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HANSARD

Monday, April 8, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Nils Clarke

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2019 Spring Sitting

SPEAKER — Hon. Nils Clarke, MLA, Riverdale North
DEPUTY SPEAKER and CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Don Hutton, MLA, Mayo-Tatchun
DEPUTY CHAIR OF COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE — Ted Adel, MLA, Copperbelt North

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Hon. Ranj Pillai	Porter Creek South	Deputy Premier Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources; Economic Development; Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee	Riverdale South	Government House Leader Minister of Education; Justice
Hon. John Streicker	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes	Minister of Community Services; Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate; Yukon Liquor Corporation and the Yukon Lottery Commission
Hon. Pauline Frost	Vuntut Gwitchin	Minister of Health and Social Services; Environment; Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation
Hon. Richard Mostyn	Whitehorse West	Minister of Highways and Public Works; the Public Service Commission
Hon. Jeanie Dendys	Mountainview	Minister of Tourism and Culture; Minister responsible for the Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board; Women's Directorate

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Ted Adel	Copperbelt North
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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North

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New Democratic Party

Liz Hanson	Leader of the Third Party Whitehorse Centre
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 8, 2019 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. Dendys: I would like to welcome a number of very special guests here today.

I would like to start by asking my colleagues to help me welcome the family of George Dawson, one of the men who worked on the *SS Klondike*. We are going to be doing a tribute to the *SS Klondike*. I would like to start with his family: his son Harold Dawson, Sr.; George's granddaughters Jessie Dawson — who is also an elected council member for Kwanlin Dün First Nation — Hilda Dawson, Loretta Dawson. I think Mary hasn't come in yet — great granddaughters Charlene Dawson and Rachel Sutherland. Thank you so much for coming here today. It is such an important part of our history.

I would like to also welcome Diane Wilson from Parks Canada, Stella Patera from Parks Canada, Linda Johnson, Anne Leckie, James and Judy Miller, and elder Frances Woolsey from the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and a very special honoured guest, Ione Christensen — thank you so much for being here today. It's such a great honour to stand and introduce you to the Legislative Assembly today, although I know you need no introduction.

Thank you very much, all of you, for coming today.

Applause

Mr. Adel: I would like my colleagues to welcome to the House Barry Waite from the Yukon Rotary Music Festival — and also music teacher extraordinaire, supporter of the festival, a proud mother of participants and a participant herself, my wife, Barbara Adel.

Applause

Mr. Gallina: I would like to take this opportunity to recognize a number of individuals who have joined us in the gallery here today. This past weekend, the hockey team I play for, the Dirty Northern Muckers, took the Canyon City Hockey League championship. We were underdogs coming into the tournament and had to fight through the backdoor to reach the cup final, which saw us play on Sunday at 10:00 a.m. and again at 12:00 p.m.

I wanted to specifically recognize our goalie, young Mason Driscoll. At 15 years old, Mason joined our team halfway through the season, and this past weekend, we

nominated him most as the valuable player for his tournament performance, including a shutout in the final game, which we won 3-0.

With that, I would like members to join me in recognizing my teammates here from the Dirty Northern Muckers: number 2, Tyler DeJong; number 77, Bryan Lalage; our captain, number 8, Andrew Connors; our goalie, number 1, Mason Driscoll — and his father, Dona Driscoll. Welcome.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: I just noticed in the gallery and would ask members to join me in welcoming from Carmacks EMS, Lorraine Graham, as well as Mike Wasylyk.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further introductions of visitors?

Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of 2019 Rotary Music and Dance Festival

Mr. Adel: I rise today for this tribute on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government, the Yukon Party, the Official Opposition and the Third Party. I rise to pay tribute to the 2019 Rotary Music and Dance Festival. Dance is now included on a permanent basis, as reflected in the festival's recent name change.

The Rotary Music and Dance Festival is a high-profile event that promotes discipline, training and practice, combined with a passion for the arts. Every April, Yukon music and dance students showcase the results of their hard work, performing as individuals and groups for Outside expert adjudicators.

The 2019 festival runs from April 3 to 13, with free performances open to the public at the Yukon Arts Centre, Riverdale Baptist Church and, this year, the Heart of Riverdale in Whitehorse.

The festival has long been one of the harbingers of spring at our house. For many years, we would scurry back and forth between the Yukon Arts Centre, the church and our house — moving more students around, getting kids moving ahead and away we go again. It was a culmination of lessons and a chance to see how the students have built on last year's success. My wife has been actively involved in music and with the festival for many years and would sit in support of her piano students and watch our son in two categories — piano and voice.

This year, eight recognized adjudicators are here from across Canada. They offer each of the over 1,300 performers constructive feedback on technique, style and ability and progress. The adjudicators also provide coaching, encouragement and inspiration. The adjudication process deepens the learning for each performer, as well as for observing students who are encouraged to watch, listen and learn from others. The festival format gives our musicians and dancers a moment in the spotlight and important performance

experience. Performers are also recognized in newspaper and radio features — some for the first time, and it's a real boost.

We celebrate all of the participants, many of whom excel in multiple categories and different styles. Festival vocalists and instrumentalists perform as individuals as well as in choirs, groups and bands. Dance categories include classical, contemporary, stage and street dance. The festival even offers young composers, songwriters and choreographers a forum to showcase their own creations.

Starting in the late 1960s, the Rotary Music and Dance Festival is one of the longest-running festivals of its kind in Canada. The opportunity to participate year after year fosters a love of performance and the arts that becomes generational. For some, this opportunity to develop their passion and talent carries them into university programs and even professional careers. For many others, participating in the festival leads to a lifetime of participation in community music and dance.

The Government of Yukon is proud to support the Rotary Music and Dance Festival and all those who make it possible. I would like to recognize Henry Klassen, retired music educator and one of the co-founders of the festival, who sends his regrets today because he couldn't be with us because he is busy of course with the festival. Thank you to Henry and his wife, Joyce Klassen, for their decades of dedication to the arts and art community. People like that make this thing happen.

We would also like to thank Barry Waitt, president of the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, and Bonnie Venton Ross, the festival chair. On behalf of my colleagues in this House, a huge thank you goes to the Rotary Club of Whitehorse, the Rotary Music and Dance Festival organizing committee, volunteers, sponsors and the many local businesses for their support, as well as to the adjudicators, teachers, parents and performers. It is this broad community effort that makes the Rotary Music and Dance Festival such a rich and successful event. Congratulations on another successful year.

Applause

In recognition of 90th anniversary of the launch of the *SS Klondike*

Hon. Ms. Dendys: It is my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Third Party NDP caucus to pay tribute to the 90th anniversary of the launch of the *SS Klondike*. It was 90 years ago that the British Yukon Navigation Company, the river transportation division of the White Pass & Yukon Route railway, launched the first of two *SS Klondike* sternwheelers. They joined the over 300 steamboats that would ply the waters of the Yukon River from the 1860s to the 1950s.

With the establishment of a land link from the coast, first via the Chilkoot Pass and then the White Pass & Yukon Route railway, the upper Yukon River became the main access route into the interior of the territory. These boats were integral in the movement of people and goods throughout the gold rush era in Yukon and Alaska.

Entering the steamboat business in 1900, the British Yukon Navigation Company became the near-exclusive

operator of the busy Whitehorse-to-Dawson route in the span of one year.

With the continued need for transport from Whitehorse to Dawson and in response to the silver ore boom in the Mayo district in 1929, BYNC set about building a ship of a bigger size and load capacity than had ever been seen before on the Yukon River. The ship would be called the *SS Klondike*, taking its name from the Han word "Tr'ondëk", meaning "hammer water", in reference to the method of driving stakes into the river bottom to which the Han people would affix their fish traps.

Constructed in the Whitehorse shipyards of materials brought in entirely from outside of the territory, the *SS Klondike* could take over 300 tonnes of freight — 50 percent more than any other boat on the river. What's more, it could do so without the need to push a barge, thereby reducing fuel consumption and transit time. Amazingly, the *SS Klondike* could do all of this while still maintaining the shallow draft and size requirements necessary to travel down the Yukon River.

Being 210 feet from stem to stern and 41 feet wide, the *SS Klondike* was powered by twin jet condenser engines, cranking out 525 horsepower. It required a crew of 23 and could carry a total of 75 first- and second-class passengers. Fully loaded with cargo, it still sat one metre below the surface.

Under favourable conditions, the downstream run to Dawson took the *SS Klondike* 36 hours, with two stops to replenish the wood supply needed to keep the boilers fired. The *SS Klondike* could burn as much as two cords per hour. The return trip upstream back to Whitehorse would take up to six days, with as many refuelling stops.

With the fluctuating currents, tight bends and shifting sandbars, navigating the sternwheeler down the quick and twisting river required great skill, instinct and teamwork. Lack of experience or a moment of inattention could result in peril, which is just what occurred in 1936 in the Thirty Mile area of the Yukon River when the *SS Klondike* struck a rock bluff. Miraculously, no lives were lost, but the ship, which had come to rest on that sand bar, was beyond repair. Launched in May of the year following the accident, the *SS Klondike II* was virtually identical to the original *SS Klondike*.

This ship resumed the BYNC's regular service and also contributed greatly to the war effort, helping move personnel and supplies during construction of the Alaska Highway. By the early 1950s, sternwheelers as a means of cargo and passenger carriage had fallen drastically out of favour, and most boats were being decommissioned. White Pass partnered with Canadian Pacific Air Lines in an attempt to keep the *SS Klondike II* going as a pleasure cruise vessel, but the operation proved to be too expensive.

In 1955, the future of the ship was very uncertain. Then in 1960, with transportation in Yukon having been newly declared as a theme of national historic significance, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources acquired the *SS Klondike II*. In commemoration of its role in building the Yukon, we now know that the ship was dedicated

as a National Historic Site in 1967. It has remained an iconic draw for locals, visitors and historians ever since.

On this, the 90th year since *Klondike I* first hit the waters of the Yukon, I wish to salute the many pioneers who built, piloted, stoked, repaired and passengered her and the *Klondike II*.

I also wish to commend the dedication and innovative work that Parks Canada has done and continues to do in preserving and interpreting the legacy of the *SS Klondike*. Seeing it as often as we do — whether it is driving our kids to school, walking the Millennium Trail or in the winter adorned with Christmas lights — I know that as Yukoners, we sometimes take this incredible piece of Yukon history for granted.

For this anniversary, I encourage Yukoners to visit this important site and look at it with fresh eyes, for the story told by the *SS Klondike* is not just the tale of the last and mightiest of the sternwheeled, steam-powered, fast-watered or shallow drafters, it is the story of the timeless heritage and beauty of one of the world's greatest rivers and the world that grew alongside it.

I would like to take just a quick moment to recognize the good work of Anne Leckie, who has been the chair of our Yukon Heritage Resources Board for a number of terms. I just thank you very much for your work and I thank everyone for coming for this important tribute today.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to not one, but two *SS Klondike* sternwheelers. Ninety years ago, in 1929, *SS Klondike I* was launched to carry cargo, fuel and passengers from Whitehorse downriver to Dawson City, Yukon and return. Sadly, the *Klondike I* met its demise in 1936 at Thirty Mile on the Yukon River and it had to be decommissioned, as it was severely damaged. Salvaging the boiler and as much as they could, it was all used to build a new boat. In 1937, enter *SS Klondike II* — the largest sternwheeler in the fleet.

From the gold rush era until the early 1950s, the rivers were the highways. Just as we use semi-trucks today to haul cargo and supplies, the steamboats filled that role — and what an industry.

Building, servicing and maintaining a large fleet of steamboats was done first by the British Yukon Navigation Company and later by White Pass & Yukon Route. Over 300 boats were used on various rivers. The first boats began their journey from St. Michael on the Bering Sea to Dawson City, but it was quickly realized that it was a shorter distance using White Pass's rail system than boating to Dawson with supplies and returning upstream with ore from the mines.

To keep those boats going, those big boilers needed wood — a lot of wood. Wood camps were set up all along the banks of the river so that they could stop and load with fresh fuel. Many First Nation people worked for and cut wood for the steamboats. In fact, my mother-in-law, Ada Van Bibber, grew up at such a camp at Hell's Gate, just south of Fort Selkirk.

Her father, Ralph Blanchard, and her brothers helped supply wood for the steamboats for years.

When the highway was built to Dawson City, the need for the steamboats stopped. The *SS Klondike* tried to operate as a cruise ship, as was mentioned, from 1953 to 1955, but cost was prohibitive and there was a lack of interest. The ship was docked at the Whitehorse shipyard, and in 1966, it was donated to Parks Canada.

The move from the shipyard to its current location took three bulldozers, eight tonnes of Palmolive soap, a crew of 12 men and three weeks. By June 24, 1967, Canada's centennial year, the *SS Klondike* was crowned a museum ship. I found a few comments from TripAdvisor — a guest from Yellowknife says — and I quote: "A really cool boat with a really fascinating history." Another, from the Netherlands: "The *SS Klondike* is so much related to Whitehorse, the Yukon and Klondike goldrush period, that this is a must see when in Whitehorse."

We have a young history in Canada compared to Europe and other areas of the world, and it is important to preserve our artifacts to the best standards. Parks Canada has done an outstanding job in the Yukon.

Most of us know the lyrics to Al Oster's song *Paddlewheeler* — and I won't sing:

Paddlewheeler, paddlewheeler;

They say you are the queen of this land.

For 50 years and some she made the Dawson run, then came the day they pulled her on to shore.

They set her high and dry while the river flows on by, and there she's gonna rest forever more.

So she sits majestically by the Yukon River, and we get the pleasure of her presence. Thank you.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have for tabling a response to questions asked by the Leader of the Third Party on March 14, 2019, regarding mine closure security.

Hon. Ms. Frost: I have for tabling a "what we heard" document about aging in place, a report summarizing the feedback we see from Yukoners during our public engagement on aging.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Mr. Adel: I have for tabling the 13th report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, dated April 8, 2019.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop rules for off-road vehicles to protect our environment and keep people safe.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to respect the importance of ensuring that the process for considering potential changes to the electoral system is fair and is not biased toward the governing party by taking the following actions:

(1) ensuring that the appointment of any commission on electoral reform is done through an all-party process that gives equal say to every party, instead of allowing the Premier to personally hand-pick the members;

(2) developing the terms of reference for any commission on electoral reform in collaboration with the Official Opposition and the Third Party; and

(3) committing that if changes to the Yukon's electoral system are recommended by any such commission, no changes will be made until and unless Yukoners vote in favour of the proposed changes in a referendum.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to invest in the development of an electric vehicle fast-charging network in Yukon to create the infrastructure necessary to make electric vehicles a more reasonable option for Yukoners, and that this government actively engages with the governments of British Columbia and Alaska to explore the option of installing electric vehicle charging stations at key points along the Alaska Highway to create an electrified transportation corridor.

Speaker: Are there any further notices of motions?
Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: The Minister of Economic Development's record of "all talk, no action" is growing. Let me quote from the government's minutes that they took at a procurement meeting on October 5, 2018. They read as follows: "At a recent meeting with industry and First Nation development corporations, the Minister of Economic Development said the FN Procurement Policy would not be separate from the new general Procurement Policy."

Well, Mr. Speaker, the new general procurement policy is out, and guess what — no First Nation procurement policy. The Minister of Economic Development once again talks a good game, but he just couldn't get 'er done.

Since the Minister of Economic Development can't deliver on his promise to have the First Nation procurement policy completed, can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us when it will be done?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am very happy to talk about this subject this afternoon. I thank the Leader of the Official Opposition for bringing it up.

Mr. Speaker, we are partnering with Yukon First Nations to develop a First Nation procurement policy within the broader government procurement policy. This policy development partnership is first for Highways and Public Works and indeed this government. We are working with the First Nations to build this policy together. I have personally reached out to all the First Nation leaders in the territory about this initiative. We are having great conversations with First Nation leaders and First Nation representatives on the development of this policy. It is a very important piece of our procurement improvements for this government.

That said, we are working with our First Nation partners to the timeline that suits all of us. We are not going to impose a deadline just because people think that it's necessary.

We are going to work closely to get the work done properly, and when that work is done, we are going to bring it forward. We are still hopeful that we will be able to get this policy in place by later this year, but we are going to, as I said, see how it goes with our First Nation partners and develop a policy that works for them and for us as well.

Mr. Hassard: So it sounds like now there is no deadline. Speaking of broken promises, the Minister of Highways and Public Works and this liberal government had promised to have all of the procurement policy recommendations completed by the end of 2018, and now we have seen that this promise has been broken. Of course, as I just mentioned, the Minister of Economic Development promised that the First Nation procurement policy would be completed at the same time, but, once again — all talk and no action. In the policy that the government did release, it says that the First Nation section of the policy is a placeholder and that whenever they figure out the First Nation policy, they will just insert it.

But it's not as simple as just saying, "Okay, we have inserted this section." If the First Nation procurement policy is going to be meaningful, then it will have impacts on the entire document. So can the minister tell us if they will have to rewrite other sections of the policy? If he says no, will he provide us with the advice from the department backing up his claim?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am going to begin my answer this afternoon on this follow-up question to deal with the preamble to the member opposite's remarks. I think we have been very clear that we have actually delivered on the commitment and promise that we made to deal with all of the recommendations of the Procurement Advisory Panel that the members opposite

commissioned and said that they would have in place within five years. Well, it is two years into our mandate and we have delivered on all of those recommendations, Mr. Speaker, and the fact is that I have always said that procurement is a journey, not a destination.

So, in delivering on all of those recommendations, is procurement fixed? No. Is it improved? Absolutely — vastly improved — but we have more work to do, and we are going to do that work. Part of that work is working with our First Nation partners to have a First Nation procurement policy within the general procurement policy, which we passed on April 1 of this year, fulfilling the promise.

Mr. Speaker, since June 1, 2017, we have tendered 189 value-driven tenders that included mandatory First Nation participation as well as northern knowledge and experience clauses. Significant examples include the Nares River bridge replacement project in Carcross and phase 4 of the Whistle Bend subdivision.

Mr. Hassard: I didn't hear much of answer, so we will try this again.

We have the Minister of Economic Development who promised that the First Nation procurement policy would already be done, but he couldn't deliver on that. We have the Minister of Highways and Public Works who has broken the promise to have contracts out by March three years in a row now. I guess we shouldn't be too surprised that when the two of them team up, they can't seem to deliver. Every time they mess up, they blame the opposition or else they blame hard-working officials in the department. You only need to look at the time when the Liberals sole-sourced a contract for the francophone school to a Northwest Territories company, only to have the Minister of Highways and Public Works blame officials.

Another procurement promise was to implement all of the advisory panel recommendations by 2018. One of those recommendations was to improve the bid challenges, so can the minister explain how his new policy improves the bid challenges?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's a very surprising preamble and sort of synopsis by the member opposite. I will say that right now, as promised, once again, we have tendered the seasonally dependent contracts — more seasonally dependent contracts than any previous government in recent memory. I think we are up to \$66 million this year by the end of March. Another \$20 million — roughly \$19 million is coming. That is a tremendous achievement on behalf of the Department of Highways and Public Works and they are doing an admirable job, allowing our contractors to plan their very short construction season, which was the goal. I am very happy with the work that we announced just last week on that file.

I am surprised the members opposite haven't brought it forward except in sort of sideways comments, but the fact is that they don't want to because it is another success on behalf of this government. I am very happy of the work we have done on that file. I am very happy to have all of these contracts out early in the year to help facilitate the planning of our construction industry contractors.

The member opposite has mentioned a number of other things. He's talking about procurement, and I am happy to talk about procurement and the way we have done the 10 \$1-million exceptions. I have talked about that an awful lot, but I am sure there will be more follow-up in the future. I'll leave it there.

Question re: Ross River School

Mr. Kent: On November 21, 2017, the Yukon Party Official Opposition asked the government to put the Ross River School in the five-year capital concept.

After ignoring our calls to make the Ross River School a priority, they finally listened and 471 days after the Official Opposition originally called for this, the Liberals put Ross River School in the capital concept. We thank the government for listening for once, but I wish they hadn't been so stubborn because now the community has lost over a year of work on this file.

When we first asked the minister to take action on the school, he said they couldn't until — and in his words — he could — and I quote: "... make sure that the school is not moving any more before we start levelling."

This year's budget has \$1.4 million budgeted for the Ross River School. Can the minister confirm that he has made sure that the school is not moving anymore?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What I can assure the member opposite is that the school is safe — that it is safe for students and teachers — which is one of the principle concerns I have always had on this file. I will say to the members opposite that we have had engineering studies done again this year to make sure that is the case. I can assure the residents of Ross River, the students and the teachers using the facility that it is safe to inhabit, to deliver school work in the classrooms. So that is where that lies.

To the members opposite: It is in our five-year capital plan — helping the construction industry and Yukoners know what our plans are going forward. That's a very important document and we will continue to publish it and refine it as new information and new money and new processes manifest themselves.

The Ross River School is settling due to the freezing and thawing of permafrost under the school. This school has a long history of work needing to be done, and over the years, a number of structural repairs and interventions have taken place. The latest building condition report completed in February this year confirms the school is safe for occupancy.

Mr. Kent: We saw in a recent *Whitehorse Star* article that, although the government budget is \$1.4 million for the Ross River School, the actual bids came in at \$200,000 more, meaning that even before work has started, the project is overbudget.

When I first read that story, I have to admit, I was a little surprised because this minister often gets up in the House and brags about how much better he is at budgeting and how much more thoughtful he is to prevent projects from going overbudget. I guess he must have been sick the day they were

budgeting for this one. Not to worry, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure in his answer he will find a way to blame somebody else.

Can the minister tell us if the extra \$200,000 to pay for this will come from another project or funding envelope or will the government simply go a further \$200,000 into debt to pay for it?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate that the member opposite can read the tender forecast system, but the fact is that tender has not yet been awarded. When it is, we will make the announcement. We're currently reviewing the costs. It has come in overbudget, and because of that, we are reviewing the tender to see if there are ways that we can actually deliver the contract within the budget that we had allocated for the project.

Mr. Kent: As we pointed out, the request to put the Ross River School in the capital concept came from the Yukon Party. After over a year of hounding the government, they finally listened to us. Last week, we were struck by comments made by the MLA for Porter Creek Centre during debate when he said, speaking about items in the budget — I'll quote: "It would be faulty for anyone to assume that just because it has been budgeted for, it is going to go forward."

That has left us wondering about the government's commitment to the Ross River School. As you know, they have abandoned previous promises for Ross River, like the emergency housing they promised during the election. So might they abandon this project? We are left to wonder. The capital concept lists that the Ross River School work will happen every year over the next five years.

Can the minister tell us what work will be happening over the next five years and how much is budgeted for those future years? Will they commit that they won't abandon their five-year commitment to Ross River School?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I can say and commit to is that we will work with the community of Ross River on education; we will work with the community of Ross River on infrastructure — which is more than I can say for the opposition.

I think I just heard the opposition taking credit for us putting money in the budget for Ross River School, yet I sat in opposition for five years where the community was asking for the last government to please put some money into that school, and again, we didn't hear the commitment. They could have taken credit when they were in government. They're trying to take credit right now for a department that is doing some substantial work on procurement and substantial work on the five-year capital plan.

We get criticism from the Yukon Party quite often about the five-year capital plan, yet this was a government that couldn't even do a one-year concept. They, on many years, would always put out on the budget much more — millions of dollars of capital projects — than they could even accomplish in a year. What we're doing is we're aligning our departments together. Highways and Public Works has been working with Finance more so than they ever had before to make sure that we can prioritize the projects that the communities have already prioritized and work with those communities to make

sure that we accomplish these goals, working with municipalities and First Nation governments again.

I'm very proud of the work that the Department of Highways and Public Works has done on this particular project because finally there's action in Ross River when it comes to that school.

Question re: Yukon Liquor Corporation social responsibility

Ms. Hanson: The NDP was pleased to see that in July 2018 the Minister responsible for the Yukon Liquor Corporation set out performance expectations for the corporation. The document states that the corporation shall be guided by the government's priorities including a people-centred approach to wellness and strategic investments to build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities.

The Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual Report 2017-18 includes the following goals: to be a leader in social responsibility and to support the government's people-centred approach to wellness through the safe, legal and responsible sale of beverage alcohol.

Can the minister explain exactly how the Liquor Corporation is promoting social responsibility and what the Liquor Corporation is doing to further a people-centred approach to wellness?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite because we do believe in focusing on the well-being and investing in the health and wellness of our citizens. We don't believe that overconsumption is healthy for us as a territory and so we want to have responsible consumption. There are a number of ways in which that work is being undertaken. I will focus on one right now in this response and hopefully we will be able to get up and talk about others.

In particular, what we are doing right now is that we have started the work of re-writing the Yukon *Liquor Act* and we have been out engaging with municipalities, with First Nations and across communities. We have had an advisory group pulled together which had the RCMP on it and the chief medical officer of health's office. We have sat down and had many conversations across the territory about how we should fundamentally put at the front — in the preamble of that act — that social responsibility is the job of all of us.

That is an example that we are working on right now, and I am happy to get up and discuss other ways in which we are looking at social responsibility through the Liquor Corporation.

Ms. Hanson: The 2015 *Yukon Health Status Report on Substance Use* noted that Yukon adults over the age of 25 made an average of 1,000 visits to the Emergency department annually that were directly associated with drug and alcohol use, including acute intoxication and withdrawal symptoms. There were also over 400 annual visits for injuries directly related to alcohol and drug use. Yukoners are well aware of the problems in our territory related to the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

In 2016, the regulations regarding liquor off-sales hours of operation were changed to extend them from 9:00 a.m. to

2:00 a.m. The *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, passed last year, proposed the same hours.

For a government that prides itself on evidence-based decision-making, can the minister explain the evidence supporting extending the hours of operation for liquor or cannabis from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m.? Can the minister explain how these extended hours contribute to community wellness?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I think it is a very reasonable question to ask, and that is what we have been doing right now with respect to the review of the Yukon *Liquor Act*. This is exactly the question that we have proposed, internally and to the public, around the times of off-premise hours. The question previously about why did it go to 2:00 a.m. — it was in alignment with our establishments being open to those hours. The question that we are asking ourselves now — for both cannabis and liquor — is: What should be the hours for off-sales? We have been working to gather that evidence and we are bringing it in for the conversation under the review of the *Liquor Act*.

I am sorry — I don't have the answer today, because that is all part of the work that we have been doing. What I will say is that we definitely have been gathering that information to consider as we work to bring the *Liquor Act* back in front of this Legislature.

Ms. Hanson: Some may say that it may be hard to get that horse back in the barn.

Over the last 10 years, the Yukon Liquor Corporation has seen a 54-percent increase in revenues from the sale of alcohol. Off-sale premises continue to open in neighbourhoods and communities. Many Yukoners have expressed concern over the impact of extended off-sale hours.

Being a leader in social responsibility and using a people-centred approach to wellness is more than giving token teddy bears to seniors or children. Our ER is overextended, the emergency shelter is seeing increased numbers since allowing intoxicated individuals, and we have one of the highest alcohol consumption rates in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister now direct the Yukon Liquor Corporation to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Health and Social Services and the chief medical officer of health to do a detailed impact assessment of the extended off-sale hours on community wellness?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have already directed the department to work closely with the chief medical officer of health. I have met with him twice, just on this very topic, to talk about wellness. I let him know that my door is open. I have certainly worked very closely with the Minister of Health and Social Services, and we have had many conversations about wellness and addictions across the territory. I agree that the overuse of alcohol is a serious problem for us as a territory. In fact, I tabled a report here in this Legislature talking about the costs and harms of alcohol use. So it is not a surprise, and I do believe that we need to take responsibility.

There are things that I want to try to point out. For example, with cannabis, we made priorities around displacing the black market. We also made a priority on focusing on health and wellness. One of the ways in which you displace the black market is by ensuring that there is access to cannabis through a legal means. Sometimes those priorities are intentioned. That is what we are working on.

As I said, I am happy to get the information from the chief medical officer of health and his office. I think it is critical work that's necessary for our review of the Yukon *Liquor Act*, which I do hope to get back in front of this House this coming fall with a new act.

Question re: Health and social services programs and services review

Ms. White: As part of the comprehensive health and social services review, the Government of Yukon is reviewing non-governmental organizations funded through the department and the funding that they receive.

One of the goals of the NGO review is to find — and I quote: “NGO efficiencies”. We are curious about how the government might react upon finding those efficiencies in a Yukon NGO. Let's say, hypothetically, that the Government of Yukon found out that a certain NGO had a 60-percent inefficiency. How might the government react? Would the government find it acceptable if, a year after that NGO identified that inefficiency, they couldn't tell the government how much it costs? Would the government accept a response from the NGO telling them that they could not provide that information because it was difficult to get?

Hon. Ms. Frost: NGO funding clearly is a priority. I have spoken to that. I have met with the NGOs, and I will continue to meet with the NGOs to speak with them about their program budgets, their funding and their service delivery model and to look at future years, their budgets and the supports that they require — and effectively implementing the resources that they require in collaboration with the NGOs.

We have committed that and we will continue to ensure that we have collaborative support and transparency as we deal with and work with our NGO partners reflecting enhanced services.

Clearly, we want to address some of the pressures and understand their pressures as well as we look at our departments. It's not something that can be done as a stand-alone initiative. We clearly need to work in collaboration so that we can better align and support them as they grow and our changing demographics.

Ms. White: I framed my previous question in the way that I did because this government is talking about finding efficiencies in NGOs when it cannot seem to grasp a massive inefficiency in one of the most expensive sectors of our health care system. This government quite simply is not holding itself to the same standard that they expect from Yukon NGOs.

Last March, this government announced that more than 60 percent of all emergency room visits were avoidable, yet a year later, they cannot tell us how much those visits cost.

They either have not taken the time to figure out that number, or they have and are refusing to disclose it to this House.

Either way, this government's indifference and inaction when it comes to avoidable emergency room visits is a complete failure of leadership. We have asked how much these avoidable emergency room visits cost on five separate occasions, and we haven't received an answer.

Perhaps, though, the minister knows the total cost of running three emergency departments in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, what was the cost to operate Yukon's three emergency departments in the 2018-19 budget year?

Hon. Ms. Frost: I appreciate the question. Certainly it is something that we are looking at and we are looking to work on with our partners — the Yukon Hospital Corporation as well as Health and Social Services. We are looking at cost drivers. We are looking at eliminating the pressures. We have done a significant job. I want to just commend the department — commend Health and Social Services and the Hospital Corporation for working very effectively on bringing around services that better align with elimination of pressures at the hospital.

We have done so with the re-enablement units at the Thomson Centre, added supports at the Sarah Steele facility and added support at the emergency shelter. Certainly that is something that is a key priority and we will continue to look at that.

With regard to how much it's costing, how much we are saving, what pressures we are seeing at the hospital — Mr. Speaker, I take that very seriously and certainly want to look at effectively eliminating pressures at the hospital so that those individuals who require acute support and emergency support are provided the services in a timely fashion.

Right now, we are seeing pressures that really we shouldn't be seeing at the hospitals. I recognize that. I appreciate the question because it's something that we certainly take seriously.

Ms. White: I asked how much it cost — money that has already been spent. We know that this government transfers just under \$75 million to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for operation and maintenance. We know that over 60 percent — or nearly 25,000 visits to the emergency room — are avoidable by the government's own admission. We know that emergency room visits are one of the most expensive forms of health care the hospital provides. We also know that many individuals and Yukoners across Yukon are in dire need of government support, yet they are turned down because the government doesn't have the money.

Could the government extend coverage to adults with diabetes to provide them with constant glucose monitors that improve the quality of their life with the money they were spending on avoidable ER costs? Could they increase the medical travel allowance to ensure that Yukoners seeking treatment Outside can actually afford to do so? The answer is: We don't know because this government can't find out.

Mr. Speaker, does this government recognize that their inaction to curb avoidable ER visits takes away from many Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. Frost: It's very interesting — with regard to grasping, I certainly understand the pressures. The department understands the pressures as does the Hospital Corporation. That's why we are working collaboratively to address that through the comprehensive health review process. We will continue to do that good work and look at managing historical expenditures in order to provide sustainable health care and social supports that meet the needs of Yukoners.

With regard to this government's commitment to helping Yukoners lead healthier, happier lives — as part of that, we are dedicated to creating programs and services that are tailored to Yukoners. We have done quite a lot already. We have PTSD legislation and mental health awareness. We have looked at collaborative care, increases to monitoring ER visits. We are doing that with our partners. We are looking at collecting data. The member opposite is very interested in data. As we speak, we are collecting the data, recognizing that we are looking at our outlying communities. We are looking at our hospitals in Watson Lake and Dawson City. We are looking at health care centres and trying to look at avoidable pressures where we can and work more on preventive measures.

Question re: Robert Campbell Highway maintenance

Mr. Hassard: On March 6, 2018, the Minister of Highways and Public Works told us that they had started design work to pave the stretch of road between Faro and Ross River. Two days later, he went on to speak about — in his words, I quote: "... paving and engineering work we're doing on the Ross River stretch..."

On March 18, 2019, he again said — and I quote: "We are continuing the necessary engineering work planning for the paving of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River."

So now it has been over a year since the minister promised that he would pave the road between Faro and Ross River. Can he update us on this work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As the member opposite knows — we have had these conversations in budget debates as well — this year, we have money in the budget to continue to stockpile material and aggregate for the Faro to Ross River stretch. We are doing the engineering work necessary in preparation to get BST on that stretch of road.

Mr. Hassard: Last year, while speaking to reporters, the minister said that he had budgeted \$500,000 for the design work for paving the road between Faro and Ross River. As a side note, that money was nowhere to be seen in last year's budget documents.

We also haven't been able to find out any information on the contract registry of a \$500,000 contract for design work to pave this stretch of highway. Can the minister confirm if that design work is now complete? Did he end up spending the full \$500,000 that he had talked about?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can tell the member opposite that we have — I am just checking our five-year capital plan — between \$1 million and \$5 million in the five-year capital plan

for the Campbell Highway over the next five years. I just wanted to make that point. As for the member opposite's comments on the Faro to Ross River stretch, we in this government recognize that stretch of road is something that we have to deal with. Within the constraints that we have within the budgeting process, we are going to tackle that road. We are currently still in the design stage, but we are gathering aggregate and other materials in preparation for doing that work.

As I said to the community of Ross River, I am going to work with them on many projects, including the Ross River School, and we will be having conversations with them in the coming months.

Mr. Hassard: Last year, we asked the minister why the paving of this stretch of road wasn't in the five-year capital concept and, as is often the case, he wasn't able to give this House a clear answer. After going upstairs and reading his speaking points, he went out and tried to explain a bit further to media.

Just to quote the minister directly from the *Yukon News* article dated March 13, 2018, the minister told reporters — and I quote: “I anticipate that next year if I can get money out of the budget, we'll start construction of that road between Faro and Ross River. I'll be asking cabinet for those funds next year and we'll see how it goes.”

We do not see paving for this stretch of the road in the five-year capital plan, so can the minister confirm if he asked Cabinet to approve funding to pave this stretch of road between Faro and Ross River? Since it's not in this year's budget, can we assume that his Cabinet colleagues rejected his request to pave this section of road?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is asking. Are they asking me to breach Cabinet confidentiality? I don't quite understand. I don't know how their government operated, but that's not how this government operates.

I have indicated to the members opposite that if they want to read it, we have a five-year capital plan — the first five-year capital plan this government has ever produced. It is actually the second iteration of that five-year capital plan. It has a ton of really good information. I do encourage the members opposite to familiarize themselves with that document. It does have money in it for the Robert Campbell Highway over the next five years. They can certainly read that and see what it is. There is a lot of other material in that five-year capital plan that the members opposite seem to be either blind to or ignoring. I am not sure why that is the case, but we will continue to stand by the documents we are producing.

We have identified a lot of work that needs to be done by this government in our budget. We have the capital budget capped at \$280 million. That is to provide a meaningful number — a good number. It helps drive the economy. What we are doing within that \$280-million capital envelope is make sure that we're getting as much money as we possibly can into the hands of Yukon companies. We are seeing that in the provision of the new French language high school and other projects.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Mr. Hutton): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Do members wish to take a 15-minute 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. 210: *First Appropriation Act 2019-20* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Education

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am welcoming Nicole Morgan, the Deputy Minister of Education, to a seat now here in the Legislative Assembly, as well as Jackie McBride-Dickson, who is the director of finance for the Department of Education. I thank them both for joining me here today.

I do have some opening remarks with respect to the Department of Education, and then I'm happy to entertain questions from members opposite.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to present the 2019-20 budget for the Department of Education. With this budget, the Government of Yukon will continue to provide consistent funding for education to effectively support the learning needs of Yukoners, from kindergarten to adult learning to post-secondary.

Education is essential to the prosperity of our communities and Yukon's economy. The world continues to

change at a rapid pace, with evolutions in technology and culture. Yukon children and citizens need to keep pace with these changes and be able to navigate and respond to new opportunities and challenges.

The school system of today is very different from the experiences many of us had when we were there. Modern instructional and assessment practices are being brought into our schools to deepen student learning as we continue the implementation of the new curriculum.

This year, Yukon schools are building on the K to 9 curriculum implementation, which started last year, by introducing the new grade 10 curriculum. In fall 2019, they will start teaching the new grades 11 and 12 curriculum, and at that point, all grades will be learning the new curriculum. These changes will ensure that students develop the skills they need to thrive throughout their lives and prepare them for their post-secondary education, career goals or life challenges.

Yukoners need to have opportunities to be life-long learners, to be able to continue to grow and acquire new skills and navigate the modern world. We recognize that Yukon learners have diverse educational needs and some need different supports to succeed in their studies.

As we modernize education, we continue to ensure that students receive the targeted learning supports that they may need to achieve their own learning goals.

Modernizing education is more than new content, skills and development and what is learned in class; it is also about how we actually learn — recognizing and adapting to different learning styles and types of knowledge and ways of learning and teaching.

Mr. Chair, Yukon students are learning from teachers, elders, knowledge-keepers, community members and from each other. They are learning in a variety of ways. They learn in the classroom from an elder or a knowledge-keeper, in a lab from an experiment, in comments from their study group, in their classroom on an iPad or from a book, on the land from the world around them, and everything in between.

An important part of modernizing education and the new curriculum has to do with reconciliation and how we work with Yukon First Nations to teach all Yukon students about Yukon First Nation languages, history, culture and ways of knowing and doing. Through our work with Yukon First Nations and our new curriculum and through the joint education action plan and individual education agreements, we are collaborating to support First Nation learners and to provide all Yukon students with opportunities to learn more about Yukon First Nations. We are embedding First Nation cultures, languages and traditions in Yukon schools to benefit all learners.

This is work where Yukon is a leader. We have cooperated with our colleagues across the country and noted that Yukon — while we still have a lot of work to do — is certainly one of the leaders in this area. Yukoners must understand the full history of our past, Mr. Chair, to effectively work together with Yukon First Nations to shape the future.

As we think about the future, we are also modernizing Yukon schools and their learning spaces. Student enrolment in the Yukon — particularly in Whitehorse — is trending up. The government's five-year capital plan identifies new major projects to ensure that school buildings continue to provide safe, modern learning spaces for Yukon students for years to come. This plan begins with a new elementary school in Whistle Bend. A new school in this growing neighbourhood will provide the flexibility and capacity needed to address the aging schools in Whitehorse also in need of seismic mitigation. From there, we will begin to renovate and replace priority schools. This work will ensure that our school buildings are ready for the learning needs of tomorrow's students.

We are also modernizing education at the post-secondary level with the transition to a Yukon university. Yukon university will offer more university-level programs and still provide programs such as diplomas, certificates, career and trades training, second-language support and upgrading. We have heard from Yukoners that this is incredibly important, and we will continue to work with Yukon College as it transitions to a university to achieve those goals. This transition at the university will support the diverse learning needs of Yukoners and train local workers for Yukon employers.

Through all this work, we will continue to provide access to high quality, modern education programs to support all Yukon learners to live happy, healthy and productive lives.

In 2019-20, we have a total budget request of \$214,564,000. Of this amount, \$185,503,000 is for operation and maintenance. The remaining \$29,061,000 is for capital projects. This is an overall increase of \$19,139,000 from last year. Capital funding can vary substantially from year to year based on the requirements and the needs. This increase reflects the significant work we will be starting this year to ensure that school buildings remain safe for available years to come and to continue modernizing learning spaces in the Yukon.

Here is a closer look at some of the items in the budget. Under Schools and Student Services operation and maintenance — Schools and Student Services — formerly called “public schools” — provides elementary and secondary education for more than 5,400 kindergarten to grade 12 students across 30 schools in the Yukon. The division also delivers student support services, student information systems resources and privacy and training programs, which includes apprenticeship, student financial assistance and student employment programs. To support this essential work with all Yukon learners, a total of \$146,576,000 in the 2019-20 budget is requested for both O&M and capital. Of this total, \$117,515,000 is requested for O&M, which is an increase of \$1,892,000 over the last year's main estimates.

I can now give a breakdown of some of those items. An increase of \$2,049,000 is requested to support the new YTA collective agreement. The Yukon Teachers' Association is an important partner in Yukon education, and we have successfully negotiated with the Yukon Teachers' Association

to reach a new collective agreement. Through the bargaining process, we have addressed several long-standing issues related to the terms and conditions of employment in Yukon schools, and we have introduced changes to the *Education Labour Relations Act*. We have discussed that in the last few days here in the House.

Student enrolment continues to grow in the Yukon. To maintain service levels in Yukon schools, we have added six full-time equivalent teacher positions across the system to support this increased enrolment. We will allocate these additional teacher FTEs to schools based on enrolment and student needs, as has been done for many years. \$360,000 is requested to support the additional teacher positions.

With respect to the Yukon Native Language Centre, \$686,000 is requested to be transferred to Policy and Partnerships for the staff of the Yukon Native Language Centre. In 2018, we transferred full control of that Yukon Native Language Centre to the CYFN. This amount reflects the funding for the salaries for the positions that have gone to the Yukon Native Language Centre. This funding will be transferred to the CYFN, as they now hire and manage these positions in their own operation of the centre.

We have \$181,000 requested to provide additional support to the Gadzoosdaa student residence. The student residence provides an option for students in communities to board in town and attend a Whitehorse high school. The funding will support additional supervisors to ensure the health and safety of all students at the residence, and it will also provide additional funds for groceries to continue to provide students at the residence with healthy meals.

With respect to the Schools and Student Services capital budget — capital funding is needed to provide the facilities to safely and effectively run school programs and to support the work of modernizing education. \$29,061,000 in capital funding for Schools and Student Services is requested this year. This is an overall increase of \$19.688 million from last year. Capital budgets can vary substantially, as I have noted, from year to year.

It is our plan to build, renovate and repair schools as set out in the five-year capital plan. I have already noted the Whistle Bend elementary school. In our five-year capital plan, we will initially focus on addressing schools that are quite old and have seismic needs. However, to replace these schools with minimal disruption to school programming, we need additional capacity. To provide this capacity and flexibility to renovate or replace priority schools, we will first build a new elementary school in Whitehorse — the first one in some 27 years. That will be built in Whistle Bend, a growing community. Many families live there with school-aged children. They are choosing to live in that area. A new school will also support neighbouring areas.

The *Education Act* requires that every school be assigned an attendance area. We have had some discussion about that here in the House.

I am mindful of the time, so we will no doubt speak about that again. To note — with respect to that school, \$1.6 million is requested for the design and planning work and site location

identification for a new Whistle Bend elementary school in this budget.

The work is continuing to plan construction of the French first language secondary school. In December 2018, we awarded the design/build contract for the construction of that new facility to Whitehorse's Ketz Construction. That work is underway as we speak, and we look forward to starting the build this spring. \$19.043 million is requested for the French first language secondary school construction project. \$6.242 million will be recovered from the Government of Canada through the Minority Language Education program. They have committed \$7.5 million in total — that being Canada — to the Yukon government for the school.

Modular classrooms — \$2 million is requested to build modular classrooms to support Yukon's growing student enrolment. Work is currently underway to address the situation at Golden Horn Elementary School with a portable. Planning is now happening so that we can have more portables to address issues in the future. We heard last year — and had some lengthy discussion — about how difficult it was to procure portables, so we are planning ahead.

We will also address upgrades to Robert Service School's aging portable classrooms using some of this funding so we can continue to serve the needs there of that school community. We will assess the needs of our schools and determine how and where these portables will be most needed.

We spoke earlier today — there were questions about remediation of the Ross River School, and that work is continuing. The health and safety of the students and staff in Ross River is an absolute priority. Monitoring and assessment is continuing. Engineering teams have reconfirmed that the school is safe to occupy with certain repairs and renovation work. That will continue. In this budget, \$1.4 million is requested to do that work in Ross River.

There is \$1,075,000 requested to complete the site work projects at F.H. Collins Secondary School. There are a number of those, Mr. Chair, that were not completed. When F.H. Collins was completed — you will know that we opened a new weight room building there last week, but there is still an outdoor learning centre, a basketball court, some parking stalls and some additional parking spaces at the technical education wing. Beginning in March, that work is being completed on the new weight room. We expect that those projects will continue over 2019.

The Kluane Lake School relocation is an incredibly important project for this government and for me, as minister, and \$50,000 is requested to continue the planning that we started last year about the Kluane Lake School with the Kluane First Nation. I am sure that I will have an opportunity to speak about that later.

\$500,000 is requested for the replacement of some playground equipment. It is important that we keep that up to date and it is important that children have the availability of those items.

There is \$2,233,000 requested to support the implementation of new technologies in schools, which is also something that I am sure I will have the opportunity to speak

about and which is incredibly important for modern learning and for students to have access to those items.

There are some smaller items — school-based equipment purchases, special education equipment. There is \$300,000 requested for a new information system to support the student financial assistance team, Mr. Chair.

There are some additional requests in this budget that I will no doubt have an opportunity to speak about under the Policy and Partnerships O&M. We are requesting \$26,206,000 for operation and maintenance funding for these program areas, which is an increase from last year of \$772,000. We have spoken briefly about the transfer of the Yukon Native Language Centre to CYFN, and there is money in the budget requested for the labour market development agreement, which is actually a decrease of \$80,000.

Yukon College O&M and capital is an important item in this budget. To support the work happening there, we are requesting \$27,193,000 for the O&M budget at Yukon College. I would like to note that this is a small increase — \$70,000. While the college's O&M increased by \$70,000, there was a capital decrease of \$529,000.

Mr. Chair, I know that I will have an opportunity to speak about a number of these smaller items, but they are just as critically important to the education process and providing great spaces for our students. We are ensuring with this budget that our education system is ready for the demands of both today and tomorrow. We are building new schools and ensuring that our existing schools remain safe and available for now and into the future. We are trying to modernize learning spaces and design spaces to support the use of technology and new curricula. In short, Mr. Chair, we are looking to the future to make the best possible education system for all Yukon students.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the members of this House today and I look forward to their questions.

Mr. Kent: I would like to welcome the officials here today as well and thank them for the briefing that they provided to us on the budget, the materials they gave us and the subsequent response to questions that came back through the minister's office today. We appreciate that.

My first question has to do with the Education annual report. Members will recall that I introduced a motion or gave notice of a motion earlier this Sitting asking that the 2018 Education annual report be made available or be tabled prior to us debating Education. Obviously that hasn't occurred. I looked on the website and it's not up on the website.

When it comes to that annual report under the *Education Act*, section 5 relates to Duties of the Minister and subsection (h) says that the minister will "... table an annual report on the state of education in the Yukon, including reports from each School Board, in the Legislative Assembly during the session next following the end of the year for which the report is made."

These reports are issued on a calendar-year basis. I'm curious: When can we expect the 2018 Department of Education annual report?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. I noted the motion from the member opposite last week and I did not have an opportunity to speak to him about this. The annual report is almost completed — in its final stages. This is the 2018 annual report for the Department of Education, required by the *Education Act*. It is in its final stages of editing and will be produced very soon. Of course it has to be tabled before April 30 here in the Legislative Assembly, and it will be.

I note that many of the topics that are covered in the annual report are things that were asked about by the members opposite at the briefing on the budget for the Department of Education. We provided that briefing and some additional answers to written questions as a result of questions that were raised at that briefing. While I appreciate that this doesn't put the annual report in the hands of the opposition to prepare for questions here, the timing — this is quite a large report and the timing of it just takes time. The editing of it does as well. Of course, the obligation and authority in the *Education Act* to have it tabled before the end of this session will be respected and will be met.

Mr. Kent: I will refer to the 2017 annual report then for some of the aspects that I will be asking about today. I have looked at the stats as well. They're available on the website.

In the 2017 annual report under the "Note" that is just inside the front cover, it says, "Information on the Advanced Education Branch can be found in the 'Labour Market Framework Report' and other reports available on the Department of Education website..."

When I looked at the Department of Education website, under "Labour Market Agreement, plans and reports", the last one was 2014-15. Can the minister either direct me to the more updated reports that are referenced in the Education annual report, or is that the most recent report that is referred to — the one that was produced for 2014-15?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The labour market framework reports, I'm told, are on the Education website under "Publications". My colleague across the way may know that already. We're just trying to confirm whether there are any there that are more recent than 2014-15. Of course, we've committed to having them available on our website as soon as they're available, and I'm just not sure. I will hopefully get a message that tells me which one is the most recent one that's published. If it is not there, we will get a copy of it to the member opposite and make sure it is put on the website as soon as possible.

I am advised that the new labour market framework — work is currently being done on that, so it may be as result of that, the new stats are delayed — but as I've said, hopefully I'll get — if I get a message, I will make sure that I pass that answer across.

Mr. Kent: I'm on the Publications page here of the department's website — when it comes to, I guess, under "Labour Market Agreement, plans and reports" — 2014-15 is the latest one here under that section. There is a training demand report for 2015 as well, but I can't find anything more recent. So when the minister is looking into — or having her officials look into — getting those reports uploaded, will we

be receiving the 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 reports? I guess that's what I'm looking for — because again, it was the 2017 Education annual report as well as the note from the 2016 report that referred any information on advanced education to these labour market framework reports that — and I hoping I'm looking in the wrong spot, but if the minister can commit to getting all of these documents uploaded and updated, that would be great.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I too hope the member opposite is looking in the wrong spot because as far as I'm concerned, if we have those reports, they should be up on the website. We'll commit to looking into that. We have somebody doing that at the moment, but if I know before the end of today, I will say so. Otherwise, we will commit to making sure that whatever is available — the most recent available is provided.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to seeing those reports. Thanks. I appreciate that from the minister.

I just wanted to touch briefly on Education Week. It was something that occurred annually around this time of year — sort of mid- to late April, and last year, it didn't happen and it doesn't look to me like it's occurring this year. Can the minister provide us with a reason or rationale as to why Education Week hasn't happened for the last couple of years including this one?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I spoke with the member opposite about this before, because we had very similar questions about Education Week and why it didn't seem to have as prominent or public of an appearance as it has in the past. My recollection is that there has been a shift so that Education Week happens in a different way from how it used to. First of all, during the Summer Academy, there is a focus on a number of activities that take place with teachers and EAs returning to school which celebrate education — which is similar to what used to happen during Education Week.

We also note that there is a lot of focus on the back-to-school campaign, but a lot of focus on education activities in individual schools. We determined that — not me, the experts in the field — determined that there was not a lot of public interest in the public events that took place and that education events should be focused on individual schools, and that does still happen. People were participating in their local school events, and they continue to do that, Mr. Chair. There were a few public events arranged in the past, but there was not a lot of attendance, I can say.

In August every year, we promote the back-to-school season with information about getting back-to-school routines and activities. That has replaced the general public notice about Education Week. Of course, the Department of Education, individual schools and school communities are trying to focus on education throughout the year, rather than on one particular week of events.

Mr. Kent: I would argue that school communities have done that for a number of years going back — focused on education activities throughout the year. This was just a specific week.

I am just kind of curious about what feedback the minister or the department received from school councils

about Education Week. Is that where the decision to make this change started or was it driven from the department level — as far as this decision to no longer have the Education Week in April, as it has been in the past?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am advised that most of the activities were department-driven and occurred at the department as well as in schools.

Indications were that Education Week, as it was designed — not that it couldn't be done better, Mr. Chair, but as it was designed — was of limited value. Schools have preferred managing local events on their own. As an aside, at a couple of school council meetings that I attended where we talked about this, school councils felt that they could better deal with education priorities in their schools as opposed to having something that was department-driven. It was a department decision, ultimately, but there was feedback from school communities. By school communities, I mean administrators and those in the schools — teachers and others — and the school councils.

Mr. Kent: I will move on. Since we're closing in on 2.5 years into this government's mandate, I thought I would check in on some specific platform commitments that were made with respect to education and some of the items identified in the minister's mandate letter on January 6, 2017, about a month or so after she was appointed to the role of Minister of Education.

When I look at the Liberal platform, there are three areas that sort of jumped out at me as far as being education-related: early childhood, K to 12 education and lifelong learning. We will start with early childhood. It seems a good spot to start.

One of the commitments from the government during the 2016 election campaign was to create structures that closed the gap in responsibility between the departments of Health and Social Services and of Education. Again, this is specific to that early childhood education piece. Can the minister update us on what structures have been created or what progress has been made on this promise so far?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can indicate that there are a number of activities taking place that deal with the commitment to early childhood.

There is cooperative work between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education. I recently visited the Child Development Centre and had some conversations with the folks there about the great work that they do and the transition that we have between students who attend the Child Development Centre and then later attend kindergarten and go through grades 1 and 2 and beyond and how that transition works and how we can do that better to support families in that instance. For the most part, I am told that it works well but that there is always room for improvement, of course.

We have focused on the learning together program, which was recently moved to Elijah Smith, which is a more centralized location. It is a school that has the space for that and where resources can be concentrated for those students who are learning before they enter school. I can indicate that some work is being done with developing a K4 program —

primarily in the communities at the moment, because those schools have space and often do not have a daycare or have limited space in daycare, and an opportunity for children to get acquainted with school and excited about coming to school is a critical project going forward. That work is continuing. While we have not had the opportunity yet to finalize one of those programs, it is an active conversation.

Of course, Health and Social Services has the mandate for early learning. Education's mandate begins at ages 4 and 5 in kindergarten and going forward, but I am excited that we are having conversations both with Education and Health and Social Services about how we can make sure that those two mandates are smooth for families and that they produce services and supports for families. We also know from all of the research that the earlier we have children connected to school, school-like programs or daycare programs with a "you are going to go to school soon" focus, the better students they become and the more they can achieve when they are excited about coming to school.

Mr. Kent: Again, just back to the specific commitment that was made during the campaign — it was to create structures that closed the gap in responsibility between the two departments when it comes to early childhood. Can the minister let me know what new structures have been created? She mentioned learning together. Obviously that was a program that was started previously — I think it was at Selkirk Elementary. It sounds like it has been moved to Elijah Smith Elementary. Can the minister confirm that? I believe it was offered in one of the rural communities — if the minister can let us know if that is still underway.

The minister referenced K4 in rural Yukon, but it was my understanding — I could stand to be corrected — that K4 was already offered in some of the rural schools, so if the minister could identify which rural schools it is currently offered in and which ones are targeted, that would also be helpful.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to try to focus on the specific questions from the member opposite, because I think they are incredibly important.

The commitment of course about closing the gap in responsibilities is what I was talking about. In my view, Mr. Chair, it is critical that we identify the gaps before we can determine how to best address them with respect to early learning responsibilities between Health and Social Services and Education. New structures that have been built to do that — I will say that they are not yet done, because we are working to identify those gaps and find out how we can best serve those students — all students, but particularly those students who are coming to school — early learning education teams and then the transfer into the school social life, structure, a little bit more detail with respect to how kids are transferring into schools.

With respect to learning together — that is correct. It was at Hidden Valley School and transferred to Elijah Smith Elementary School here in Whitehorse. I can also indicate that there is a learning together program in Pelly Crossing and in Watson Lake, which then became K4 in those schools. I am just going to check on the schools.

It might be easier to say that there are a number of K4 initiatives in the rural schools. I just want to say about that, in the rural schools — I have noted already that there is space in those schools, that it is incredibly important to get kids connected to school early on. The project will also be worked on as a priority in Whitehorse, but primarily, the rural schools were the first priority.

There is K4 in a number of rural schools. It is probably easier for me to say the four without K4 — at this point, the Johnson Elementary School, the Teslin School — let me see if I can try that name; I'm going to look for it — the Khàtinaxh Community School in Teslin, where there is no K4 at the moment — the Nelnah Bessie John School and the Robert Service School. Two of those schools have no programs in K4, and two of them have a program but there is no enrolment at this time.

Mr. Kent: The second commitment under early childhood that the Liberals made during the 2016 campaign was to "... research, develop and implement a Yukon Early Childhood Strategy (childcare, development and education), in consultation with early childhood education and health care professionals, parents and First Nation governments, in order to improve developmental and educational outcomes..."

So there are three aspects to that commitment: researching, developing and implementing the strategy. Can the minister let us know which one of those three steps the government is currently at with respect to this strategy?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am afraid that I don't have step one, step two, step three. In my view, as I noted earlier, identifying the gaps — where they are and if there are any — between Health and Social Services, between children in daycare or early learning and then transferring into school situations is absolutely critical.

If we could — if there were unlimited resources and unlimited time — I would be keen to have very young children involved in these kinds of programs. Mr. Chair, I say that we are working toward that. That work continues. It is a partnership between Health and Social Services and Education.

Education is working with them because we understand — as all the research shows — as our Yukon educators, Yukon schools councils, and Yukon school communities know — the more we can provide early learning and early childhood education in communities and in Whitehorse, the better off our students will be. We continue to complete that work.

We are at this stage in the process, as I have noted, where we are identifying the gaps and identifying the needs of children as they enter school, and that informs the process for how we can best do that early childhood work.

Mr. Kent: Just for clarification — is it better to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services about this specific commitment — the Yukon early childhood strategy? Is that the department where this responsibility is right now?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Members opposite are welcome to ask the Minister of Health and Social Services, but we are working on this together. I have noted already that the

responsibility for early childhood education before the age of five for entering the school system is the responsibility of Health and Social Services, but we are working closely together to say, “Are we providing the right service? Are we identifying what children need as they enter school and are we providing services once those needs are identified?”

Mr. Kent: We will look forward to some follow-up on that specific campaign commitment. I am sure that there will be some going forward as we move toward the back half of this mandate.

When it comes to campaign commitments made for K to 12 education — there are a few here that my colleague the Member for Porter Creek North raised during Question Period that I wanted to follow up on.

The first one was to “... enhance education governance, in consultation with partners in education, by exploring the establishment of an additional school board(s)...” Has anything been done with respect to this commitment? Are we going to see additional school boards established at any time soon? If so, what will those school boards be?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think, as I noted in my answer when I was asked during Question Period, there are no plans at the moment to structure additional school boards here in the territory. The enhancement of the Department of Education — if I could break this commitment down a bit — is absolutely critical. That work is ongoing. It has made leaps and bounds under the current deputy minister, may I say, Mr. Chair.

The only school board here in the territory at the moment is the CSFY — the French first language school board. I can indicate that the structure of the governance both of the Department of Education and of our school communities is well-served by our school council process. There are elected officials who put their names forward to work with individual school communities.

In addition to school councils and the important role they play in the governance and the assistance of the department and an individual school, we have reinstated the advisory committee for education. I know the member opposite asked me several questions about that last year. I was concerned that the advisory committee had been inactive for a period of time and that there was some interest at the department in having them remain inactive. Conversations took place. The current and new deputy minister recognized clearly that the importance of the advisory committee on education and the opportunity for that role in our school governance and education governance process here in the territory was critical.

We worked very closely with our partners in education to share perspectives and collaborate to support learners from cradle to career. One way that the Yukon government does that with partners in education is through this Advisory Committee for Yukon Education.

The committee met three times this school year — in September, November and early January of this year. They will meet once more before the end of the school year.

This year, the committee is focused on student input on education, school growth planning, education performance indicators and modernizing learning spaces in Yukon schools.

We note that is sometimes the role that might be played by a school board, and this has been a very effective way of having a variety of perspectives have input into our education system. I can also indicate that the school council process, as well as advisory committees, is in fact in line with other smaller jurisdictions here in Canada.

Mr. Kent: I guess just one follow-up question on that and then I will ask my next question as well with respect to the Liberal platform.

That specific commitment said that “A Yukon Liberal Government will: enhance education governance, in consultation with partners in education, by exploring the establishment of a school board(s)...” I believe the minister said that they’re not going to establish an additional school board, so I’m curious: Which partners were consulted with to arrive at that decision?

I will just leave it at that and then I can ask my next question when I rise again.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: What I want to say in response to this is to emphasize the critical role that school councils play in our school communities in the direction of individual schools and in the overall process where elected officials are consulted and that they play a critical role under the *Education Act* in the current governance structure.

What I also want to say about that is that it is absolutely critical that energy, focus and resources go to working with Yukon First Nations in the area of reconciliation. It is not something that Yukon Education has done well in the past. It is something that is focused on now. We have an incredible opportunity to build relationships with Yukon First Nations, focusing on their priorities for Yukon education. The governance question about school boards versus school councils, in my view, is less of a priority than it is to repair and rebuild relationships with Yukon First Nations and to have them be true partners in education going forward in all of the communities here in the territory.

I don’t think that the former commitment focusing on school boards versus school councils is in fact where our energy needs to go. It is something that has been not discovered, but realized in a more poignant way, and our relationship with Yukon First Nations — their priorities for education — is now the priority and is critical.

School councils are absolutely critical in our current structure of governance, as is the Advisory Committee for Yukon Education and as are our relationships with Yukon First Nations. All of these things come together in order to make education here in the territory better. The time has come to concentrate on the practicalities of how we can improve that, as opposed to changing governance structure. It may be that there need to be adjustments to the governance structure going forward, but it is not something that is being focused on at the moment. What is absolutely critical is our relationship with First Nations and having the wishes that they have for their learners and all Yukon students incorporated into our governance structure, which has not been the case in the past.

Mr. Kent: Just to let the minister know, this was a commitment that she and her party went door to door on in the

2016 election. So if it has been abandoned — I agree that school councils play a pivotal role — but again, for the minister, this was her commitment and her party's commitment to Yukoners during 2016. If it has been abandoned, that is where we are at.

Another commitment that my colleague asked about during Question Period was that “A Yukon Liberal Government will... ensure that schools have the necessary resources (e.g. in-school social workers, psychologists) to facilitate health services work within all Yukon schools...” Can the minister tell us how many additional in-school social workers and psychologists are currently working in Yukon schools as a result of this commitment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, we spoke about this last year. It is an opportunity for us to ascertain what the best possible services are that can be provided to Yukon students and if we are doing that in the best possible way. The health, safety and well-being of students are our absolute first priority. School counsellors are trained and certified teaching professionals who support students in achieving their personal and academic potential. Their role is to provide advice, guidance and resources to help address students' learning needs and to help them plan for life after high school, including post-secondary and career planning. They are, I note, not either social workers or psychologists, but we have those counsellors in addition to the other individuals. We are working with partners to ensure that mental health supports and resources are available for young people at school. It is so absolutely important, Mr. Chair.

In the community, I can also indicate that mental wellness, substance use counsellors and child and youth counsellors are available to Yukon students, both for prevention and for counselling services. Students have access to these services either through mental wellness hubs that service the communities, or schools can make specific requests for services when needed. The mental wellness hubs, as members probably know, are in Dawson City, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, and Carmacks.

There are social workers and psychologists on staff at the Department of Education. There has been a number of discussions in this House and — I assure you — at the Department of Education about reviewing student support services to make sure that those individuals are in schools much more often, are connected through the superintendents and the administration to schools, and are providing the services that students need, when and where they need it.

I do not have specific numbers of the members of staff, but I can undertake to provide that if necessary.

Mr. Kent: We look forward to getting those numbers from the minister — again, respecting the promise that was made by the Liberals in 2016.

A couple of other ones that jumped out at me for K-to-12 education are with respect to the relationship with teachers.

The first one was to “... review teacher hiring practices in conjunction with the Yukon Teachers' Association...” I am wondering if the minister could update us on what has been accomplished to date on that front. The second one is to “...

develop incentives and increase opportunities for teachers in rural Yukon to remain in and integrate with communities...” What work is underway to accomplish that commitment that the government made to Yukoners a little more than a couple of years ago?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just looking for a note with respect to this topic, if I can find it. I can indicate that we are very pleased with the negotiations with the Yukon Teachers' Association.

The number of changes that came out of that negotiation and ultimate collective agreement were in fact to improve hiring practices and the concepts of probation and the concepts of temporary teachers and hopefully to resolve some long-standing issues with the Yukon Teachers' Association going forward. I know that they were pleased about the outcome and I know that a number of teachers are. I can also indicate that the substitute teachers or the teachers on-call hiring practices and the opportunity for them to be represented by the Yukon Teachers' Association was an improvement that, in my view, falls into this category of improvement for teachers going forward.

I can also indicate that the work is ongoing with the Yukon Teachers' Association, that the relationship is critical between the department and the Teachers' Association so that when issues arise, they can be dealt with in a professional and appropriate way for teacher hiring practices.

With respect to some rural teaching positions and the hiring there — very careful care is taken with the Human Resource Services branch and the administration of schools, because it is very important that we have dedicated teachers in the rural communities and hopefully some who will stay there for many years. We encourage them to become part of the community. In fact, that is an opportunity that many young and other teachers take up and we are all beneficiaries — our children certainly are.

Housing for teachers in communities is critical as well. It is an opportunity for us to work on that front. Education has a rural support line under Schools and Student Services to help alleviate housing issues in some of the communities and some funding has been put toward that. We continue to work within available resources to assist staff in rural communities with housing, and we are working closely with the other departments here in government. There are currently 51 Yukon Housing Corporation units for educators in rural communities. As well, some have private leases in communities. That is an important factor for us to address when hiring teachers to work in rural communities.

Mr. Kent: We will follow up with the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation on some of the housing concerns that we have heard from teachers in rural Yukon. We look forward to getting into those discussions at some point later on in this Sitting.

One quick question on the lifelong learning portion of the platform — I didn't have a chance to go through all of the commitments that were made in 2016, but I am sure that we will have a chance going forward to explore some of those in one way or another. Mine is with respect to the Yukon literacy

strategy that was identified here. The specific commitment in the Liberal platform was to "... partner with NGOs, the private sector and First Nation Governments to implement the Yukon Literacy Strategy to develop education, training and literacy programs to help reduce social and economic disparities between Whitehorse and the communities..."

If the minister can provide us with an update on that work — I'm assuming that work is being done primarily through Education. If it's not, she can direct us to the minister who we should ask about that specific commitment.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Literacy issues are absolutely essential skills and perhaps even the number one issue facing those who cannot engage successfully in the labour market in the territory — so it is absolutely critical. There are a number of NGOs and other opportunities for people to enhance their literacy skills and those are all amazing organizations and I want to note that here today.

The new labour market transfer agreements do allow for the development of programs and services to address literacy issues, and efforts continue to explore ways to enhance literacy and essential skills through the new labour market transfer agreements. Literacy and essential skills have been key topics of discussions between the Department of Education and individual First Nation governments regarding their participation and engagement in those strategies going forward.

Work and the lessons learned in creating the Yukon literacy strategy have positively informed the work on the curriculum redesign here in the territory. The K to 12 system identifies the need for more specific focus and definition on literacy and it is a core learning requirement of the curriculum. The strategy's definition of "literacy" was far broader than the core definition in the K to 12 curriculum, and that definition needed to be worked out with respect to next steps.

The member opposite is correct — it is a situation on which we are working together across a number of departments. We're continuing to work on the Yukon literacy strategy for adult learners over the next number of years. The next step, at the time the strategy was put in place, was for that work to continue.

Again, I think this is one of the items where it's not about getting to the end of the path, but in fact it is about creating a path where people can continue to create foundational skills, improve literacy and the opportunity for individuals to enhance their skills. I can also indicate that the foundation skills are part of a new program suite for the labour market, and that comes from the literacy strategy as well.

Work is prominent in this area; it is critical. I want to take the opportunity to thank all of those NGOs, individuals in the department, and others who focus on literacy because it is absolutely essential for our economy, for the health and happiness of Yukon citizens, and for lifelong learning.

Mr. Kent: I will come back to those commitments if I have time before I turn the floor over to the NDP later this afternoon. I just want to move on. There are a number of other

areas that I am hoping to have some discussion with the minister about here this afternoon.

The first that I would like to talk about is the attendance area review for the Whitehorse schools. Now that the minister has confirmed that all of the attendance areas for schools in Whitehorse will be reviewed, can she give us some details as to what the consultation plan will look like, when it's going to start, and when she anticipates that work to be done? What kind of documentation will be provided to these school communities on the front end to help them get a sense of what the department is looking at?

I will leave it at that, and there will probably be some follow-up questions.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The review of attendance areas is to help us plan for future enrolment and future student needs. It will not affect current students enrolled in Whitehorse schools. It is the responsible thing to do in anticipating a new school. It is appropriate for us to review the attendance areas and determine where the new school will go and what attendance area it will serve. That will absolutely affect other nearby schools because of course, at the moment, all areas of the City of Whitehorse are covered by an attendance area of one school or another. Adding a new school into that mix, it is critical that this work be done.

The purpose and the criteria for the review are to ensure that the school attendance areas continue to effectively support the governance and operation of schools. It will inform the school council election process, it will assist with developing bus routes, and it will help to allocate resources that are determined by enrolment, including for the new Whistle Bend school. In the 2019-20 school year, when we are starting this work to review attendance areas, we will meet with Whitehorse school communities at their school council meetings to discuss their input before decisions are made.

Work has begun. The member opposite will note that I discussed last week in this House that some mapping was being done of the current school attendance areas and what areas they serve. That work will soon be completed and will inform how we will go forward with planning and doing this work.

Some individuals who work at the Department of Education have already been involved on many occasions — including our deputy minister — with reviewing attendance areas because it is done from time to time. I don't have a note about the last time it was done, but certainly school attendance areas have changed over time. I am told 2009 was the last change to the attendance areas.

I guess I also want to make clear that a review of the attendance areas doesn't mean that every school attendance area is going to change. We have to review what neighbourhoods are currently served by what schools and then determine: What is the appropriate attendance area for the schools going forward?

Mr. Kent: One of the things the minister said that caught my attention was that the review of the attendance areas will not affect current students. So essentially, if there are students attending a school — the way I understand it is

that they will be grandfathered into that school and won't have to switch, even if they no longer reside in the attendance area. Can the minister confirm that?

A sort of sub-question to that is: What happens if they have siblings coming up — so that families aren't split and the parents have to take one kid to one school because they were grandfathered in or were not affected, but then another child coming into kindergarten has to go somewhere else? I know that when they are determining the kindergarten registrations, sibling groups are given the top priority.

So I have two questions: Will the minister confirm that her statement that this won't affect current students means that those who are attending a school will be grandfathered in? If they do have siblings coming up after the attendance areas are established and if they are affected, will those sibling groups continue to be able to go to the same school as their older siblings?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, the review is properly characterized by the member opposite as an exercise to plan for future enrolment and the future student needs. It will, as a result, not affect current students enrolled in Whitehorse schools. We always work with individual families when they have a request for siblings to go to the same school that their older siblings go to, and whenever it is possible to accommodate that, it is done. This is not about moving kids around willy-nilly from a school that they are used to attending and that their family is used to attending or from their school community. It is about planning for the future needs.

Mr. Kent: When the meetings are set up with the school communities, it will obviously be done in collaboration with the school councils, and I am assuming that there will be public meetings if requested by specific school communities. We have asked the minister a couple of times during Question Period, and we wanted to give her a chance here today to commit that, if there are broader public meetings with school communities, she will attend those public meetings.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: With the exception of being sick on a couple of occasions, I have never turned down an invitation to attend a school council meeting. I am very keen to work with school councils. It is a priority for me in this role. It is evidence of the importance of school councils and school communities. I have no intention of changing that practice now. I cannot speculate on meetings that may or may not be called or held in the future, but my commitment to school councils and to this process is clear.

Mr. Kent: This is a bit of a speculative question, but what sort of thresholds are the minister and her department going to set if a certain neighbourhood or area doesn't want to be moved from a specific attendance area that they are in?

How do they — is it a petition? Is it feedback through the school council? What thresholds is the minister going to establish for people who are against having their attendance area adjusted? Or is this something that the minister will just essentially push through regardless of what the feedback is from the parents and families in those attendance areas? I am assuming and hoping that this is not going to be the case. I am

just curious as to what sort of thresholds the minister is establishing for opposition to any potential changes and how parents can make sure that their voices are heard either through these public or school council meetings. How does the minister intend to gather information with respect to these attendance area adjustments?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is not possible, appropriate, or responsible to answer speculative questions, but what I can indicate is that the purpose and the criteria for the review is to ensure that school attendance areas continue to effectively support the governance and the operation of an individual school. We of course need to look at school attendance areas because they will inform the school council election process. The *Education Act* indicates that appropriate voters for a school council are either parents of individual children at school or they live in the attendance area. Of course, it is incredibly important to inform that process. One of the purposes the criteria continues is that we will assist in developing bus routes and to help allocate resources that are determined by enrolment, including for the new Whistle Bend school.

We will meet with each school council before any decisions are made. I am confident that we can work with the school councils, the neighbourhoods, and the individuals because we all have the same goal, which is not drawing lines necessarily, but making sure that we are supporting students in their learning in the best possible way, that we have learning spaces that meet the needs of our children in the best possible way. When there are concerns or upset on behalf of parents — and they express that to us — we work with every family to come to the best possible solution. That is our goal. We hope that we are always able, with calm resilience and goodwill, to meet their needs.

As I noted, we will meet with each school council before decisions are made. Hopefully they will also have some interesting perspectives and input as to how they see — being experts in their schools and neighbourhoods — the attendance areas lining up.

Mr. Kent: I would note that some of these school councils that may be affected more than others will probably request a public meeting, and I would hope that the minister would attend any of those public meetings — that are organized, of course, with the support of her department officials — to talk about it.

Just before we leave this, I note from the enrolment figures — I think they start at 2018 — that some of the elementary schools in Whitehorse are at or near capacity, but some are down and the lowest is 52 percent. There are a couple that are at 68 percent. Obviously, we are going to be adding another school to this mix, so I just wanted confirmation from the minister that no schools will be closed as part of this attendance area review. I think that is something that will be important for members of these school communities to know. I'm just looking for confirmation from the minister on that this afternoon.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I see this as a bit of a speculative question. I suppose that if there are new

attendance areas and individuals are moving neighbourhoods and all of a sudden we have a school somewhere that has very few students, that will affect decisions going forward. That is all I can say about that. There is no intention at this time for that to be the case, but in the long-term plans, enrolment is a speculative business. Individuals often are excited and might choose to try to enrol in a new school. At this point, I think the question is speculative and therefore it would be irresponsible of me to answer one way or the other.

What I can indicate is that careful care is taken with respect to watching enrolment, working with school communities, working with school administrations to ensure that we are delivering the best possible programs to Yukon students. Going forward, we will work with any school that has low enrolment to manage their resources, if that is in fact the case. We talked last year about there being certain pressures on individual schools here in the territory, and particularly in Whitehorse, with respect to enrolment, but as we know, the kindergarten enrolment is often what drives enrolment in any particular school. Just because there are empty spaces — a few in grade 4 and a few in grade 5 — doesn't mean that we are not meeting the needs of Yukon families. Primarily, we must look at enrolment overall and we must look also to helping students who are attending in their attendance area. In fact, when students are attending in their attendance area, that of course helps enrolment issues as well.

Mr. Kent: I am going to move on to some capital planning questions in the Department of Education. In the budget document that was presented, Table 1C, Investments in Education — the first one — we will just kind of walk through some of these projects and then some from last year that are no longer in this document. The French first language secondary school — there are two years of expenditures identified here. I believe the minister said there is approximately \$19 million in this budget — \$6 million of that being recoverable from the federal government. Can she just confirm for us the 2020-21 budget and the additional federal recoverables in that budget for the French first language school?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm just trying to get a specific answer for the member opposite. The design/build contract has been awarded to Ketz Construction, as I noted in my earlier notes. It is, for a total — now this is not 2019-20; it has been awarded — of \$29,357,000. There are supporting contracts including the bus loop and other work on the property that will be in the amount of \$1,115,000. There is an additional \$4,925,000 for past work contingency fund, furniture, fixtures, equipment, fibre optic, project contract administration, and other essentials, for a total of \$35,397,000. The federal government's contribution to that is \$7,500,000, so that would be subtracted from that.

Earlier, there was a specific question about my mentioning earlier in my address to the Legislative Assembly that \$6,242,000 will be recovered from the Government of Canada through its minority language education program in the 2019-20 year — the current budget year. None of the \$7.5 million from the federal government has yet been spent

in this circumstance. The difference between \$7.5 million and approximately \$6.2 million will be provided to us by Canada in the 2020-21 budget year.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate getting those numbers into the record here.

When it comes to the Whistle Bend school — and I will also ask questions here about the generic school design project that was in last year's budget documents but is not in this current year. I think the number that is being spent this year is \$1.6 million on the Whistle Bend school.

On last year's contract registry, we found one contract in the amount of \$132,760 that was awarded with respect to this project. Last year, it was identified as a two-year project. Can the minister tell us how much more she anticipates the government spending in this current fiscal year on the scalable design? She did mention at one point during proceedings in this House that this scalable design would save the government \$7 million over 10 years. If she can give us some details on how those numbers were arrived at, that would be great.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't want to confuse the questions being asked, so I will speak specifically — I think there were two things here — one is about the generic school design functional plan and the other was about the cost of what it will save — and the third I think was about what it costs through Highways and Public Works to complete that.

The information that I have is as follows: A generic school functional plan was completed last fall. I can't confirm the amount of the cost. I know that Education contributed approximately \$20,000 to that project and worked with Highways and Public Works to complete that generic functional plan. It can be used to scale the design of multiple different types of schools, which is what the goal was.

We now have completed a functional plan that covers all room types for schools with small conceptual drawings that can be scaled. The plan will be to use that in the design and planning for the new Whistle Bend elementary school as well as other future schools.

I have a note now that indicates that the total cost of that generic school functional plan was \$126,000. I can't make reference to some figures, but what I will say about the concept to design is that some time ago — probably in 2017 perhaps — conversations that I was having with the Department of Education and future plans going forward with very, very rough plans and figures indicated that, in almost every case, functional plans, designs, conceptual plans, drawings going forward for school education projects were in the millions of dollars in most cases.

Clearly, in the event that we are trying to build a number of schools out in the future — whether it be in the next 10 or 20 years — an opportunity to have a scalable functional plan that, at this point, has cost — not that there won't be additional costs, but that those figures being in the millions of dollars seemed to me to be an inappropriate cost. Presumably, developers build neighbourhoods — they have similar designs. They have some designs that are tweaked. They don't build every single house individually. While school needs do

vary, a functional and scalable design plan that we can use going forward as a core piece for schools and to talk to individual school communities about and to make sure it's modern going forward for the purposes of having modern opportunities for learning spaces was a responsible and an appropriate expenditure in this process. I'm pleased to say that has been done. It will be used going forward — that there will be some additional costs. It's simply not the total cost, but the scalable generic design is a responsible and appropriate step going forward so that we have a starting point for these discussions.

Mr. Kent: The minister mentioned \$126,000 spent so far on this project, but again, the contract registry and the description of the contractors generic school design is managed by Highways and Public Works so perhaps we should follow-up with the minister about that \$132,760. We can certainly have further conversations about that.

The one question I did ask was when we had last year's budget documents, it said that the scalable design would be done over two years. Is the minister now confirming that work is done and it was done — all completed last year?

I just need a little more clarification on this \$7 million savings over 10 years. Did the minister say that this was essentially a guess on her part, or was it backed up by some documentation that she had?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think the member opposite should know that I don't guess at numbers. I have extremely talented people who work with detailed figures all of the time. I don't have a note in front of me about \$7 million in costs, but I think that sounds reasonable. I would have had that documentation at the time, Mr. Chair.

What I can indicate is that the generic school functional plan includes the general space requirements and types of rooms in schools. It is the basis and foundation of the planning process. It is going to assist us going forward with the work of design and planning for any individual school here in the territory. I am advised that the work is completed to the stage at which it is a functional plan and can be used going forward in planning, developing, and designing schools going forward and that the generic school functional plan costs \$126,000.

I am not trying to contradict what is on the public website or what my colleague will say with respect to that. I am telling you that it is the figure that I have right now. It could be that there was some additional work that has been done by Highways and Public Works. I am not sure. We can find out about the discrepancy between \$126,000 and — I believe my colleague has said \$132,000. Nonetheless, that is the figure that I have today. That is what I am presenting to you today. If it is incorrect, I am happy to correct it.

Mr. Kent: We would appreciate that documentation and information that led to the figure that the minister mentioned in the House, which was \$7 million in 10 years, because it was one of the primary justifications that the minister had for doing that project, in spite of the concerns that we raised at the time last year. I look forward to getting those figures and the background information with respect to a

\$7-million savings over 10 years and how that would be attained.

I have a couple of quick questions on other capital plans. The relocation of the Kluane Lake School was \$50,000, I think, in last year's budget documents. That has now been carried forward to this year, and the time horizon has also advanced. I think last year, it was supposed to be completed this year, and now here we are going to complete it in 2021. The minister has given us the rationale for why.

There is \$50,000 being spent this year, and then the budget range that is identified in the government's documents is \$1 million to \$5 million. Can the minister tell us what is going to be spent next year with respect to the relocation of the Kluane Lake School? Is there an idea? Obviously, it is a pretty quick turnaround — to have this project completed over the next couple of years according to the documents that we have here. So I am looking for some information with respect to that so that my colleague the Member for Kluane can report back to his constituents with those numbers.

One other question that I know he raised during Question Period is about conversations that have been had with the community of Destruction Bay with respect to the existing school and if there are opportunities to repurpose that building into other things, or if it just going to be demolished. I guess that is the information that we would be looking for, as well as what conversations have happened with the community of Destruction Bay on that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I want to be clear that there was \$50,000 allocated in the 2018-19 budget which was spent. \$49,940 of those dollars was spent in the 2018-19 budget for a functional program and business case regarding the new school for the Kluane First Nation. It was an upgrade — amendments made to the functional program — that was not quite completed previously. Let me just say that this money was spent doing that and working with the First Nation in the 2018-19 budget year.

An additional \$50,000 is in the 2019-20 budget allocated to continue planning work on this project with the Kluane First Nation. There is a functional planning working group that involves individuals from the First Nation, the Department of Education, Highways and Public Works, and a number of officials from government. They have been meeting and last met in January 2019. The department is gathering additional information that was requested by the First Nation to inform the next steps of the planning process.

The current school was built in 1961 and is aging, Mr. Chair. The school is also a priority for renovation or replacement on the government's school seismic mitigation program. So in addition to the fact that all of the current students live in Burwash Landing and are moving to Destruction Bay on a daily basis to attend school, we are also — let me stop there for a second. With respect to the building, of course we are keen to work with the community of Destruction Bay. I am always interested, as my colleagues know, in repurposing buildings. I think that there is an interesting movement in the world nowadays to actually do that — repurpose buildings or renovate rather than destroy, if

at all possible — but there are issues with that building because of its age. We are very keen to work with the community of Burwash Landing in the event that they have some ideas for repurposing it, but that is a ways down the road.

With respect to the budget money next year for 2020-21, I do not have a figure with respect to that because it will be informed, frankly, by the conversations that are happening with the First Nation as we go forward. As part of our commitment to reconciliation and long-term capital planning for all Yukon schools, we are very pleased to be working with the Kluane First Nation to relocate Kluane Lake School from Destruction Bay to Burwash Landing. I may have said that HPW was at the meeting in January, and I just want to confirm that I have a note that HPW will be joining the group at the next meeting. The next meeting is not yet scheduled, as the department is committed to getting back to the First Nation with some information.

Mr. Kent: A couple questions about school portables — I think there is \$2 million identified. The minister did mention some things about it in her opening remarks. If she could just restate for us where the money will be spent this year — I think, again, \$2 million. My understanding is that there will be a second portable put at Golden Horn Elementary School and that there will be some repairs to the Robert Service School. How many more portables will be constructed? Where is it anticipated that they will be deployed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In November 2018, Yukon government issued an invitational tender for a design/build modular classroom — it was earmarked at that time for Golden Horn Elementary School — using one of our \$10-million regional economic development trade exceptions. Southpaw Construction, a Yukon company, was the highest ranked proponent and was awarded a contract in the amount of \$566,000. A separate tender for the supply and delivery of a number of additional modular classrooms for other schools will be issued during the 2019-20 fiscal year. That takes into account the funds that are showing in the budget of up to \$2 million for portables.

We have earmarked one of those portables, as noted, for Golden Horn Elementary School. The portables are designed to address the short- and medium-term school needs, and they will do so also at Robert Service School and Golden Horn Elementary School, as I have noted. Those are important planning options going forward, and I am pleased that amount of money and funding is in the budget so that we can plan going forward. It is likely, based on the enrolment numbers we have now, that a second portable will be for Golden Horn Elementary School.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*. Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: I have about 13 minutes left — I probably have a couple of hours' worth of questions left, but I will try to focus in and jump around a little bit here through what I was hoping to ask.

First, I know there have been a lot of conversations going on around school bus and traffic safety — going back to last year and then in the fall, when we passed a motion — and then a couple of accidents out on the south Alaska Highway toward Marsh Lake have expedited a few things. I know that the federal government, through Minister Garneau, the federal transportation minister, has responsibility for seat belts in school buses. He was up here attending a conference and doing some other announcements — I would say a couple of months ago probably; sometime in February — and I am just wondering if the minister or any of her colleagues had a chance to meet with him and discuss the seat belts in school buses aspect specifically and if there are any updates for Yukoners on that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Chair, I will also endeavour to answer a little quicker than maybe I have been so that more questions can be asked.

I can indicate that I did not meet with Minister Garneau. I don't think I was here when he was here in — I believe it was February. I can indicate that my colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works met with him both on that occasion and in January at a federal-provincial-territorial meeting in Montreal. On both of those occasions, he spoke about seat-belt safety. There is a federal working group with which the Yukon government is participating, and that work is ongoing. That is the information that I have about that process.

Mr. Kent: Moving on, the Sled Ed course at Porter Creek Secondary School has been at the centre of many concerns brought forward by students and parents. We know that, last year, the school announced that they were going to be staggering the offering of that course to every other year.

Can the minister confirm if that is still the plan going forward and if any work has been done by the government to look into the possibility of fully reinstating that course on an annual basis?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, there is still a plan to offer that course on alternating years. Initially, it was based on teacher availability and student demand, and that is still the case at Porter Creek Secondary School. All students who want to take that course during the course of their high school education will have the opportunity.

Mr. Kent: The minister mentioned earlier that she has endeavoured to meet with each school council. Has she met with every school council in the territory so far in her mandate? If not, which ones has she not had the chance to meet with yet?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have not had the opportunity to meet with some of the rural school councils at official school council meetings. When I visited Old Crow, for instance, I did meet with school council members, but it wasn't an official meeting. There are a few cases like that. I have met with every school council in Whitehorse — some on more than one occasion — based on invitations and availability of meetings, coordinating with my availability and my schedule. Unfortunately, some school council meetings are often the first or second week of the month, so many of them happen on the same nights, but I note that school councils have been extremely accommodating in inviting me to come to not regularly scheduled meetings, and I am happy to attend those as well.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to talk quickly about French immersion and the lottery for the Whitehorse Elementary School kindergarten enrolment. There were 11 families that were left without the opportunity to enrol their kids in kindergarten French immersion at Whitehorse Elementary; however, I believe the minister said that this number was subject to change. Are we still sitting with 11 families who are affected as of today's date?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Yes, currently there still are 11 families who are on a waiting list for children to attend French immersion as of today — but certainly, as I have noted, sometimes that changes as the school year ends and over the summer before the new school year begins, so we will continue to work with those families.

Mr. Kent: I did take a look at the supplementary information on the department website, and the 2018-19 estimate for French immersion students is at 816. Can the minister tell me if that number is accurate or has it fluctuated as well? When will we get the actual number for the year?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Sorry, Mr. Chair — could the member please repeat the last part of the question?

Mr. Kent: I am just curious as to if that 816 number is still the estimate for this year and when the minister estimates we can have the final figures — or do you wait until the end of the school year is done?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I know that the member opposite may have noted where he got the 816, but I'm sorry — I didn't hear him say that and would like to clarify that.

In answer to his question generally, the enrolment numbers change so rapidly over the course of a summer and into the beginning of a school year that our enrolment figures for a school year are done as of September 30 — so about a month and a half into the school year is when we see that settle, and those numbers are published based on enrolment — but of course they can change from time to time before then. Then they are published in the annual report. In the annual reports, there are figures at a glance. For instance, French immersion student enrolment as of March 31, 2018, was 768. I am sure that my colleague is correct about 816, but we are just not sure where he got that number.

Mr. Kent: It is in the Education supplementary information. I found it online on the Education website. I can

send the document over to the minister as well and she can take look at it.

If the minister can let us know what percentage that number is of the overall school population, that would be great.

I am just going to end with a couple of questions before I turn it over to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King. I am hoping to get an update from the minister — whether it is her responsibility or the responsibility of the Minister of Highways and Public Works — on the testing for lead levels and the remediation — if all that work has been completed and if there are plans to re-test to make sure that the lead levels are what they should be.

My other question was with respect to air-quality testing in schools. It is not about radon, because I know that happens on a regular basis. I am just looking for dust, mould, and other allergens that occur often in the air — when the last testing was done — and if there is a maintenance schedule to clean the air ducts in our schools. That would be great.

As I have said, I have quite a few more questions. Hopefully we get a chance to get Education back, but if not, thanks to the officials for their assistance to us in the briefing and for assisting the minister here today. After the minister answers, I will turn it over to the NDP.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: With respect to the issues of the water quality in the schools — as members will know — on the advice of the Yukon chief medical officer of health, the Government of Yukon tested all water fixtures in schools built before 1990 in the summer of 2018 to check for lead leaching. There were concerns indicated, although the chief medical officer of health also assured all of us that there was no short-term risk to health and that occasional consumption of water from the older fixtures — which, by national standards, could have contained lead in the pipes — was not a significant health risk to staff or students.

All schools that were built before 1990 were tested in phase 1 due to the higher likelihood of them perhaps containing lead in the plumbing materials. To ensure that all schools were tested, schools built after 1990 will also be tested. They have not been yet. That will be in the summer of 2019; that's phase 2.

I have a list of schools that were tested in 2018. I am happy to provide that rather than read it into the record today. The results were that tests show that all schools, with the exception of Kluane Lake School, did have water fixtures that tested above the national standards for possible lead. The Government of Yukon began mitigation work in September 2018, and I am advised that the mitigation work included decommissioning some water fountains and replacing fixtures. That was done quickly in the schools. There were also signs and identification for students and staff so that they would know which faucets were of issue. Some were allowed for short-term purposes and for washing but not for drinking, and replacing all the fixtures that tested high with new water fixtures was the plan. Replacement of the water fixtures continued into the winter and into 2019.

I am advised that Highways and Public Works have replaced all fixtures in schools that exceeded regulation limits and that of course no lead solder was used in the repairs. That work is ongoing — both the testing and the final mitigation — with respect to that.

On the air-quality testing — I don't have any specific information and we can provide some. I have spoken very briefly with the Minister of Highways and Public Works, who is of course in charge of Property Management, and we can determine the schedule for the work that is done with respect to schools.

Ms. White: I thank the Member for Copperbelt South for giving me some time today, and I of course echo his welcome to the officials who are here today.

I would like to just get started with the Yukon grant. If the minister can walk me through how the Yukon grant works these days — I, like many others in the Chamber, graduated a couple of days ago and so I don't remember how it is. So I am looking for the amount, the application process, and the duration for when a person is able to access it.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I can note that the student financial assistance unit in the Department of Education administers several programs to assist students in pursuing post-secondary education. Of course, there is the Yukon grant — which is being asked about here — a student training allowance, Yukon excellence awards, Canada student loans and grants, and a variety of scholarships. In the 2017-18 academic year, over \$6.6 million was awarded through student financial assistance programs — of course that would be all types of programs.

The Yukon grant has been established pursuant to the *Student Financial Assistance Act*, which is the authority to provide financial support to Yukon students enrolled full-time at approved post-secondary institutions. Students can receive the grant for a maximum of 170 weeks over the course of their education. That is what I understand to be the case. In 2017-18, the total Yukon grant expenditure was \$4,091,079. Eligible students receive \$136 per week of study when they are enrolled full-time. In addition, eligible students who study outside of the Yukon receive a travel amount of \$1,500 to help them to travel between school and home.

Ms. White: Just in quickly trying to go through the math on that — so 170 weeks would equal 42.5 months, which would equal 3.5 years. I got a confirmation nod.

The one reason why I was asking about the Yukon grant specifically — and the minister is well-versed, as are her officials, because I spent some time asking about it previously — I appreciate that the *Student Financial Assistance Act* was updated in 2016. I was here and there were some things at the time that just didn't come to mind, because existing Yukon programs — either no one had brought forward the concerns they had or it wasn't running at that point, but that is a moot point.

I have talked before about the environmental monitoring project that's offered through Yukon College and how it is a program that does everything we hope that school will do — it trains people to put them out into the job force and gives them

the opportunity for careers. The challenge is that the environmental monitoring program doesn't qualify — it doesn't allow Yukon youth who have gone through the education system here and would qualify for the Yukon grant if they were going to a more standard program to access it.

I did of course get the return today that the minister tabled, but I would like to have a bit of a conversation here. This is because I believe that, in the Chamber, we are all intent on the same thing, which is making sure that we get the right people matched up to the right programs. I can speak truly for myself that I was never going to be able to sit still for four years. I mean, I have been here for five years now and it's a struggle at times. Well, it has been longer than five, hasn't it? It has been eight or so. It has been quite a few years.

The reason why I'm asking about this is that I went to culinary school. It was a professional culinary school that cost probably in the range of \$7,500 for a five-month program. What happened is that I had excellence awards that I was able to access. Then I had to work full-time while I attended school full-time because I also didn't qualify for the funding, but it led me to a career that I worked on until the day I was elected. Part of bringing up the questions around the Yukon grant is that there is a finite amount of money. It doesn't stretch on for infinity, so if a person decides that they want to do ancient basket weaving first and then four years later, they want to change to poli-sci, it doesn't mean that the money is still accessible. So I wanted to talk about funding alternative programming.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Luckily, I too want to talk about that, so we're on the same page.

This is a situation that the member opposite and I have discussed a little bit through some letters and briefly in person. She is correct that the *Student Financial Assistance Act* was reviewed and updated in 2016, but I don't think the work — as far as I am aware — was done at the time to look at the scope or description — I will say it that way — of programs and how they would apply. It is true that not all programs are eligible under the current act and under the current way in which courses are described. I will talk about the ones at Yukon College because I think that's primarily where the concerns arise.

The Government of Yukon, through the department, has committed — in conversations with the member opposite and in conversations with Yukon College which have begun — to ask about how those courses are described and whether it is a situation of a round hole and a square peg. It may be that some of those courses, especially those like the one noted by the member opposite, take place over a number of months with a break in between — or other opportunities in between — as opposed to the standard term of so many weeks, then a Christmas break, and then a term of so many weeks.

That being said, the Department of Education has met with Yukon College. We briefly raised it with them, and we will sit down to discuss the non-traditional courses. We will discuss with them adjustments to the program design or structure or even description that might allow students to be considered under the current legislative regime. We will

carefully look at those particular courses — the non-traditional ones — and ones like the one described by the member opposite. For instance, I don't know at the moment if the Yukon College culinary program meets the requirements for student financial assistance, but we will work with the college to determine if that's the case. It is critical that we not have individuals who have chosen specific education opportunities going forward be exempt from assistance. We want to remove those barriers, if at all possible, in a responsible way so that we also have funding available to the broadest number of students possible.

There is not an act revision planned at the moment, but I think this work of trying to sort out these particular barriers to students could lead us to that, or if we can find solutions along the way, that is where we will go first.

We will begin this work with Yukon College because I think it is appropriate for us to work with them. It is appropriate for us to remove barriers for Yukon students to have education here in the territory, but we will work with other jurisdictions more long term as well. I think it is probably primarily in the non-traditional programs — I don't love that term, but it is not nursing or a bachelor of science or those kinds of things. They are programs that are absolutely critical for Yukoners to have access to — to have access to those opportunities — and we want to make sure that there are not artificial barriers in the way.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. One of the questions that I have is: If the rewrite of the description isn't able to meet the requirements under the Yukon grant — and the minister mentioned that, at this point in time, there is no act revision set — is there an intention or appetite to then revise the act to make sure that those alternative programs would qualify for accessing the Yukon grant?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think it is responsible to speculate, but I do think that the work we have just described in answering this question and the conversations that I have had with the member opposite will inform that process. We will certainly take a look at what would need to be done and what the scope of that work would be to remove barriers to education for Yukoners.

Ms. White: I do look forward to that time for all of those reasons. There are a lot of young people out there who aren't going to necessarily go down the traditional academic route.

I would like to ask some questions about the Aurora distance education. I would like to know. A number of years ago was when it was initially rolled out, there were some challenges. I know that in rural schools some of the students struggled because there wasn't access to having a hands-on teacher. I just want to know where we are. How many classes are now offered? How many students are accessing the programming? Where in the territory is it being offered?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Yes, the Aurora Virtual School — I am sorry I looked strange to the member opposite. I didn't hear the name that she noted. There is what's known as the Aurora Virtual School physically located here in Whitehorse. They do provide distance learning programs. There is a

number of ways in which that can happen, both here in Whitehorse and in communities. In communities, for instance, there are online courses available to some students where there is a teacher assigned in the school who can help them with that work, and they access the course information online with the teacher support. In the schools, they can also access distance learning programs themselves without necessarily the teacher's support. The same is available at the Aurora Virtual School here in Whitehorse. There is a variety of different ways that can happen. There are currently 48 students registered as home-schooled students through the Aurora Virtual School here in Whitehorse. Others are typically enrolled in high school but take some courses outside of that — what's known as being "cross-enrolled" in high school. It is an area that deserves some attention. I know that our deputy minister is paying attention. As well, there is a process in the Department of Education to look at how these programs are being delivered. Are they being delivered as effectively as possible? Are the students benefiting from that? Do they have the support necessary that they feel they need if they want to be schooled in a distance-education-type situation?

Yukon schools do offer some programming online, as I have said, and rural communities have more options, but Whitehorse has more flexibility. It is an area that is developing as technology grows. As opportunities are more and more, we need to make sure that the Yukon education system is responding to students' needs in this area.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that the deputy minister has taken an active role in that. Part of what the minister talked about sounded like an assessment of the effectiveness of the Aurora Virtual School, and I am not sure if that is the right language. In my head, I was saying "audit" first and then I was trying to find another word that would mean "audit" without meaning "audit". When will that assessment happen, as to whether or not those programs are effective? By that, I mean: Is the information being shared effectively with the students? Are the students able to process that information in a similar way that they would in a classroom? What is the effectiveness of the Aurora Virtual School and the programs that it offers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am very pleased to be asked about this because it is long — even though I haven't been here that long, it has been something I have asked about, probably very early on.

Yes, we are looking to assess the effectiveness of all of what is known as our "alternative programs". Whether it is distance learning, whether it is online programming, whether it is AVS, whether it is the individual learning centres in a number of places that are available across the territory, the feedback of students and parents is absolutely critical because it is their experience that we are trying to understand and make sure we are meeting their needs.

I can indicate that there very recently has been a former superintendent assigned to work on this project over the summer and into the fall of this year. He will be working on the project to assist with implementing the redesigned grade 11 and 12 curriculum in alternative and secondary

programming in Yukon schools. I know that it is time, and there have been some officials visit other jurisdictions where the alternative programming — I am going to use that as a very big umbrella — is being delivered in ways that are effective, and we are very keen to make sure that we are doing that work here in the Yukon Territory as well.

Did I say “former superintendent”? It’s soon-to-be former. Let me just say it this way: Changing responsibilities prior to retirement. We have assigned that individual to work on this project based on his skills and based on the fact that it needs attention. We need to make sure that our alternative programs are aligned well with the needs of students, that we are delivering the service that we intend to deliver and that we are actually providing alternatives for people to learn so that education is more accessible.

Ms. White: When we talk about the alternative education, I wanted to ask about the sport school. I know it has been running for a number of years. I would just like a bigger overview — the number of education staff and the number of specialized individuals who are brought in. I will just leave it at that. I would like to know more about the sport school.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Let me just take the opportunity to say thank you to F.H. Collins’ staff and administration and also to their school council. They have worked diligently with the Department of Highways and Public Works and with a very impressive team at the Department of Education to finish what has been called the “weight gym”, which is a primary location for sport school students to attend. It opened officially last week. There is much excitement about it. It was an opportunity to add on to what was the plan for the new F.H. Collins, but anybody who has been to the old weight gym will know that it was — I don’t think “dilapidated” is too strong a word. The heating was questionable. There was no running water or washrooms, and the students now have an appropriate facility to encourage them on their health and wellness paths, including the sport school students. It is not only for the sport school students.

I will stop there to say that there is currently one teacher assigned to that program at F.H. Collins. The students attend for one term, usually, in a particular school year. They focus on health and well-being and on weights and other sports. I want to say that they earn credits in an alternative way, but they certainly earn part of their high school credits for that work that they do.

I am pleased to tell you — without the specific numbers — and I am happy to get some numbers for the member opposite if that is of assistance to her. I don’t know how many students are currently enrolled or how many they can take. My recollection is that 27 students can be in that location, so that will likely focus the enrolment at that particular program if they are using that space. I can indicate that, over the last number of years, it has been an alternative part of a school year that has been very successful. It has helped some students who may not necessarily be so focused on academics, but because of that program and because of the opportunity to have experiential learning, which we know the new

curriculum is based on — to learn in different ways and to meet students where they are — there has been some real success.

The sport school focuses on leadership, education, athletics and athletic development and the overall development of students. I should also acknowledge that the Porter Creek Secondary School also has a program similar to that and is equally a success.

Ms. White: Moving along to the Individual Learning Centre, the question I have about the Individual Learning Centre is actually more about support for staff. I say that only in terms of having a conversation recently with someone and they mentioned that, in the last number of years, five of their current and past students had passed away — this was in recent memory. For the teaching staff — and anyone who hasn’t had an opportunity to go and check out the ILC, I would definitely suggest it. If you are lucky enough to be invited for a holiday feast, that is a pretty fun time to go. The reason I would suggest that especially anyone in this Chamber should take a tour or take a look is that it is a school that, had it been around when I was a teenager, most of my friends and I would have ended up at. Again, it is just because traditional school isn’t the easiest. The question I have is: What support is being offered to staff?

I understand that they have access to the Public Service Commission and the EAP and the rest of it, but in some situations, I would suggest that there needs to be some sensitivity or some extra attention around who I would refer to as front-line staff in this case. I just wanted to ask the minister if there had been any discussions about making sure that the staff is supported at the ILC.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, I share the member opposite’s support for the ILC. I have spent more than one fabulous afternoon there, including some meals. I am familiar with the teachers and the principal there and the extraordinary manner in which they carry out their dedication to their students.

I can indicate that there are currently, as of February 2019, 132 students registered at the ILC. Of course, they don’t all come at the same time. They are in individual independent learning and come at different times based on their choice and needs. I do not disagree whatsoever that there needs to be support for staff and administration at that school based on the work that they do, which can be very stressful. I also think that there needs to be extraordinary support for the students who are there, and our student support services are accessible to them.

Some of the things that have been done at that school and others: training for educators and students on suicide prevention and intervention, far more conversation about mental health issues, mental health literacy as well. In a number of schools, there has been a mental health literacy curriculum guide that is a resource for teaching about mental health in high schools to students and, of course, educators. There is opportunity to get trained there as well. There is focus on bullying and cyber-bullying awareness and prevention education.

The member opposite has mentioned employment assistance through the opportunities that are available, but I take her point that this may be a special circumstance based on the kind of work that is done at this extraordinary school. I can indicate that there has been a counselling position assigned to the ILC this year and that teachers have responded. The administration and students have responded that this has been a positive thing.

In the fall of 2019, the plan is for the department to be providing all department staff with access to mental wellness support and training. We certainly can give more details about how that unfolds as it is launched. There are school counsellors employed for student support services for individual counselling. I mentioned earlier today a number of issues regarding mental health access for children, youth, and teachers, and I am pleased to say that the counselling availability at the ILC is a step forward. It is important to make sure that we support our staff and administration.

Ms. White: I would like to ask questions about the Teen Parent Centre. I was invited last year to go take a look at the early childhood program that they had put on, independent of the actual school year, with hopes of actually being able to open up more spots for children. I am not sure if that has had the good fortune of going ahead or if it was merely a pilot for last year, so I would like to ask the minister that.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I too am aware of the early childhood opportunities that the Teen Parent Centre has been trying to develop, along with their young moms, dads, and the children of those individuals and also other people's children. I am currently not aware of what the situation is, but I will commit to getting back to the member opposite. I know there was conversation about running a daycare. I was at board meetings as the minister with the Teen Parent Centre board. I understood there to be a summer daycare last year. I know that when I was there, the conversations were around getting that off the ground. We can get an update for the member opposite.

Ms. White: There are so many reasons — it is an ideal space. It has an outdoor play area. It's almost designed for that. I mean, I would be hopeful that they are able to pursue that.

I had a question about — so in all the Yukon Forums and in conversations with First Nation governments, has there ever been an indication that there is a First Nation that is interested in taking over education within their own First Nation or traditional territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. As the member opposite may know, last year the Yukon Forum struck a committee known as the Chiefs Committee on Education, also known as the CCOE, that has four chiefs on it. They have some officials assigned to it. We have been working with that chiefs committee extensively to have conversations about what the future of First Nation education looks like. I don't think it is appropriate — I am not at liberty to say now and I am certainly not at liberty to speak on behalf of the First Nations. What I can advise the members of this House is that I have expressed, on behalf of the department,

that we are open to all conversations about Yukon First Nation education and how we will improve, not only the relationship, but the outcomes.

I can indicate that Yukon First Nations are essential partners in supporting First Nation students and teaching all Yukon students about Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing. The Government of Yukon has signed individual education agreements with the Council of Yukon First Nations, as well as with six Yukon First Nation governments, including Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Vuntut Gwitchin, Selkirk First Nation, Kluane First Nation, First Nation of Na Cho Nyäk Dun, and Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I can also indicate that these agreements reflect our government-to-government relationships and our commitment to reconciliation. We also work on Yukon-wide initiatives with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the First Nations Education Commission — which is also known as FNEC to some — and as well, the Chiefs Committee on Education that I mentioned initially.

Our current individual education agreement discussions are truly about shared priorities and how we will get there. I can also note that our guiding document at the moment — and I did not have anything to do with the inception of this document, but I'm very proud to have it as our guiding document — which is also known as the JEAP, which is the joint education action plan, J-E-A-P — enhances the Yukon First Nation authority around education. It is a document that is signed by all 14 First Nations as a plan going forward — I believe a 10-year mandate to go forward on Yukon First Nation education initiatives.

I appreciate that this doesn't directly answer the question but I think it does indirectly answer the question and I think that what I am trying to express here as strongly as I can is that this is an absolute priority for this government and an absolute priority for this Department of Education. We have expressed that clearly to every Yukon First Nation, and we are working diligently with each of them to realize how we can go forward together on these very important goals.

Ms. White: Just in the budget document, where would I find the line item that would have Yukon educators in-service training within the budget? I am trying to find the difference between this year and the previous year.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to suggest that I do a specific return with that information. I am concerned about the time and having the opportunity for the members opposite's questions. I can indicate that I do know that approximately \$450,000 is given annually to the Yukon Teachers' Association for that, and there is funding given to individual schools. There is funding to the First Nation Programs and Partnerships. It is known as FNPP. It also runs through individual schools. There is a summer academy. There is funding for the group activities as well as for individual PD days through the schools. Professional development funding shows in a number of locations. We can provide that information in a short return for the member opposite.

Ms. White: In that return, can I please get the number — my understanding is that the Yukon government would have money that they would use themselves for sponsored

professional development days. If that's the case, can that number please be included in the return?

I want to move into Advanced Education. Advanced Education used to have immigration within it, and it has been moved to Economic Development. It is interesting for me to be on the Advanced Education for all of the stuff related to labour markets. There are the reports. As the Member for Copperbelt South pointed out, there may be some outdated reports.

But I wanted to know why the labour market stuff was still within the Advanced Education branch and it hadn't been transferred over to the Department of Economic Development at the same time as the immigration file.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. In March 2018, we were pleased to sign two new labour market transfer agreements with the Government of Canada, which provides \$7.6 million per year to support labour market programs in the Yukon. These new agreements provide additional funding and program flexibility to meet the needs of Yukon job-seekers and employers. The funding from these agreements is used to support and provide services and supports, such as employment services for job-seekers, apprenticeship training, on-the-job work experience or training support for employers and their existing staff.

The decision was made at the time — it's not a clean line, no matter what. The labour market programs — relationships with the federal government and training through those labour market programs are related to apprenticeship and often to post-secondary overlap. They often overlap between youth and adult programs. For the most part, they live in education departments across the country. Immigration — there was an opportunity to separate that and have it live in Economic Development.

There is benefit of having the labour market programs in Education. One of the benefits is the holistic view of lifelong learning and an opportunity for those programs to remain with the education focus. Education does and will continue to work collaboratively with the immigration folks at Economic Development. The relationship at this time is to have the labour market agreements and that work remain in Education because of the natural link.

Ms. White: Currently in the Yukon, how many registered apprentices are there?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As of December 2018, there were 488 registered apprentices in the Yukon apprenticeship program, 144 of whom were First Nations and 57 of whom were female. I believe that would be the most accurate numbers we have, as of a few months ago.

Ms. White: I highlighted this at length in the 33rd Assembly — which is one of the challenges with apprentices and trades training — that you actually require a journeyman to work under to be able to sign off on your hours. At the time, in the 33rd Assembly, when I asked — at one point in time, Yukon government had two apprentices within their entire ranks. It wasn't good. That was not what you would want, because it's one thing for the public sector to have to take on all the work of training apprentices, but I think

at one point I said that I was counting on my hands and got to 15 trades that I could easily identify within Yukon government — and to know that there were only two apprentices. I would like to know — if the minister is able — how many apprentices are currently working in Yukon government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I agree — as Minister of Education, I agree. Our one-government approach is that we agree. I don't know what the history is, frankly, with respect to apprenticeship. I take the word of my colleague from across the way that it has not been stellar in the past, but work has already begun on remedying that situation. If we have the opportunity to have apprentices work under qualified persons at Yukon government, we should absolutely do that.

I understand that there has been work already started with Highways and Public Works and also in at least one of the communities. I can indicate that the Yukon government is an excellent employer of apprentices — once they have completed their training — but I think the focus of the question is having them actually qualify under trained individuals at the government. That is something that is not falling on deaf ears here and that we are encouraging and working to have rectified.

Ms. White: I am hopeful. I have highlighted that to the Minister of Highways and Public Works and all the other ministers. We can go from continuing care, to hospitals, to Corrections. We can go across the spectrum for where apprentices might be, so if someone within the government could possibly do a legislative return on what that number is, that would be fantastic. The challenge of course is following up with that training.

I was asked to go speak at the Yukon College with the early childhood education program last week. They mentioned the learning together program. The reason that it was brought up in conversation is because one of the students asked the rest of the students, "Did you know that this program existed?"

I was just online, and I took a look at the learning together page. It is a really phenomenal program that, right now — anecdotally — has two families who attended at Elijah Smith school, whereas it seems to me that it would be a really valuable asset to others. Does the government track that? What kind of advertising do they do around it? Do they encourage families? Do they let daycares, day homes and play programs know about such things? How can we get those numbers up? That is what I am asking.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Before I move on to that question, I am just going to go back to the last question. The numbers that I have about apprentices as of December 2018 — there were two apprentices employed by the Government of Yukon. My colleague across the way is correct, and my answer remains that we should work diligently to change that number to be much higher.

I will speak briefly about the learning together program — it is part of our early learning programs, working with Health and Social Services and our opportunities to extend

education from the cradle through to one's career and to make lifelong learners. We know the importance, Mr. Chair, of having students connect early with education in a formal and informal way.

Learning together, of course, works to do that. It is primarily aimed at four-year-olds, although there are some three-year-olds in that program. We know that one of the barriers that has, in the past, been responsible for some lower numbers — there is currently a requirement for parents to attend with children. It's partly because of that — people have jobs, and there is a difference, of course, between daycare and the early learning program. The requirement for parents to participate may be a bit of a barrier, so we are not seeing the enrolment numbers that we would like. We hope that, by moving to a more central location — the program was being held at Hidden Valley and is now at Elijah Smith school — it may help us to increase those enrolment numbers.

We will continue to monitor it and work with Health and Social Services on the focus on early learning, of which learning together is an important piece. It is not the only piece, but it is certainly an important piece, and I certainly would like to see us expand it — or organize it — in a way that removes barriers for parents.

Ms. White: Earlier, the minister was talking about the importance of early childhood education — whether it was care centres — on school grounds. That was a really lovely pitch for the new Whistle Bend school — to maybe consider that as part of the campus. There was that model in Watson Lake until that building had to be closed. There are a whole bunch of reasons why — I mean, you have access to play outside and access to the transition and all those things. I am going to leave that. I am going to let that sit here as my pitch.

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

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: The Member for Kluane, on a point of order.

Mr. Istchenko: On a point of order, I would like to wish the Leader of the Third Party a happy birthday today.

Applause

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

Motion agreed to

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Mr. Hutton: Mr. Chair, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 210, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2019-20*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled April 8, 2019:

34-2-91

Standing Committee on Appointment to Major Government Boards and Committees Thirteenth Report (April 8, 2019) (Adel)

The following legislative return was tabled April 8, 2019:

34-2-205

Response to oral question from Ms. Hanson re: mine closure security (Pillai)

The following document was filed April 8, 2019:

34-2-68

What We Heard About Aging in Place: A summary of what we heard during our public engagement on aging in place and aging well in Yukon (Frost)

Written notice was given of the following motion April 8, 2019:

Motion No. 463

Re: access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (Ms. White)