City of Dawson, and I am looking forward to those discussions. This is definitely one of the projects that we have within our five-year capital plan.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Minister of Education has indicated that there is a lengthy wait-list for childcare in Dawson. Back in 2015, the Premier committed that a Liberal government would fund a new building for the Little Blue Daycare. Are there plans in place to live up to that commitment?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am well aware of the needs in terms of childcare space in Yukon. As I just mentioned, I’m going to be in Dawson tomorrow, and one of the meetings that is planned is with the Little Blue Daycare. Accessibility of early

childcare programs is a high priority for our government. We’re working with all of our partners, and it is essential that we work with our rural communities to ensure that we have enough spaces. This is part of our universal childcare and work toward accessibility of early learning opportunities for our children. I’m looking forward to direct discussions with all of those involved.

I am happy to bring back more information as it becomes available.

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this week, the Minister of Community Services said that site selection for the new recreation centre in Dawson is underway this year. Can the minister tell us which locations are being considered?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I do know that my department and my predecessor have been working very closely with the town of Dawson on the site selection for the new recreation centre in that community. We will be having an announcement on that site and everything else in due course.

Question re: Camping fees

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the upcoming long weekend is a popular weekend for campers in the Yukon. The previous minister brought forward a new parks strategy that contemplated increasing camping fees for Yukoners.

Does the new minister plan on carrying forward with those increases next year, and how much will he be increasing the nightly and annual camping fees for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member for the question concerning our wonderful campgrounds. The Member for Watson Lake will know that the camping fees for both Yukon residents and Yukon resident seniors have remained the same for this year and that there is no plan to increase fees for this summer.

I will be briefed by the Department of Environment on the policies going forward, but I can confirm that, in the campground planning going forward, there are plans to increase fees, but I can return to the House as required.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, another aspect of the new strategy that the former minister brought forward was ending the seniors discount for camping. Does the new minister plan on increasing camping fees for Yukon seniors as well?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the question from the Member for Watson Lake. As I indicated in my prior response, I will return, as required, to the House with her query, which was essentially the same as her first query.

I can advise — some exciting news with respect to campground planning — that work is already underway to develop a new campground. Six Yukon First Nations whose traditional territory lies within two hours’ drive of Whitehorse have begun discussions with Yukon Parks on campground location possibilities and potential partnership opportunities. Once a location has been selected, there will be opportunities for the public to provide feedback on specific features that Yukoners would like to see in the new campground.

More details on public engagement will be provided on engageyukon.ca before campground design and construction

begins. We are aiming to have a location chosen by the end of 2021 and to have the new campground up and running by 2025.

First Nations and the private sector will have opportunities to bid on tenders for several project components at various stages of the project. The new First Nation procurement policy will also be followed.

The *Yukon Parks Strategy* outlines a number —

Speaker: 10 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: More to come, and I will defer my final response.

Question re: Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan

Ms. White: In 2019, community members worked with this government to develop the fetal alcohol spectrum disorder action plan. This plan included the commitment from all partners to improve the lives of Yukoners with FASD. The authors of this plan were clear from the outset, stating — and I quote: “For us, the key to success is in the name of the plan — Action.”

However, it seems that this government has gone back on their commitment. Decision-making power has been taken out of the hands of the people doing the work. Instead of implementing the plan as it was designed, community partners have been made to submit application after application to the government to justify what can only be called “piecemeal funding”.

Will this government commit to more consistent and reliable funding for the remainder of the action plan’s 10-year timeline?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the information that is contained there.

What I will commit to doing is to determine what the current state of affairs is and where we are with the implementation of the action plan. What I will also commit to, in response to this question, is the recognition of the importance of the fetal alcohol action plan and the services that are provided to Yukoners who are subject to the related concerns in that particular area of concern.

What I can say is that I have experienced in the past — and the department has much experience with respect to making services better for Yukoners. Our client-centered approach is key. It is something that we will continue to do. *Putting People First* is a great example — not only by its title but by the many important recommendations made going forward, and fitting those two strategies together will be important work going forward. *Putting People First*, by its very title, is a patient-centred, people-centred approach here in the Yukon for health care and the services that wrap around individuals, and we will continue with that important work.

Ms. White: It’s important to know that the current state of affairs is poor when it comes to the *Yukon FASD Action Plan*. Those who worked so hard to develop it are afraid that it has been shelved and is gathering dust.

Right now, many adults and children with FASD in the Yukon live with their parents or older family members. As this caregiving population begins to age, many will lose the ability

to continue supporting their children. With the Yukon’s housing crisis, caregivers who are aging out of their roles are rightfully concerned.

Has this government developed a plan for adults and children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder who have senior caregivers who are aging out of their roles?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. As I indicated in my answer to the first question, I certainly will be looking to determine — it’s quite a specific question, and I appreciate those, but I don’t have a specific answer with respect to the comments made by the member opposite. The approach I have taken with respect to learning these files in this particular area is to determine what the current state of affairs is and what the plans are from the former minister, as well as how we are going to implement changes going forward in working with our partners across the territory.

I will take the opportunity to reiterate again the importance of Putting People First, which is a client-centred, people-centred approach. It has drastically new policy-making potential for us here in the territory. It is considered groundbreaking in its work and I am pleased to be tasked with the responsibility of working with Yukoners going forward, making sure that all decisions in Health and Social Services are made to the benefit of our Yukon people and to their health priorities and to their well-being.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it’s important to note that those behind the *Putting People First* document made clear that they had no intention of replicating work already done — for example, the *Yukon FASD Action Plan*. So, for many people, an assessment and diagnosis of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder means a door opened to better support in accessing the right services. This is especially true for folks at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. When someone who is incarcerated gets assessed and diagnosed with FASD, they can access the Community Wellness Court, individualized support plans, and more.

I would hope that this House can agree that the justice system in the Yukon must be a restorative one. The first step in that direction is to offer support to offenders and understand their needs so that no one is punished for behaviour beyond their control.

Is this government still assessing adult Yukoners for FASD at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre? If so, how many people have been assessed in this last calendar year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question — quite a specific one. Again, I don’t have the details of those assessments and how many might have been done recently or whether they’re being carried out at all, quite frankly, but I will get that information.

What I think it’s important for Yukoners to know is that our people-centred approach to Health and Social Services — and I’m very pleased to have had this crossover into the concept of justice and those initiatives, because we have a new restorative justice unit in the Department of Justice — something that has never been done before. It is properly staffed — or will be. It is properly financed for the purpose of making sure that a focus of our work, through the Justice

department, through Corrections — which of course comes under Justice — will, in fact, be the people-centred approach that we need to take here in the territory.

It is critical that we have the right services to meet Yukoners where they are, whether they be health or justice. It is critical that we have the right services to meet the needs of those Yukoners, and we are working as one government to make sure that happens in every area to the benefit of Yukon citizens.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: 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: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 2: *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise to speak about the *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*. I'm pleased to be joined by Kelli Taylor, assistant deputy minister of policy and partnerships, and Michael McBride, director of policy and planning, from the Department of Education.

I want to take the opportunity to thank everyone who worked to move this forward. It really is doing the right work for the right reasons. As I have mentioned previously, these amendments focus on finalizing the transfer of the mandate for early learning and childcare from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education.

We are taking this opportunity to respond to the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report to coordinate the government's early learning services with its

other education services by moving early learning to the Department of Education. This will allow for improved planning and decision-making while ensuring that we keep our children at the centre of those decisions.

While we were engaging with Yukon First Nations, our partners, and stakeholders on the development of our recently implemented universal early learning and childcare program, we heard a great deal of excitement and support for the transfer of the early learning mandate to Education. This includes engagement with: the Yukon Child Care Board; the Yukon Childcare Association; Yukon University; childcare centre and day home operators from across the Yukon; the network for healthy early human development partnerships for children; the Child Development Centre; the early childhood educators of Yukon Territory; the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; the Yukon First Nations Education Commission; and the Yukon First Nations health commission.

I would like to, once again, acknowledge that Amy Ryder, chair of the Yukon Child Care Board, has joined us in the Legislature today. We tabled the annual report for 2020-21 in the Assembly just an hour ago. I want to also acknowledge Ms. Ryder for meeting with me. I have had a lot of meetings in the last couple of weeks, but one of them was with Ms. Ryder. I very much enjoyed that, and it brought insights into the work that we are doing. I certainly recognize the excitement from this board and how critical and instrumental they are.

Once you have had a chance to review the report, Madam Chair, you will see that the board has acknowledged that the *Putting People First* report will greatly benefit early learning and childcare in Yukon. The transfer of the mandate for early learning to the Department of Education is a move that will positively influence many generations of Yukoners to come. The collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and the positive and productive relationships that we have built will make early learning and childcare an example for other jurisdictions to look to. As I said, this is the right work for the right reasons, and this was fully confirmed during the engagement process.

I would now like to move to talk about the details of the bill. In part 1 of the bill, under paragraph 2, the definition of "director" will change to the person designated in Education. Currently, the director is designated as the director of Family and Children's Services. Paragraph 3 of the bill will allow the Minister of Education to designate a person who will be the director of early learning and childcare in Education as a member of the public service with responsibilities under the *Child Care Act*.

Paragraph 4 will amend section 37 of the *Child Care Act* to make clear that reports of children suspected to be in need of protection will continue to be made to the director of Family and Children's Services, who has the responsibility to carry out those investigations under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

The current definition of "director" in all of the regulations attached to the *Child Care Act* will be repealed and replaced with the new definition set out in 3.01. This ensures that the definition of "director" in the act and the regulations is the same and that the director is the member of the public service designated by the Minister of Education, which, as I have

indicated, will be the director of early learning and childcare in Education.

Lastly, we will be doing a housekeeping amendment to section 4(1) of the *Health Act* to remove the list of legislation that the Minister of Health and Social Services is responsible for. The list is now redundant because it is found in OIC 2014/174, enacted pursuant to the *Government Organisation Act*.

I want to reiterate that we have heard clearly, during the engagement, that the act needs to be modernized, and we will do that in collaboration with First Nation governments, the Yukon Child Care Board, stakeholders, and interested Yukoners in a thoughtful way where all views will be considered.

We are very pleased with how engaged everyone has been since we started on the journey to affordable universal childcare. As we can see in the annual report, the Yukon Child Care Board has acknowledged the collaboration, sharing of knowledge, and the positive and productive relationships that have been built with our officials. Madam Chair, we look forward to continuing on that journey with them.

As I said earlier, high-quality early learning opportunities support improved long-term outcomes for children in all aspects of their education and development. The transfer from Health and Social Services to Education helps ensure that early learning services are coordinated at all levels, including the transition into kindergarten and school years. The integration of the early childhood and the education system creates a learning continuum that begins at birth and has a positive long-term impact.

This is the start of our journey and not the ending. We have committed to continuing our collaboration with First Nation governments, the Yukon Child Care Board, stakeholders, and Yukoners in order to improve outcomes for Yukon children and families.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you to the minister for those opening comments. I appreciate her opening information. In her opening comments, she actually has answered a few of the questions that I had, but I will still ask a few questions of her.

The minister listed a number of organizations that were consulted through the consultation for this bill. I want to double-check. I believe she indicated that Partners for Children, or the network for early human development — I may have the acronym wrong, but I believe that is what it is.

Can she just confirm that was the group that was consulted in the process for this?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I thank the member for the question. Yes, the Network for Healthy Early Human Development, Partners for Children, was consulted.

Mr. Dixon: Excellent. The Network for Healthy Early Human Development previously interacted with a few different branches in Health and Social Services, predominantly in the Family Resource Unit. I know that the interaction of the Family Resource Unit with that group of folks provided opportunities to engage in a few different aspects of social services. I am certainly in agreement with the shift from Health and Social Services into Education for the reasons that the minister

outlined, but I wonder how the links between the unit now being in Education will be maintained with the Family Resource Unit in the Department of Health and Social Services because of the work that they do with a number of overlapping issues that the unit in Education now will deal with.

Perhaps the minister can just comment on the ways in which organizations can continue to expect ongoing engagement between those employees and staff who remain in Health and Social Services with the staff and work being done with switching over to Education.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I thank the member for the question, and it is a good question in terms of how things will work going forward. I did indicate that there are aspects of the need for protection and services. Some will be retained through the director of Family and Children's Services. That being said, we do have a memorandum of understanding with Health and Social Services currently to work together in a one-government approach, and that will continue going forward.

I do respect the question from the member opposite, and I know that there will be a lot more information to come. Our partners and folks will be made aware of how those relationships will be maintained and how they will continue for the betterment and well-being of our children.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister provide us with the information regarding the number of staff who will physically be moving to a different department as a result of this change? If there are any budget implications as a result of the change, could she outline those as well?

Do employees physically move? Are they physically switching offices and moving to a new building, or are they just switching their reporting authorities?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will maybe start with some of the budgetary considerations here. We have allowed for \$25.202 million. The budget transfer from Health and Social Services includes \$10.383 million. The additional budget for the universal childcare is \$14.819 million.

In terms of the staff that this represents, we have 7.8 full-time staff from Health and Social Services who will be transferring over to Education, and we have 8.2 new positions, so this mean 16 positions altogether.

The physical location of the staff — currently, the staff remain at Health and Social Services. Renovation at the Department of Education is underway. I am told that there is a lot of excitement around this — that the transfer, physically, into that space will happen in approximately June, and this will include a separate entrance for parents and separate parking. Folks are very excited about this transition to bring everyone into one space.

Mr. Dixon: During the course of consultation with a number of organizations, were there any groups that expressed concern about the switch from Health and Social Services to Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I am new into the file. I was not personally part of all of the consultations, but my understanding of how the consultation unfolded was that they mostly received positive feedback. Of course, there were a lot

of questions on how this would work, and our department has done a fine job, I think, in ensuring and answering the questions as they have come out. I think that there is a clear indication from the Yukon Child Care Board annual report that there is a lot of positivity around this move and that it is widely supported.

If there is other information that we need to come back to the Legislative Assembly with, specifically — if there is something very specific that the member has a question around — I would appreciate that either today on the floor of the Legislative Assembly or in writing. That would be helpful to us, just to ensure that if there is something that the member thinks we are maybe unaware of, that he please bring that forward to me, as a new Minister of Education.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much to the minister for that answer. I realized, as soon as I sat down, that, of course, she wasn't the minister who conducted this consultation, so that was perhaps a bit of an unfair question on my end. I apologize, but I appreciate her providing that information. I haven't heard of any specific concerns. I just was curious if there was any feedback from groups that had provided any.

My last question, Madam Chair, relates to the next steps for the rest of the *Child Care Act* review. Obviously, we debated a motion yesterday that was ultimately defeated and related to the review of the *Child Care Act* — a more comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act*. As the member has noted, the Child Care Board has called for the comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act* for a number of years. I was wondering if the minister could provide us with some sense of a timeline for next steps for the comprehensive review of the *Child Care Act* and if we can expect to see a consultation launched relatively soon — what that process may look like, and with what sort of time frame we should be expecting to see an overhauled *Child Care Act* come back to the Legislature.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. Yesterday I listened very intently to the debate. Although I wasn't one of the speakers on the debate — and I have to take some issue with how this has been framed — we did commit to doing a full review of the *Child Care Act*. We committed to that during the most recent election; we committed to it again yesterday; we just did not commit to doing it within a committee process within the Legislative Assembly.

We have a Cabinet Committee on Legislation that sets the agenda for legislative matters. We are working with our Executive Council Office to set and work toward the new agenda for legislation for this particular mandate. As we stated yesterday, we are committed to doing this review of the legislation, and I think it's very timely.

I know our previous minister spoke clearly about our intent, not only during the election but yesterday in the Legislature, and fully confirmed that we will be doing this work.

Once that agenda is set, I will be happy to bring that information back to the Legislative Assembly to inform folks of this important review, rewrite, and modernization of the *Child Care Act*.

Mr. Dixon: One of the reasons why we advocated for the review to be conducted by a legislative committee was the openness and transparency of that process, the ability for the public to understand the steps being taken in the process, and for all affected stakeholders to have an opportunity to review the submissions of their colleagues.

I appreciate that a different decision was taken, and I certainly respect that the minister has made that commitment today — that they will be moving forward with the act review. My only ongoing question is just around the timeline. I know that the minister has indicated that the legislative timeline hasn't been set yet. One of my concerns is that, under the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the NDP, the government has a very ambitious legislative agenda, and my concern is that the *Child Care Act* may get bumped, as it's not cited in that agreement.

So, I was just looking for some assurances from the minister around the timeline for the act review. We just don't want to see it get bumped as a result of other legislative priorities, and we certainly believe that it ought to be a pressing priority for the government. I want to encourage the minister to press with her colleagues for this to be on the priority list to be dealt with very soon.

I'll just give an opportunity for the minister to perhaps respond to that and to offer some further detail around when she thinks it will be slotted into the legislative agenda.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. It's an important one. It's certainly a high priority and a commitment that we have made, as the Yukon Liberal government, to review this act. I look forward to working with our First Nation partners, other partners, and stakeholders going forward, including experts in the field. I am anticipating that we will be receiving our mandate letters soon, which will clearly outline what priority areas that the Premier will be asking us to work on. I anticipate that this will be one of them in my particular mandate letter.

We have made this a high priority for our government. We campaigned on this commitment to early learning and childcare in the Yukon, including universal childcare, and it will remain a high priority for us. As soon as that legislative agenda is set, Madam Chair, I will endeavour to bring that information back and to ensure that folks are well aware of the plan, going forward, for this important review and redraft of this act.

Ms. White: I thank the officials for being here, and thank you for the great briefing. I realize it's something that is very small but means a lot — and I appreciate that we do have the chair of the Child Care Board here because it's timely that it was tabled today in time for this conversation. I do appreciate that there has been an endorsement and support put behind the plan that the government has put forward, including today's legislation — small but mighty, moving it to the Department of Education.

Based on what is actually here for us in legislation, I'll ask a lot of my questions in the Department of Education. Just one more positive for the Yukon Child Care Board is that they did a really fantastic job of going through the universal childcare and what it meant and how it would affect Yukoners. I thank

them for the work that they have done. It's exciting that some of the things that we have talked about for so long, and over so many years, are now in the forefront.

Just as a point, it is here that the Yukon Child Care Board is asking that government do modernize that *Child Care Act* and have the regulations and all that tabled within the next two years. There's a timeline for it. With that, Madam Chair, I just look forward to line-by-line.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed clause-by-clause.

On Clause 1

Clause 1 agreed to

On Clause 2

Clause 2 agreed to

On Clause 3

Clause 3 agreed to

On Clause 4

Clause 4 agreed to

On Clause 5

Clause 5 agreed to

On Clause 6

Clause 6 agreed to

On Clause 7

Clause 7 agreed to

On Clause 8

Clause 8 agreed to

On Clause 9

Clause 9 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Hon. Ms. McLean that the Chair report Bill No. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First 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. 201: *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing

Corporation, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any further general debate?

Hearing none, we will now proceed line by line.

Mr. Kent: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: Mr. Kent has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, 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 Expenditures in the amount of \$19,907,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$38,355,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$58,262,000

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

Some Hon. Members: Agree.

Some Hon. Members: Disagree.

Chair: Due to COVID-19 protocols, there will be a mandatory five-minute break to ensure that the staff can have time to properly clean the desks and chairs.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I believe, Madam Chair, in anticipation of the prior department being cleared expeditiously, the COVID protocols have been followed and that the officials are now able to take their seats immediately.

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Economic Development

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I would like to thank the officials for joining us today and the Deputy Minister of Economic Development, Mr. Justin Ferbey, and the director of finance, Beth Fricke, here with us today. I thank them for the preparation for today's budget debate.

Madam Speaker, honourable members, and visitors, I am pleased to rise today to table the Department of Economic Development's operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the 2021-22 fiscal year. At the Department of Economic Development, our mandate is to develop a thriving, prosperous,

and diversified Yukon economy to enrich the quality of life of all Yukoners.

We achieve this by working with business and industry partners and the federal, municipal, and First Nation governments to broaden our economic base, build local capacity, and encourage the competitiveness of businesses and services.

The programs delivered by Economic Development provide resources to support sustainable job creation for Yukoners, innovative approaches to existing and new industries, and business and industry growth — trade fund and the regional economic development fund into a streamlined economic development fund —

Sorry, Madam Chair, we were ensuring that we were environmentally conscious, and my speaking notes are double-sided.

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the department acted swiftly to launch programs to support businesses and employees, and these efforts continue, as we move our focus toward recovery. We remain focused on growing and diversifying the Yukon economy while keeping our methods sustainable and environmentally responsible. We provide economic opportunity to all of Yukon by working with First Nation governments and communities to support their chosen goals and needs.

The last fiscal year has been notable for the Department of Economic Development. We have: introduced a variety of pandemic response programs to support Yukon businesses and their employees through that pandemic; conducted multiple public engagement campaigns to inform the future of immigration in Yukon and how our government supports innovation; improved our funding programs by combining the strategic industries development fund, the enterprise trade fund, and the regional economic development fund into a streamlined economic development fund; and released Yukon's economic resilience plan that maps out our approach to support people and businesses impacted by COVID-19. The goal of the plan is to guide Yukon's economy back to pre-pandemic levels and chart a path beyond.

The Department of Economic Development is taking action on platform commitments that focus on supporting local jobs and our economy. These initiatives will create opportunities for innovation and expansion in Yukon and support economic development and diversification.

These priority initiatives include extending the Yukon paid sick-leave rebate program to September 30, 2022, as committed under the confidence and supply agreement, a new immigration strategy, an innovation strategy, an innovation commission, and growing Yukon's film industry. These commitments focus on supporting local entrepreneurs and getting Yukon businesses the assistance that they need now and in the future. These commitments will meet Yukon's changing needs from immediate relief to adaptation, investment, and growth. To meet these expectations, our operation and maintenance budget for 2021-22 fiscal year is \$22.292 million, with a capital budget of \$1.111 million.

Just over \$4 million has been allotted to Corporate Services to keep the department's programs running successfully. This funding includes the deputy minister's office, finance, information management, and human resources.

I am going to outline some of the Department of Economic Development's plans for the coming year and updates related to ongoing initiatives. The Department of Economic Development has begun work on an innovation plan that will create opportunities for local entrepreneurs and establish an innovation commission to attract new start-ups and grow Yukon's digital ecosystem.

The Department of Economic Development is in the process of developing an immigration strategy to ensure that our immigration programs are modernized and responsive to the needs of Yukon businesses seeking employees and foreign nationals moving here for work.

The Policy, Planning, and Communications branch represents Yukon in a number of trade negotiations and discussions with other jurisdictions. Among these is the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* to address barriers to the free movement of goods, services, and workers and investment in our country. By participating in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, we guarantee that Yukon businesses have the access to other markets in Canada, making it easier for them to grow and expand. We are now working to expand the scope of the agreement to cover the financial services and cannabis for non-medical purposes industries.

The branch has been actively involved with reducing red tape and will continue building on the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* to remove further barriers hindering the expansion of Yukon enterprise into the rest of Canada.

Between the *United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement* and further development of trade within Canada, Yukon businesses can expect a greater degree of certainty when they sell their goods, services, and expertise outside of Yukon.

To support the work of the department's operations, there is a budget of \$13.225 million. This funds program areas such as business and industry development, immigration, media development, regional economic development, and technology and innovation.

The Business and Industry Development branch supports the growth of the private sector. The department is making \$2.1 million available to the Business and Industry Development branch this fiscal year. The branch supports industry advancement in Yukon through a variety of methods and funds that directly assist entrepreneurs to improve their products and services.

The immigration unit primarily administers the Yukon nominee program and provides support and advice to nominees and the businesses that employ them. A budget allocation of \$739,000 for 2021-22 will allow the immigration unit to continue its work. A public engagement period was conducted to inform Yukon's new 10-year immigration strategy. Collecting input on labour challenges facing Yukon businesses and communities, as well as on Yukon employers' experiences with existing immigration programs, will help ensure that a new

immigration strategy incorporates the needs and priorities of our businesses and communities as we move through recovery.

The Business and Industry Development branch also provides specific advice and expertise to Yukon businesses through the Yukon business development program. This is a joint effort with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, which absorbs 50 percent of the program costs.

To finish the Business and Industry Development branch, the capital budget of just over \$1 million is accounted for by the business incentive program. The business incentive program provides rebates on eligible Government of Yukon contracts promoting Yukon hires and Yukon-made goods and services.

The Technology and Innovation branch of Economic Development plays a key enabler role in promoting an entrepreneurial culture that attracts and supports start-ups. The department has committed \$2.163 million to technology and innovation programs in 2021-22. Our government remains committed to expanding the knowledge economy by working with businesses, industry partners, and First Nation development corporations to identify opportunities and make strategic investments.

The department is currently working on an innovation plan that will guide how the Government of Yukon supports innovative practices and builds Yukon's technology sector. The plan responds to extensive public engagement and will reflect the needs of the innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship community.

Another way that the Government of Yukon has continued to support the knowledge sector is through NorthLight Innovation. NorthLight hosts many workshops that help entrepreneurs build on their skills, including the well-known start-up boot camp. This program leads entrepreneurs through a rigorous process to assess, adjust, and validate their business ideas, helping them to achieve their goals.

The Technology and Innovation branch also funds the Yukon Innovation Prize through innovation and entrepreneurship at Yukon University. The Yukon Innovation Prize encourages the local development and delivery of innovative products and services. The most recent Yukon Innovation Prize intake was focused on creative solutions that address new challenges created by the global pandemic.

In 2020, we launched the Hall of Innovators Awards to celebrate Yukoners who shaped their industry sector, or social or cultural landscape, creating a brighter future. The Government of Yukon will remain focused on developing our local entrepreneurs and their ideas, keeping Yukon modern and relevant in a constantly evolving society that emphasizes innovation more than ever.

Investment attraction includes Yukon's participation in the annual Vancouver Resource Investment Conference, a Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference, and a focus of attracting investment to Yukon in the mining sector.

The Business and Industry Development branch organizes Yukon Mining Days, increasing awareness in our communities

of opportunities in mining. A recent introduction of Invest Canada North is significant. This is a pan-territorial initiative that will help drive investment to the north and promote Yukon mining projects. Mining activities remain a prominent part of Yukon's economy, largely driven by Victoria Gold's Eagle gold mine. Several other mining operations are also underway in the territory, which are anticipated to be significant economic contributors for years to come.

The Minto mine, under the ownership of Pembridge Resources, resumed producing copper concentrate in late 2019, with plans to reach full production in 2021. Production in Q1 2021 is up by 36 percent over Q4, and the company just announced that the expected mine life has been extended from 2023 to 2028.

The Department of Economic Development also supports market-driven media production in Yukon. Media development is a valued contributor to our economy and plays a significant role in showcasing Yukon on a larger stage. This fiscal year, the Economic Development department has identified \$1.503 million for the media development unit. The media development unit provides funding to help Yukon content creators make their sound and media production a reality.

This budget allocation will allow the unit to continue with this work. The unit also provides funding to projects from outside the territory that produce their film, television, and digital media content in the Yukon. Additionally, these media producers provide employment opportunities to locals and showcase Yukon to other parts of the world.

Several projects related to the media development unit were recently completed or are under final assessment, including a film fund review with final recommendations pending a strategic planning exercise conducted by Music Yukon, which will influence how we approach the music industry, and the first stage of a gap analysis where Screen Production Yukon Association is assessing the resources available to filmmakers within the territory to determine where our services are lacking and what more we can provide in the future.

This past year was different due to the state of emergency, but usually the media development unit provides funding to marquee industry events such as BreakOut West, as well the Available Light Film Festival. Events such as these bring valuable outside dollars that our territory wouldn't otherwise receive.

The final branch I will discuss is Regional Economic Development. The Regional Economic Development branch has a budget of \$4.377 million. Of that, \$2.95 million will be directed toward the community development fund. Throughout the last fiscal year, a total of 62 projects received support through the community development fund.

Changes made to intake deadlines and eligibility criteria have contributed to the fund being more flexible and suited to the evolving needs of Yukoners. The key change was to enable First Nation development corporations to access funding to support their investments in economic growth and community-led initiatives.

The community development fund assists projects that provide long-term economic and social benefits to Yukon communities — projects such as: the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce research toward the safe, affordable, and reliable rural transportation service; the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun's greenhouse retrofit at the farm north of Mayo that will increase local food production and self-sufficiency; and the Industrial, Arts and Technology Society of Yukon's work developing a model for makerspace in Dawson City where people can share resources to learn, experiment, and build and bring new ideas to life. Along with the Regional Economic Development branch, Business and Industry Development assesses economic development fund applications that promote the advancement of entrepreneurs and development corporations.

The new program replaces the regional economic development fund, the strategic industries development fund, and the enterprise trade fund. The amalgamation of funds follows public engagement in 2019 on how to modernize and improve these programs.

The streamlined approach for funding will allow the department to reduce red tape by implementing a standardized application process. It will allow for greater funding flexibility so clients can undertake a wider range of projects while still ensuring that all activities that the clients could access before remain in the program.

The department will be able to emphasize local spending and employment opportunities for Yukoners. The programming, managed and delivered by the Department of Economic Development, provides clear and tangible benefits to Yukon and its industries. The Department of Economic Development remains focused on economic diversification and support for an economic ecosystem that offers opportunities to all Yukoners.

Our operation and maintenance budget of \$22.292 million and capital budget of \$1.111 million reflects this task. The work that the department undertakes using these funds will continue to deliver meaningful long-term benefits to all Yukoners.

In closing, to individuals from the Department of Economic Development, I just want to again take this opportunity, on behalf of all Yukoners, to thank you for your exceptional work over the last fiscal year and your work on a recovery strategy as we move forward. Certainly, all government employees came together, but as I speak to this specific department today, I hope that individuals are proud of themselves for what they did and the foundation they built; it shows. Not only are we in a position where, when you look at North America, we are leading on a vaccination strategy but also on an economy that had an opportunity to grow even though we were under immense pressure in very difficult circumstances.

Ms. Van Bibber: Madam Chair, I too would like to welcome the officials to the Chamber and thank the minister for that extensive wrap of his department.

The new fund that you spoke of — the economic resilience plan — was announced in March to maximize current projects

and programs, plus add new initiatives due to the pandemic response.

Can the minister explain the rationale for the creation of this new fund? When did the fund go live and have there been many applications to the fund to date?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Throughout the pandemic, we have monitored and adapted our supports to meet Yukoners' changing needs, from immediate relief to adaptation and investment. The economic resilience plan described the Government of Yukon's plan for long-term resilience, growth, and prosperity across all sectors of Yukon's economy was released on March 10, 2021.

Yukon's plan demonstrates our comprehensive, transparent approach for minimizing COVID-19 damage now, in building a foundation for the future. The economic resilience plan also coordinates our 40 programs and initiatives that demonstrate our commitment to Yukon's people, jobs, business supports, infrastructure development, and economic diversification, and we will continue to work closely with our partners.

The strategic industries development fund, regional economic development fund, and enterprise trade fund have been core tools for the department for over 15 years. To maximize the impact of our department's funding allocation and to simplify access for our clients, we have combined these programs into a single program: the economic development fund.

The new program retains the previous programs' focus on business and capacity development, diversification, and market expansion while expanding the range of eligible activities, supporting capital expenditures, and levelling the available funding across all client groups. The new program does not limit any existing client's access to funding or the types of projects the department will fund.

The department accepted applications to the existing three programs up until the launch date for the economic development fund. Applications received under the three older funds — strategic and regional, as well as enterprise — will be administered under the terms and conditions of those funds until the projects are completed. For example, a project underway prior to April 1, when the new fund went live, will continue to be assessed and administered under one of the three former program guidelines and not the new fund. By creating our new fund, we are meeting our commitment to make our program more responsive with less red tape.

I just want to check to see if I have some information concerning the number of applications to date on our new one. There have been 13 tier-2 applications received by the May 17 intake date for our new fund.

I will just quickly speak now to the piece around the launch. The new funding program, which we touched on, gives us a bit more flexibility but also removes a bit of red tape. I'm going to give a bit of background. The new program is reflected in our budget today, and the new program launched on April 1, 2021, with an advertising campaign for the next intake, tier 2, for May 17, commencing the week of April 26. The new program operates with the following tiers: Tier 1 is a rolling

intake for applications below \$30,000. We are constantly taking those applications. Tier 2, which I just spoke about, are applications between \$30,000 and \$100,000, with intakes in February, May, August, and November, always on the 15th of every month. Tier-3 applications are over \$100,000, with a \$500,000 per project cap, with intakes on January 15 and June 15.

Again, we are going to continue to monitor the success and effectiveness of our new fund and we will, if needed — whether feedback from clients or what we are seeing within the department — have an opportunity to potentially tweak some of the policy around it if it is not meeting the expectations of our clients.

Ms. Van Bibber: During the throne speech, there was mention of a new innovation commission. It read that this was to be established to attract new technology start-ups and grow Yukon's digital ecosystem.

Can the minister give us an outline and/or an update on the vision for this new innovation program or secretariat? When will it be established and what is the budget for the innovation commission?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Truly, the vision for the innovation commission — it's really about ensuring that the private sector expertise is brought into a process of identifying the good opportunities that are here for Yukoners and the Government of Yukon.

Simply stated, over the last year, and primarily over the last six months, there has been a very significant number of proposals that have been brought to my office. During that process, there were immense opportunities identified. My sense in that work, and with the department, is that there have been so many different proposals put forward. Many of them are exciting. We had a proposal from one local technology company that wants to scale up to 300 employees. Those employees, as we have been informed, would make an average salary between \$75,000 and \$100,000. But, as we spoke about yesterday, we are in a challenging time as we look to meet our housing needs. We also have a finite amount of resources that we can put toward supporting these different undertakings.

We have also had a group come to us that has looked at our early work around an angel network, which is essentially bringing money from local individuals together in order to employ small amounts of capital into fledgling start-ups.

There are some very talented folks who have a great track record of success in the Yukon, and they have come to the department and asked for some support. We have had another group of local entrepreneurs who have come to us and have said that they think there could be between 300 to 500 start-ups that could be brought to the Yukon over a decade. That's based on quality of life and the great opportunities that are here and the support from government and the ecosystem that supports start-ups.

The sense was to really look at these opportunities, but it's important to have expertise that works in these fields all the time. The department quickly — after I had the opportunity to come back into this role, they met with me and they laid out a series of options. What we have looked at is a small group of

individuals, primarily Yukoners who have expertise in this field, maybe bringing expertise from one or two other individuals who we are looking at and who are known in the tech sector across Canada and having a period of time — not prolonged, respecting the way that the sector works — and trying to use those same values of working hard, compressing, and moving to get some decisions.

We haven't announced the start date yet, but we're looking at probably a period of about three months for these folks to analyze.

I will come back with a budget. I don't know if I can speak to that today, but we would be looking at, likely, some per diems to those individuals to offset their cost — but really, just bringing a small group of people together to analyze the proposals that have been put in front of us and to take a look at our innovation plan, which is almost complete. Then we can figure out if the findings from the commission can be added to the innovation plan and if some of the work on the innovation plan, particularly as it focuses on the tech sector — if these individuals think that we're hitting the right tone and the right mark.

That's the concept behind it — priority initiatives, including the other items that we have touched on — the sick leave and the immigration strategy. But this is quite high up on our list of things to get accomplished. We want to get this moving quickly and are hoping to have this work underway throughout the summer, being able to come back and see what their thoughts are on where the Yukon could go.

This is something, I think, that will not just be able to guide us through this mandate but is for future governments to take a look at, and it gives a bit of a track that you can follow to really enhance the growth and to maximize the use of the tools that we have here, whether it is funding, mentorship, or boot camps or all of those different tools that have been put in place to help that industry grow.

Ms. Van Bibber: I thank the minister for that answer, and we look forward to hearing the final set-up of the commission and how much it is going to cost.

Can the minister give us the status of the new immigration strategy? Is it currently being worked on, and is it contracted out or being done in-house?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The immigration strategy — a tremendous amount of work has been completed on it. Just a bit of information concerning the mindset of the government as we move into the completion of this work.

Yukon is positioning itself as a destination for the settlement of newcomers, and we are strategically targeting newcomers to strengthen our economy, to diversify, and to add to our social fabric.

Economic immigration is an essential tool for attracting skilled workers and developing a labour force that supports investment, economic growth, and diversification. This is very much in line with the federal mandate as well — a large portion of the federal mandate that really looks at economic immigration. We are in the process of updating the 2010 Yukon immigration strategy to ensure that it meets the evolving needs of Yukon's employers and communities. We are engaging

directly with program users and stakeholders with their immigration priorities and experiences.

I will just go back through the public engagement portion on engageyukon.ca for the immigration strategy that concluded in December 2020. Further input-gathering is being compiled into a “what we heard” report and will be released very soon — in the coming weeks. The insights received will contribute to the development of our new 10-year strategy.

The work, as I understand it, has been primarily worked on in-house by our team. I think that there might be one local individual who has been working with them — a local resident who has expertise and strategies and did, I think, a little bit of work with the public service — so a public servant from outside the department, but other than that, that’s the team that has been completing that work.

Again, it’s important to put on the record that there is a connection between — even our innovation plan, because when we think about our innovation plan, we know that we have particular tools that we can use within the immigration strategy, in some cases, to fast-track certain expertise in the innovation sector. It was something that was done at the federal level. We haven’t used some of those programs as much as other areas within the country, but when you think about adding expertise to start-ups or to other organizations — some of our bigger telecommunication entities here — these are key.

We see a lot of synergy between the innovation plan as well as new parts of our economy and how they interact with the immigration strategy. We believe that there might be some outputs and some advisement from the innovation commission that we should also take into consideration as we look to complete these important pieces of work.

Ms. Van Bibber: Due to the expedition of time, as we are limited in the number of days in the Sitting, I will now thank the staff for coming again and turn it over to the Third Party.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for that. Last year, there was an essential worker top-up program that was introduced to top up the wages of people who earn less than \$20 an hour. We talked about it last year, and there were concerns that sometimes it was employer-accessed for employees. I had highlighted that there were employees who had reached out and hadn’t been contacted. I just wanted to know if that had ever been resolved for the employees who did reach out, and I did forward the information on to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To just expedite this, I can go through the program, but I know that the member opposite knows the program well. We have had lots of conversations concerning the program, so, just quickly, I’ll add that, for the record today, we’re talking about the Yukon essential workers income support program, and it was part of the Yukon government’s response to COVID-19. It was to provide temporary financial support for lower income workers who deliver essential services.

The wage top-up ran until February 15, 2021, and was an acknowledgment of the important role that essential service workers played during the height of the pandemic, as they continued to offer the services and goods relied upon.

At the close of the program, the program had processed over \$5.4 million in claims, for more than 160 businesses supporting more than 2,000 employees.

I am going to leave the details at that. I will get back to the member opposite. It is a priority for us to just respond. There was lots of vigorous debate in the last Sitting. The member opposite and I have had a couple of discussions about that, and the Leader of the Third Party has done a great job of being an advocate for a number of individuals and, in some cases — even though it was through debate versus other ways that we collaborate now — the work of the Leader of the Third Party did lead us to being able to reach out and fix some of the situations that occurred, but I don’t believe all of them.

I will get back to the Leader of the Third Party with some information so we can conclude some of those discussions from the 34th Legislature.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, the paid sick-leave program that was announced last year, has it been carried through for this budget year, 2021-22?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The program, right now, is extended until the end of September, I believe. Of course, it is still in place, and it has not been utilized as much as it previously was, I don’t believe. Part of the budgeting for this is — the Public Service Commission, I believe, has about \$500,000 in the budget. That is part of our commitment to our work with the Third Party.

The one thing I would like to share with the Assembly today is, over the last year — and this speaks volumes to the individuals, to Yukoners, and to the good work of Yukoners, specifically inside the public service — if folks remember, this was a program that was worked on. There is always, as we know — especially when you take on some of these innovative programs under a short timeline, you roll it out, and the culture of the Assembly is that any type of failure, when you’re trying to pursue innovation, is not handled lightly. It’s pretty unforgiving, by the time you get to the Assembly. Sometimes, that precludes the ability for public servants to undertake ideas on innovation, because they want to ensure that they always get it right.

In this case, in the spring of last year, there were a number of programs that were developed very quickly. What we saw was absolute leadership, when you take into consideration the rest of the country. That’s where I just want to thank the public servants who did that work. The sick leave program was launched very quickly.

Over the last year, we’ve had provinces in western Canada reach out — in the fall of last year — reaching out to us, asking if we could share information and details about how we built that program. Just in the last 30 days — it might be a little bit longer — we watched — as some folks would joke, as they believe the epicentre of Canada — Ontario was still trying to get it right and rolling out, I think, what inevitably was a three-day program.

I just commend the Yukon on how they rolled that out. It was done quickly, the program was capitalized, and it was in place. Now we’re seeing big provinces that have a tremendous amount of resources available to them trying to follow the

footsteps of the Yukon, right from the standpoint of policy development to the innovation that was done.

The paid leave to date, just in closing — \$661,000 was provided for 3,302 sick days for 450 Yukon employees.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I guess the answer is yes. So, my question is: Can people re-access the program? If they accessed the program the last go-round, are they able to access paid sick leave today?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, Madam Chair.

Ms. White: One of the concerns that we've heard is that auxiliary-on-call employees for Yukon government aren't able to access sick leave. They get called into work, and they work, and if they are sick, they aren't able to do that.

Has there been any thought to expanding this program, for example, to cover auxiliary-on-call government employees or teachers on call, so, substitute teachers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is a new topic and challenge concerning this program that I wasn't aware of. I will work with our department to ensure that we will have that opportunity to have a dialogue with the Public Service Commission, as well, and maybe work through them to understand what the reality is for YTA members as well.

Ms. White: I would suggest that one of the challenges is that it is "employer-applied". An employer has to make the application, so the Yukon government would apply to Yukon government to cover Yukon government employees who don't have access to sick leave; so, I can see that as being one of the problems.

But I will highlight it there as one of the things, you know — as we're leading the country in program design, this is maybe one way that we can also improve it.

In 2019, there was a letter of intent signed by the minister with the Philippine secretary of labour to negotiate an agreement. Last fall — it just so happens that it's the same minister — noted that the agreement still had not been signed, but there was an anticipation that something would be signed in early 2020-21. I know that we have had an election, but here we are again. Has this agreement been signed, and can the minister explain for Yukoners what the agreement actually entails?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The work on the agreement has been ongoing. Actually, I think that we are in a position that we are getting very close to being able to sign off on that. Really, the delay has been a situation where there was an opportunity to hopefully have officials either from here sign there, or vice versa, and of course, because of COVID, that has all been put aside.

The agreement had to do with — and I will do my very best here to touch upon it. There continue to be costs that were applied, in this particular case, in the Philippines, and it originated with government officials in the Philippines. That cost was getting passed on to folks here. I can respond with our unit providing a written response in very significant detail, to talk about how the costs that were being applied were missing the actual purpose of why they were supposed to be put in place.

It really had to do with folks who were coming and making that move to the Yukon, and then this fee was applied. In many

cases, these were individuals who were coming through our nominee program and then were moving on, over time, to becoming citizens of the Yukon and Canada.

Those fees, I believe, were really contemplating the individuals potentially returning to the Philippines. So, we had a conversation — we were the first jurisdiction in the country to move on that particular topic — and very positive and cordial conversations back and forth between our officials and the officials there. We have continued to have great support from the consulate in Vancouver and continue to have very strong conversations.

I think what inevitably might have to happen is that we might have to do this virtually, once the final details have been solidified. At this point, most of the work has been done. It is groundbreaking for the Yukon to be leading that, and I am quite proud of the work that has been accomplished to date.

What folks within the Filipino community can share with you — and one of our newest members of the Assembly — it is very significant to have the Minister of Labour here at the Transportation Museum, the federal Minister of Labour in the Yukon. Inviting him to be here, and to do that work, was something that was a first for Canada's north.

Ms. White: Previously, there was a lot of conversation between me and the previous Minister of Education, but whether it was economic or whether it was immigration — in my mind, when someone who comes from another country applies to come to Yukon as a nominee, we in Yukon may look at it as an economic opportunity, but a person coming to the territory definitely looks at it as an immigration opportunity. We sometimes see the lack of balance between what someone is trained to do and what they're doing when they come, because it is an opportunity for folks to immigrate.

When that program moved to the Department of Economic Development — and previously, this was not my area, so it's exciting to be back. Currently, how many nominees do we have registered as employees in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: If the member opposite can give me a little flexibility, I'll just go through and try to summarize just a bit about the program. We are utilizing this immigration program to meet our identified needs in Yukon businesses, both urban and rural. In 2020, the Yukon nominee program utilized its entire base allocation. So, the number of individuals on an annual basis is 190 nominations, and that's the second year in a row that we have used that.

In the earlier part of the 34th Sitting, I know that we had not, at those times, used our full allotment, but in the last two years, we have. Yukon's allocation from the federal government for the Yukon nominee program in 2021 will be 300 people, an increase in our base from 190 to 220. The Government of Yukon administers the two immigration programs in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — the Yukon business nominee program and the Yukon nominee program.

To give a bit of background on some of the numbers — I should have most of these, and if there's more detail required, I will provide that. In 2020, the Yukon nominee program approved nominations for 229 nominees. This consists of:

Under the critical impact workers, we had 177; skilled workers, 43; and express entry, nine. The top five countries of origin for the Yukon nominee program in 2020 were: India with 90; the Philippines, 58; Japan, 14; China, 11; and France, seven.

The top five occupations filled by nominees in 2020 were food-counter attendants, kitchen helpers, and related occupations, which was 69; early childhood educator, 23; light-duty cleaner and related occupations, 20; cashiers, 16; and retail salespersons and sales clerks, 16.

Since 2007, the Yukon nominee program has received applications from over 450 employers to address labour shortages, approving 1,751 principal nominees to date.

The average application processing time in 2020 was 93.2 days, or 13 weeks. In 2018, the immigration unit, as we just touched on, was transferred over.

It gives a bit of a broader macro answer to how many people have gone through and what we had last year, but I think the question really focused on the total number of people now in the program. I can endeavour to get that answer and bring back where we are at this particular moment with nominees over the last number of years.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. One of the reasons I was asking about the total number is that, when a nominee is accepted into the program and comes to Yukon, within the first six months, typically, people apply for permanent residency. Then, there is sometimes up to an 18-month, or almost two-year, process. Once they are a permanent resident, it is very exciting, because it means they have the ability to move freely throughout the country.

The one reason I was also asking about the number of nominees — we have seen in the past, for example, unfortunately, where employees are vulnerable. They are here at the behest of employers, and there can be troubles. I had asked previously, when it was under the Department of Education, about whether or not there were random site tours and checks, making sure that folks were doing well. One of the challenges — and I think the system changed — was that people were being interviewed with their employers in the same space. One could understand that, if things were not going well, it would be really hard to speak freely.

Can the minister just confirm that there are still site visits making sure that nominees are safe and happy in their positions?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, absolutely, there is monitoring of the individuals who are in the nominee program. There are, to my understanding, site visits still conducted. It has been a learning experience here with this responsibility. Of course, even the questions, and particularly the questions from the previous Leader of the Third Party, gave a sort of passive education about what some of the challenges were in this particular area.

I would say that what we are trying to do is just have accountability throughout the immigration ecosystem, whether it is understanding how folks and individuals are being treated in the workplace — I will get some clarity around whether or not the employers are still there from time to time. As part of our immigration strategy, we were also going out to individuals

who had gone through the nominee program and then became permanent residents.

They had already used the program, so then asking them to come back and reflect on their experience about how the department did — if we were getting it right, what was their experience from a client-centred perspective, but also, if they felt supported in the work that they were doing at that time. Of course, to speak bluntly, we were doing it in a way that — the relationship between the unit and that individual had lapsed, and so there was hope that with those questions, they could feel very comfortable in reflecting on what their experiences were.

That is the approach we have tried to take and that we continue to ensure that the individuals who are here — as our communities become extremely multicultural, not that it hasn't always been — but when we look at the number of individuals, and when I look at the data of people coming from so many different places, we continue to be focused on ensuring that individuals are treated with the appropriate respect and properly, as per the agreement — the trilateral agreement that is in place. For us in the department, there is a mandated obligation within the trilateral agreement that those responsibilities are undertaken.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that the minister mentioned the trilateral agreement, because I was going to ask if that was still a thing. The reason that is important is that it is an agreement signed by the Yukon government, the employer, and the employee, and it talks about the relationship — also making sure that protection is put in place for the employee.

One of the challenges we have seen, kind of ongoing, in the last year with COVID, of course, was that people's applications to the Government of Canada — so, the federal government — for permanent residency were being halted. We saw some real barriers put in place with the inability to access language classes, and more than just the classes themselves, to access the exams that you needed in order to complete your application process.

Can the minister let me know if that backlog has been cleared up, especially making sure that people who were trying to apply through this process weren't punished — that it wasn't a punitive process — if they were unable to access what they needed at the time, to make sure that they were able to stay in Yukon and to not be deported?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: My understanding is that, during this COVID period, there has been flexibility, both at the federal level and at the territorial level, to ensure that these unique circumstances were taken into consideration, especially when there were documents or a process that was required and, because of COVID, that process couldn't be done at the same pace as it was before.

There still continue to be different scenarios. I know that the unit just had — and the deputy minister just provided me with information this week — I believe the Canadian embassy in New Delhi has been closed since April 5. Because it's closed, there's a hindrance there for individuals who are Yukon nominees who are moving to the Yukon, because they can't get their paperwork concluded. There have been impacts here, and there are impacts to people who were waiting to move here.

I don't know of situations where that flexibility wasn't granted. I can try to get a better, broader sense of some of the bigger delays, but I think that both Canada and the Yukon have done a really good job of ensuring that we supported those individuals and we understood the uniqueness of this particular situation, and we gave flexibility, in many cases, to ensure that folks felt supported and safe and respected.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just in closing, if we're not going to have any more questions, it's appropriate again to thank the officials who have been here the last number of days, waiting to have an opportunity to come in and support the deputy minister, Mr. Justin Ferbey. A real pleasure, as well, having an opportunity to work with our director of Finance and using her extensive expertise to advise and her passion for the department, with Beth Fricke here.

As well, I just want to take a moment to thank Mr. Steve Rose who has been here and who has spent time supporting many members of the Legislative Assembly — truly committed to ensuring that he still understands what's going on in the world of economic development here in Yukon.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in 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: Ms. White 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 \$22,292,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,111,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$23,403,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First 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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would first like to invite our officials to the Legislature today. We have our deputy minister, Nicole Morgan. Welcome and thank you so much for being here. We have Andrea McIntyre, acting director of Finance for the Department of Education. I would also like to acknowledge Jackie McBride-Dickson who is retiring after 30 years of service to our Government of Yukon.

She has done a tremendous job, and I know that she is going to be missed by the department. I'm really wishing her well in her well-earned retirement. I am sure that she is going to enjoy herself, working on their family business, and really wish her well.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to present the Department of Education's 2021-22 mains budget. Over the past year, we faced an unprecedented set of challenges due to COVID-19. In order to quickly respond, we prioritized and worked together to adapt operations and adjust resources to ensure the health and safety of our students and staff while maintaining continuity of learning.

While the past year has been difficult for all of us, through it all, Yukoners have demonstrated incredible resilience. As we look toward pandemic recovery, we are focusing efforts to ensure that our education system, at all levels, provides positive outcomes for students and advances Yukon's social, economic, and community goals.

This budget will allow us to achieve a number of educational priorities, including: supporting early childhood learning and development efforts so that children can make an effective transition into their school years; responding to the Auditor General's recommendations to improve educational programs, services, and outcomes for Yukon students in collaboration with First Nations and educational partners; ensuring that our school curriculum reflects the diverse needs of Yukoners, including First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being; continuing work on a number of capital projects to ensure that our schools meet community needs; supporting the transition of Yukon College to Yukon University; and utilizing increasing funding to support Yukon's changing labour market needs.

The health and safety of our students and staff remains our top priority. With COVID-19 still impacting our day-to-day lives, we have developed a budget that will provide the resources needed to manage emerging needs resulting from the pandemic while building a bright future for Yukon families.

In 2021-22, the department has a total budget request of \$244,891,000. Of this, \$220,118,000 is requested for operation and maintenance. This represents a \$16,875,000 increase over last year's budget, primarily for the important implementation of the universal childcare and collective agreement obligations.

The remaining \$24,773,000 is for critical capital projects. This represents an increase of \$49,000 for the 2020-21 capital budget. The department has carefully considered the resources that it needs to adapt and improve supports for learners and how those funds can be strategically allocated to achieve the greatest impact.

I will now go over some key initiatives — certainly not all — in more detail.

The Policy and Partnerships branch provides leadership for support for activities that enhance Yukon's partnerships and policy initiatives. The branch includes strategic support, curriculum and assessment, French programs, training programs and post-secondary education, and the labour market, as well as early learning and childcare.

The branch participates in local, national, international, and internal Yukon government management discussions about post-secondary education and labour market activities. We are requesting \$50,401,000 for operation and maintenance funding for these program areas. This is an increase of \$15,041,000 over last year, which is largely due to the implementation of the universal childcare.

Investing in children is a priority for our government. We know that investing in high-quality early learning and childcare in the earliest stages of a child's development is key to later success in school, which contributes to productive and healthy adults, families, and communities. We also know that families are struggling to afford the costs of childcare, and we are taking action to make life more affordable.

On April 1, to support early learning initiatives and coordinate services, the childcare services unit transferred to the Department of Education from Health and Social Services. This is part of our ongoing work to provide more integrated, collaborative programs and services that will better meet the needs of Yukoners and Yukon families.

With this in mind, one of the most significant increases in our budget this year is the introduction of a universal childcare model. As per recommendations outlined in the 2020 *Putting People First* report, the department started implementing a fully funded, universal childcare model that is available to Yukon families who attend childcare with participating licensed operators.

The early learning and childcare unit has been allocated \$25,202,000, and \$12,751,000 will support the implementation of a universal childcare system that will provide families with more options to improve children's learning outcomes.

There is \$1,148,000 requested for increased staffing, materials, and engagement to implement early learning and universal childcare. A \$920,000 increase is also proposed to increase childcare operational funding for the rural sustainability project and to support early learning programs for First Nations.

Moving to this universal childcare system will: put more disposable income in the hands of families; provide parents with more choices if they want to work outside the home; ensure that families can access high-quality, affordable childcare options for their children; and increase accessible training opportunities for day home and daycare providers to support continued integration of preventive and early learning supports.

On early kindergarten, to complement universal childcare and ensure consistent and equal early learning opportunities across our rural communities, we are working toward a full-time early kindergarten and kindergarten programs in all rural Yukon schools.

We are working with Yukon First Nations, school councils, schools, and their communities to ensure that this program meets their specific needs. We will move forward together when they are ready. We have budgeted \$817,000 to enhance these early kindergarten programs. Early kindergarten programming is being designed for children who are four years of age and provides a literacy-rich, play-based learning environment to support their transition to kindergarten. Increasing access to quality early learning opportunities will allow families to take advantage of work opportunities, ease the financial burden for Yukon families and caregivers, and help close the gap to early developmental opportunities between Yukon's rural and urban children.

Implementing early kindergarten programs in the Whitehorse-area schools will be explored in the longer term.

We are very excited to be moving forward on these early learning initiatives, both universal childcare and enhanced early kindergarten, which will support and improve our long-term health and education outcomes for Yukon children, families, and communities.

Another major initiative under the Policy and Partnerships branch is support for curriculum implementation. We are requesting \$470,000 for ongoing curriculum implementation with \$150,000 specifically used to support the expansion of early kindergarten and rural communities. All grades in Yukon schools are now following Yukon's modernized K to 12 curriculum, which is designed to incorporate future skills, Yukon's context, and Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The new curriculum is designed to be student-centred with more hands-on learning opportunities, more career and finance education, and reflective of the needs of communities and Yukon First Nations. We will continue to develop and distribute guidelines, materials, and professional development to educators, including working with Yukon First Nations on additional materials and supports for teachers to enrich student learning about Yukon First Nations.

The Policy and Partnerships branch continues to administer a variety of programs to support post-secondary education, including the Yukon grant, student training allowance, Yukon excellence awards, Canada student loans, and a variety of scholarships. This budget allocation of \$6,811,000 is for training programs. We recognize that adult education has been significantly impacted by COVID-19.

Department officials are working with other jurisdictions to monitor how adult learners are impacted by COVID-19 and, where possible, we continue to mitigate financial impacts and address specific needs toward access to learning.

The Policy and Partnerships branch also provides important programs for the training and certification of apprentices and trades workers in Yukon and administers the student training and employment program, also known as STEP, and the Yukon summer program. Apprenticeship training at Yukon University and Alberta institutions are currently being offered in a new blended format, incorporating online and in-person learning. This is similar to other jurisdictions across Canada.

The Policy and Partnerships branch leads kindergarten to grade 12 French and second-language curriculum assessment and cultural support through the following programs: French immersion, intensive French, core French, and option-plus. A total of \$1,398,000 is being requested to support this work.

We are requesting \$10,161,000 to support labour market funding programs, including the labour market development agreement, the workforce development agreement, and the community training funds that support training and enable Yukon workers to find and maintain employment.

Labour market transfer agreements from the federal government provide \$7,435,000 annually to strengthen Yukon's labour market. This funding is delivered through three programs: building up support for organizations, staffing up support for employers, and working up support for individuals.

Education continues to work with First Nations, employers, service providers, and other colleagues at Economic Development, Tourism and Culture, and the Agriculture branch of Energy, Mines and Resources in developing initiatives to support Yukon's economic recovery.

The Schools and Student Services branch delivers public school education for more than 5,700 kindergarten to grade 12 students across 30 schools and alternate program sites in Yukon.

This includes French immersion, distance and home education through the Aurora Virtual School, and flexible learning options through the Individual Learning Centre. The branch includes kindergarten to grade 12 programs, student support services, technology and student information, and facilities and operations, as well as working collaboratively with CSFY.

A total of \$103,563,000 is requested to support kindergarten to grade 12, with \$94,902,000 of funding allocated to approximately 873 FTEs. This represents a \$1,226,000 increase for K to 12, due to the YTA and YEU collective agreement increases offset by two-percent YEU vacancies and one-percent YTA vacancy factors.

Based on increased enrolment, we are also requesting a \$728,000 increase for six FTEs for teachers.

We have also allocated \$667,000 to support an increase of 5.5 FTEs for early kindergarten in rural communities. The second learning during COVID-19 survey completed in November 2020 identified the need for more academic supports.

Additional supports for 23 educators and \$150,000 for tutoring programs were allocated in 2020-21 based on what we heard through the continued work with school administrators to monitor student learning across the school year.

The cost associated with these time-limited educator positions are covered under Canada's safe return to class fund.

The Schools and Student Services branch supports educators in identifying and developing supports for students to learn skills and outcomes identified in the curriculum, as well as special education programs to support their learning needs. A total of \$3,026,000 is requested for Student Support Services, which covers areas such as psychological services, speech language programs, occupational therapy, sensory impairment, social and emotional supports, and safe and caring school policy support.

We are committed to providing effective learning supports to Yukon students and continuously work to improve these services. As members are aware, a review of how inclusive and special education programs are provided in Yukon is underway. I will speak more about the review shortly.

A total of \$1,870,000 is requested to support Technology and Student Information. This unit manages the student information system privacy management and is also responsible for resource services and digital tools and content for school. This team plays an important role in our response and recovery to COVID-19 as we continue to modernize our curriculum and engage in blended learning.

A total of \$8,714,000 is requested to support the work of the CSFY. They are responsible for providing French language programming to eligible students in the schools in the Yukon and oversee three schools: École Émilie Tremblay, which is K4 to 6; and CSSC Mercier, which is grades 7 to 12; and École Nomade offers supports for distant learning and families doing home-schooling.

As part of the settlement with CSFY, the government and CSFY agreed to establish a funding formula for determining the school board's annual budget. This includes a change in accounting practice regarding the transfer and recovery for certain CSFY staff salaries. This change in accounting practice created a significant decrease in the CSFY's transfer payment agreement and ultimately to the department's first supplementary budget in 2020-21.

For 2021-22, the funding for CSFY is as follows: \$7,187,000 for CFSY staff salaries and utilities paid by the department, and \$1,527,000 for operational funding through CFSY's transfer payment agreement. A total of \$8,167,000 is requested to support facilities, planning and maintenance, health and safety, student transportation, and custodial services in Whitehorse schools.

Madam Deputy Chair, I am halfway through my opening comments. I recognize that I have one minute. There are areas in capital that I would have moved into, with some detail around each project. I will move into those as they come up, I suppose, during general debate today. I look forward to engaging with the members opposite.

Mr. Kent: Madam Deputy Chair, I thank the minister for her opening remarks and welcome the officials who are

supporting her today. I also thank those officials for the briefing that we received on the budget and on the supplementary budget from last fiscal year.

I will just start with a couple of questions. Normally, the Spring Sitting is when the annual report would be tabled for the Department of Education. I am curious if we can expect that before the Sitting is completed on May 31 or if that will come in the fall.

I have just one further question here. Going through the documents provided by the department at the briefing, it looks like there are going to be 53.74 additional full-time equivalents. I am hoping that the minister can confirm that number for me, and then I will have just a couple of questions around the number of FTEs. How many are on term versus permanent? How many will be in the schools, such as teachers or custodians, versus working centrally in the department? Those were the questions that I had around the FTE count and the annual report.

Just while the minister is speaking to officials, I remember the other question that I had around FTEs, and that is: How many are existing FTEs? How many are being transferred in from, say, Health and Social Services as part of the early learning and childcare initiatives?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the first question around the annual report, yes, we will be tabling that before the end of this Sitting. That's very near completion, and I look forward to tabling that soon.

In terms of the FTEs, in the O&M mains, the variance that we had was — sorry, we had a full count of 43.93 under the 2021 FTE summary. There are also an additional two for capital positions, and we have 7.8 transferring from Health and Social Services. That brings us up to the 53.74 FTEs.

Perhaps, if there is anything I have missed on that — I think you were also asking potentially about term and permanent, and how many are central and with the department. Is that correct?

Mr. Kent: Yes, that's correct. I think the minister did answer that. It was 7.8, I think she mentioned, coming in from Health and Social Services. So, of the total of 53.74, how many are term? How many are permanent? How many are centralized in the department versus in the schools, including, I think, there are some custodians who are on the list as well?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We will get back to the member opposite with those precise details that you are requesting today. I thank him very much for the question.

Mr. Kent: I wanted to touch on the individualized education plans, or the IEPs. Obviously, there was a lot of discussion in the abbreviated Spring Sitting before the election was called. Those conversations picked up after we reconvened after the election. I am kind of curious, with respect to the confidence and supply agreement that has been signed between the Liberals and New Democrats — there is a reference in there to reverse the changes to the IEPs. I know that we touched on this in Question Period a couple of times, so I hope, with the support of officials, the minister will be able to tell us how many students have been moved off of the IEPs since this started, I believe, in the fall of 2019. I am assuming that will be

the total that need to be moved back onto IEPs. Could the minister give us a status report, as well, on where we are at? My understanding from reading the confidence and supply agreement is that these changes need to be reversed by a week from tomorrow, May 28 — on the one-month anniversary of the signing of the agreement.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm happy to stand today to speak to this question. I know that it has been spoken about a number of times in Question Period, and I'm happy to have the officials here today to work with us on talking about where we're at with the individualized education plans.

I just want to start by saying that we are working closely with our partners, with the New Democratic Party, and absolutely recognize the importance of these plans for our students. I am happy to stand today and talk about the actual numbers that we are dealing with.

The individualized education plans are, and will continue to be, a legislated support for students in need of special education programs. Based on the data set in the active Aspen system, there were 477 individualized education plans at the start of the 2019-20 school year; 62 plans were transitioned to student learning plans, with 38 in 2019-20, and 24 in 2020-21. No individualized education plans were transitioned to behavioural support plans.

There were 400 students with individualized education plans as of May 31, 2020, and individualized education plans are typically discontinued when the following occurs: the student completes their educational program; they leave the territory; or at the request of a parent or guardian.

I'll just go into a little bit more, in terms of how we're working with families and timelines. School staff are reaching out by letter and/or phone to parents and children who were transitioned to a student learning plan to review their child's learning plan and provide them with the opportunity to return to an individualized education plan and to address any outstanding concerns.

A family who wishes to continue with the student learning plan will not be required to reinitiate an individualized education plan. Initial contact and conversations with families will occur before May 28 with the expectation that all individualized education plans and student learning plans will begin implementation for the start of the 2021-22 school year.

With the end of the school year fast approaching, staff, students, and families are not expected to meet during the summer break.

Mr. Kent: Given the lateness in the day and a conversation that I had with the Leader of the Third Party, I'm going to ask one more series of questions and then I'll cede the floor to her for the rest of the day. I'm hoping that Education comes back to the floor in our last four days just so we can get a few more questions in that we have.

The last question is a capital question with respect to portable classrooms. We know that, in this budget, there is \$4 million identified for portables at Robert Service School and \$1.7 million identified for other portables. At the briefing, I think we were told that those two other portables are destined for Selkirk Elementary School and Hidden Valley elementary

school. If the minister could confirm that for us and give us an update, as well, on when the construction will begin or when tenders will go out for these portable classrooms so that hopefully they can be in service for the fall when school returns.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will start with the Robert Service School module. \$4 million has been allocated in this budget toward the module project, which is 100-percent recoverable from the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. The project to replace old modular classrooms has advanced past the design phase, and we are working toward a tender. Demolition of the old portables is expected this summer. We continue, of course, to work with the Dawson school community and, as I said earlier today in Question Period, I am planning a trip to Dawson tomorrow. I will meet with the school community and with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other partners involved in this overall project and with other priorities for the community.

In terms of other modular schools, Selkirk No. 2 will happen this fall. I know the member was also asking about Hidden Valley. We are still at the site-selection phase for that particular module, but it is a high-priority module, as enrolment at Hidden Valley School is at, or near, capacity. Government is working with the Hidden Valley School community on ways to optimize the space utilization at the school. As I said, we are still at site selection for placing the modular school classroom at the school, and we continually work with our school communities to explore ways to ensure that each school facility continues to meet educational programming needs, as well as the needs of students, staff, and the community.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for sharing the time today. I greatly appreciate it.

I have quite a few questions about early learning and actually a lot around the direct operating grant. So, the DOG, or direct operating grant, is something that is calculated, and it is awarded to, or transferred to, childcare facilities depending, from the outside anyway, on a complicated series of calculations. I wanted to know if the minister could walk me through the process of a direct operating grant application and how it is calculated for individual centres.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I hope the member opposite affords me a little bit of flexibility. I'm not as intimate with each program as the previous minister was, and these are very detailed questions that I really want to be able to provide a good answer to. The new funding model that became effective on April 1, 2021 — the government budgeted \$25,202,000 in 2021-22 to support the new program. All licensed operators had the choice to opt into the new program within two years by signing the transfer payment agreement. As of April 1, 2021, every licensed operator in the Yukon, except for Watson Lake and Mayo, had opted into the new program. So, we are still working with those communities.

I recognize that your question is around the application process, and I will bring that back in a written legislative return — in terms of that entire process that operators are going through at this point. I'll stop there for now.

Ms. White: This possibly highlights a good reason why I asked for a briefing of the new childcare programming from

the officials — only because it could probably save a lot of questions.

So, I'm just going to ask a follow-up question for clarification. Under the new programming, starting in April this year, does it mean that centres no longer have to apply monthly for the direct operating grants?

Hon. Ms. McLean: That is correct; they do not have to apply monthly. There is a transfer payment agreement in place and that alleviates that need.

Ms. White: I appreciate that, and that's possibly why the links no longer open anything on the yukon.ca website — maybe because they're no longer needed, which is great news.

Under those transfer payments, is there ever any conversation or discussion about what a full-time program looks like?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Can you ask that again? I didn't quite hear the last part of it. Thank you.

Ms. White: One of the reasons why I was bringing this up was, after lots of conversations with childcare providers previously, one of the concerns they had was around the definition of what "full time" was and the complication that, when a provider was trying to figure out where they fell, you couldn't find policies online — you couldn't find printed policies or an understanding of where things came from.

One of the questions that folks had was: What is "full time"? What does a centre need to do to be operating full time? Is it five days a week? Is it 38 hours? Is it 38 hours spread out over multiple — it's a question of what is required to be a full-time operating childcare centre.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Deputy Chair, it really depends on the agreement that the centre enters into with the department. There could be variations; i.e., there could be a centre that operates in the early morning or has varied hours. It is according to circumstances for each centre. I would like to just point out that these agreements are renewed, or looked at, yearly, in terms of adjusting to ensure that the department is flexible with the centre that is providing the service.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

This week — and it is something I have asked on more than one occasion: What is Yukon government doing to support those individuals, or those families, who do not work the standard Monday-through-Friday job? We know that, for example, a fair number of Yukon government facilities — whether we are talking about continuing care or group homes and others — have shift work, where it means the centres are staffed 24 hours a day. Of course, there is the same challenge on weekends. What is the government doing to support the creation of those sorts of spaces for Yukon families who do not work standard work hours?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are dollars being provided to centres to provide childcare outside of those kinds of standard hours. We pay for flexible spaces with various centres — and there are a number of them that are actually doing this now — so that we can provide the flexibility for parents who are working different types of hours or need childcare outside of their regular nine to five. This is to the licensed operators.

Ms. White: One of the challenges that we also highlighted — for example, the unfortunate reality that Pelly Crossing’s daycare facility burned down in a fire last year, and they’re working to hopefully get another centre up and running in one of the new house builds that’s happening. But currently, Pelly Crossing and Ross River both don’t have licensed daycares. So, what is a family, a parent, or a child supposed to do in either of those two communities right now?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We continue to work with our partners to determine the best way to enhance early learning programming in rural communities.

I know that I have stood in the Legislature just in this sitting talking about the gaps that we do have in a number of our rural communities. The conversations are actively happening with these communities and with others that were mentioned today. Our goal is to ensure that all rural communities have the resources and training that they need to provide early learning programs that meet the needs of their learners in their community. This is, of course, part of the whole goal of providing the best early learning opportunities for children in all of our communities and this is something that we will continue to have as a priority for our department. As the early learning and universal childcare programs are evolving, we will be working with all of our partners, and for sure our rural partners.

Ms. White: I will just highlight to the minister and her officials that I am going to jump around as we have 15 minutes before the end of it.

Is the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and the Chiefs Committee on Education being included in the reporting of the Auditor General of Canada’s report on the audit of Education in Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are, of course, working with Yukon First Nations to ensure that schools meet the needs of Yukon First Nation students and to offer all students opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation histories, cultures, languages, and ways of knowing, doing, and being in all schools. We, of course, will continue to work with partners, with First Nation governments, to improve education outcomes for students on a government-to-government basis, as well at the community level and by collaboratively making broader changes to the Yukon education system.

We recognize the value of the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate and what it adds in supporting this work, and we’re working collaboratively with them to increase these opportunities, including connecting their education advocates with our schools and other opportunities to collaborate and work together. In terms of other specifics that have come from the Auditor General’s report — and I have spoken about this a couple of times now, during Question Period — some of our actions, since the release of the audit report, include education agreements with all Yukon First Nations, a student-data sharing MOU, and a data working group with Yukon First Nations. We have invested \$1.8 million in new funding to support the joint education priorities with Yukon First Nations at both the collective and community levels. We’re working with Yukon First Nations on a new teacher resource and professional

learning tool for Yukon First Nation languages, culture, history, and ways of knowing, doing, and being in all grade levels and subject areas.

We’re engaging with Yukon First Nations on a collaborative framework and student outcome strategy. We’re working toward a First Nation school board, and we have launched a review of inclusive and special education. I am anticipating that I will be in receipt of that report soon and that there will be very tangible and immediate steps to begin addressing the outcomes and the findings of that report. It’s going to be instrumental in helping to guide us, as we go forward together, in a collective way.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I recently had the great pleasure and honour of meeting with the Yukon First Nations Chiefs Committee on Education and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. One of the things that was pointed out to me as being a symbol of success, and something that they suggested I read — and I have, and I appreciated it — is the Mi’kmaq education agreement between the Mi’kmaq Nation and the Government of Nova Scotia.

The really incredible thing about it is that it was a clear demonstration that self-determination led to better outcomes. It is really interesting. When I’m reading it, you would almost think that it could be applicable right now to where we are, with a 30-percent less graduation rate and things like that. One of the things they had pointed to was to look at that, among many other things.

One of the questions that I had was, knowing that the First Nation initiatives — so the ADM position was created a number of years ago, and the minister can correct me about when that was. But, at any point in time, has that been reviewed to make sure that it’s meeting what the original intent was that was set out between First Nations and the Department of Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Chair. I’ll try to give a quick answer because I know that we’re running out of time today, but our government took action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s call to action 62, which calls upon government to establish positions at the assistant deputy minister level, or higher, dedicated to indigenous content in education. Over this past year, the ADM and First Nation Initiatives branch have worked to clarify their mandate, which included consideration of the joint education priorities and services that it provides.

I will give an example. The branch has established a position focused solely on Yukon First Nation language education. The ADM and the branch have also supported ongoing collaboration and discussion with Yukon First Nations on pandemic response, for instance, and recovery for Yukon schools and support for students during the pandemic. We are going to continue to work with the Chiefs Committee on Education. In fact, I have a meeting with them very shortly today. We are continuing to work in partnership with them.

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

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McLean that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Madam Deputy Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by Ms. McPhee 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. 2, entitled *Act to Amend the Child Care Act (2021)*, and directed me to report it without amendment.

Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 201, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Seeing the time, 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. Tuesday.

The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled May 20, 2021:

35-1-5

Yukon Child Care Board Annual Report 2020-21
(McLean)

Written notice was given of the following motion May 20, 2021:

Motion No. 61

Re: establishing a Special Committee on Electoral Reform
(McPhee)