



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, April 27, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable David Laxton

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER — Hon. David Laxton, MLA, Porter Creek Centre

DEPUTY SPEAKER — Patti McLeod, MLA, Watson Lake

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Hon. Darrell Pasloski	Mountainview	Premier Minister responsible for Finance; Executive Council Office
Hon. Elaine Taylor	Whitehorse West	Deputy Premier Minister responsible for Tourism and Culture; Women's Directorate; French Language Services Directorate
Hon. Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Minister responsible for Justice; Yukon Development Corporation/ Yukon Energy Corporation
Hon. Doug Graham	Porter Creek North	Minister responsible for Education
Hon. Scott Kent	Riverdale North	Minister responsible for Energy, Mines and Resources; Highways and Public Works
Hon. Currie Dixon	Copperbelt North	Minister responsible for Community Services; Public Service Commission
Hon. Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Minister responsible for Environment
Hon. Mike Nixon	Porter Creek South	Minister responsible for Health and Social Services; Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board
Hon. Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin	Minister responsible for Economic Development; Yukon Housing Corporation; Yukon Liquor Corporation

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Yukon Party

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Hon. David Laxton	Porter Creek Centre
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Jan Stick	Official Opposition House Leader Riverdale South
Kevin Barr	Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes
Lois Moorcroft	Copperbelt South
Jim Tredger	Mayo-Tatchun
Kate White	Takhini-Kopper King

Liberal Party

Sandy Silver	Leader of the Third Party Klondike
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 27, 2015 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes which have been made to the Order Paper. Motions No. 97 and 742, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party; Motion No. 848, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King; and Motion No. 881, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake have been removed from the Order Paper, as the actions requested in these motions have been taken, in whole or in part.

DAILY ROUTINE

Speaker: We will now proceed with the Order Paper. Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Education Week

Hon. Mr. Graham: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to pay tribute to Yukon Education Week, which runs from April 27 to May 1.

Education Week marks a time when we recognize the value of public education. The social contributions of public education to our families, communities and economy are significant. We experience the benefits every day. Our schools and training programs prepare the citizens, leaders and workforce of tomorrow — dedicated to their communities and ready to meet the challenges of the future.

Education Week helps us to reflect on and appreciate how fortunate we are to live in a country where we have the right to education. This year we honour an important theme, “Many Paths to Learning”.

The events and activities during this year’s Education Week highlight how the Department of Education is supporting the success of every learner through individualized learning. Individualized learning means that the content, method and pace of learning are tailored to the diverse needs of Yukon students of all ages. I invite my fellow members and all Yukoners to come and see how Yukon students thrive through this support.

Partnership is an important element of supporting Yukon students. I would like to extend a big thank you to many of our partners in learning: the parents and families getting involved in their child’s education, who bring their little ones to learning together programs across the territory, who ask their kids at the dinner table about what they learned in class today, who give their time volunteering at school plays, carwashes and coaching and, finally, those who are always ready to help with homework and assignments from kindergarten to college.

The wonderful educators in this territory also deserve a huge vote of thanks: from teachers tailoring their lessons inside and outside of the classroom to help students achieve success; to paraprofessionals working one-on-one with students who need extra support; to administrators overseeing the safety and growth of Yukon schools and their students; to the trainers, guidance and employment counsellors of Yukon’s future workforce; to the language instructors helping newcomers and Yukoners to learn our country’s official languages and the languages of Yukon’s First Nations; to the school councils who are the voice of the public in our schools advocating for each student’s right to education; to the elders, educators, communities and the Council of Yukon First Nations who work with us to improve learning outcomes for First Nations students; to our dedicated community partners who promote and support education and lifelong learning, as well as work with Advanced Education on the labour market framework, the Yukon literacy strategy, the community training funds, the labour market development agreement, and other programs; to the case managers and organizations providing literacy, training and employment services through to the businesses and employers working with us to develop labour market programs that address the needs of Yukon’s work force, to Yukon College — a leader in post-secondary education in Canada’s north.

As we celebrate the individualized learning opportunities here in the territory, Mr. Speaker, let us honour the educators and front-line support staff who work directly with Yukon students of all ages every day to help them succeed in their learning. All Yukoners are invited to get involved and join us at any of the terrific events of Education Week being hosted in Yukon schools and by partner organizers.

I will be travelling to Watson Lake to enjoy the Watson Lake school programs being offered on Friday and I am really looking forward to it. I invite all Yukoners to come and see how Yukon learners are thriving in the schools and in their communities and careers in Education Week this year. More information and a full calendar of events for Education Week are available on the Yukon Education websites.

Mr. Tredger: I’m pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP Official Opposition on this first day of Yukon Education Week to pay tribute to education in the Yukon. I thank the minister for his update and his tribute to education.

As an educator and as a parent, I’m reminded how much we have to celebrate. Today we acknowledge the students, the parents, the teachers, the educational assistants and the many other people in our territory who are involved in education. We are honoured in Yukon to have a very skilled, dedicated and dynamic group of educators. In this special week, we extend our gratitude to the professionals involved in the wide range of education, understanding that learning is a lifelong adventure.

We thank the early childhood educators, elementary and high school teachers, educational assistants, remedial tutors, those who help adult learners and of course the Yukon teachers. We celebrate the passion, the commitment and the

dedication of those serving Yukon students and acknowledge that their commitment to lifelong education and training has a positive and lasting effect on the future of our children and our grandchildren.

These incredible professionals don't stand alone. They are supported by secretaries, office administrators, bus drivers, college instructors, school crossing guards, public servants and early childhood educators — all pieces of a greater mosaic. Every day they make a difference. They are often the first faces that greet our children. They are cheerleaders and encouragers.

The remarkable contributions of parents and volunteers who sit on our school councils and boards, who assist teachers in public schools with extracurricular activities, who work with children and adults with special needs — through various non-governmental organizations — are also recognized and celebrated this week.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to those many volunteers and staff at various NGOs, like Yukon Learn, Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Yukon Literacy Coalition, the Child Development Centre and Skills Canada.

Businesses also play an integral part in our educational community. Professional engineers, scientists, tradespeople and others share their skills, their knowledge and their passion with young minds looking to the world for answers.

In this Yukon Education Week, we need not only focus on the successes, but acknowledge that we have far too many students who are not succeeding in our schools and slip through the gaps. How we react and meet these challenges is critical, not only for the health and well-being of our students, but it's important for all of our society. How we react says a lot about the inclusiveness of our community and the effectiveness of our education system.

We know research and experience tell us the involvement of families and children in programming and extracurricular activities is critical. We know that involved parents and family lead to more engaged and supported students. We need to find a way to make space for family involvement to ensure that they are involved and can find a way to contribute to their child's educational life and be valued for that contribution.

It is our collective responsibility to find a way to enable all parents a place in their child's education. Education should embrace that commitment like never before. It takes a whole community to educate a child.

Mr. Speaker, there are no simple answers. Education and learning are about working together. It's about taking risks and taking chances. It's about building relationships. It's about being a part of a team. Mr. Speaker, it is well worth it.

Many financial advisors talk about the value of compound interest and how money grows over time. It's the same with education. Money and time invested early pays long-term benefits. Small things grow to big things. Every life change; every lesson taught and learned; every moment in a child's life compounds over time.

We take this moment to celebrate and acknowledge our successes. Our continued success will depend on each and every Yukoner rolling up our sleeves, innovating, creating,

taking chances, caring and doing the hard work. We have an opportunity in the Yukon. School communities, First Nation leadership, parents, teachers, the Department of Education and principals have all made it clear they are willing to work together for our children's education.

Mr. Speaker, together we can make a difference. Thank you.

Mr. Silver: It's with great pleasure that I also rise today on behalf of the Liberal Party to pay tribute to Education Week. This year's theme, as mentioned by the minister, is "Many Paths to Learning" and it is a reflection on the different ways that each individual learns.

A one-size-fits-all approach to education never works when it comes to advancing the educational needs of students. There are many skills that a teacher needs to have in order to be successful, but few are more valuable than being able to understand the learning needs of a student. The earlier that a student has a learning plan, the better off the student will be in the long run.

By creating a system around that student, we promote inclusion and we ensure success and we build confidence in the student. By teaching self-worth, however, we enable the student with the ability to learn with a focus. Now I can't stress that enough. As a math teacher, my curriculum did not identify how to teach self-worth to my students. But if a student or if a school embraces a community approach to developing a whole child, and if the teachers willingly step outside of the confines of their classrooms and their standardized goals, students will benefit by understanding what it means to have self-worth.

I learned early on that in order for a student to succeed, the teacher needs to understand how that student learns. Every student retains information differently. But this year's slogan, "Many Paths to Learning", means a lot more to me than that. To me, it means that it takes a whole community to raise a child. A community with many people, from many of life's pathways engaged in education is a recipe for our next generation to have a more enriched life than their parents' generation.

As I pay tribute today to Education Week, I want to take the opportunity to thank every teacher, every parent and every student who I've worked with in my tenure as a teacher for all that they have taught me. I hope that I was able to teach them something as well.

I've said it before, Mr. Speaker, and I'll say it again: We have the best students in Canada here in the Yukon. They deserve the best education in the world.

Speaker: Introduction of visitors.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a donation of \$25,000 in disaster relief to the Red Cross to aid the people of Nepal who suffered a devastating magnitude-7.8 earthquake on Saturday, April 25, 2015.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to play a key leadership role regionally and nationally to address the problem of violence against women in all forms by:

- (1) reaffirming the call for a nationally coordinated effort to address the large numbers of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in Canada;
- (2) responding to aboriginal women's recommendations on leadership, wellness and violence prevention;
- (3) supporting First Nation governments and aboriginal women's organizations to develop community-based projects designed and developed by and for aboriginal women;
- (4) supporting women to navigate and make decisions on issues that have legal implications; and
- (5) continuing to work on the finalization of a justice framework on violence against aboriginal women and girls with their national partners and with input from community and First Nation organizations across the country.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to release building plans for the upcoming \$72-million expansion of the Whitehorse General Hospital.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?
This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Lobbying legislation

Ms. Hanson: It comes as no surprise that in 2014, the Yukon Party coffers were once again awash with corporate money. Mining companies and oil and gas companies, largely from Outside, make up a large percentage of donors to the Yukon Party's war chest. I am not suggesting there is anything unlawful going on. Yukon's rules, or lack of rules, allow this. Yukon Zinc, the owners of Wolverine mine, has every right to contribute to the Yukon Party, and they have given \$9,100 since 2006, including \$600 last year. Again, there is nothing unlawful with this, but Yukoners can't be blamed for wondering about the benefits of donating. This perception is damaging and may be completely incorrect but, in the absence of lobbying rules, it persists.

Does the Premier agree that this perception is damaging to the credibility of his government?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: We have spoken about lobbying in this House on a number of occasions and, as I have said in the

past, we are not supportive of lobbyist legislation. This government — all members of this caucus and all ministers — are open and ready and willing to talk to all people in this jurisdiction.

As we know, we live in a very small jurisdiction where people wear many hats. We feel that the best way to ensure that there is an opportunity to hear what people have to say — like in the drugstore, like in the grocery store — and that that continues to happen, and we won't support lobbyist legislation.

Ms. Hanson: In 2009, Yukon Zinc wrote the then-EMR minister a letter calling for changes with how the mine was being regulated. Shortly after, the minister changed the regulations. On April 15, 2015, the EMR minister was asked if he had direct discussions with Yukon Zinc about missed security payments. He didn't answer the question. Then we see thousands of dollars rolling into the Yukon Party coffers from Outside oil and gas and mining companies, including over \$9,000 to date from Yukon Zinc. I'll repeat, there is nothing unlawful about this. The annual hundreds-of-dollars-a-plate Yukon Party cruise in the Vancouver Harbour may be perfectly fine, but there is a perception that access to government is for sale.

Is the Premier prepared to release information on the number of meetings —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Elias: I have a real problem with this question because it is casting aspersions and attacks on the reputation of the members on this side of the House and it is against the specific rules of Question Period. The member opposite should know full well that those types of words are going to cause disorder in this Assembly.

Speaker: Opposition House Leader, on the point of order.

Ms. Stick: The House Leader is using these points of order to dodge questions from the opposition. This question directly relates to the government's ability to do its job. It does not imply motives. We are simply asking the Premier to be accountable and open. I believe this is a dispute between members.

Unparliamentary language

Speaker: I have to disagree with you. It is not a dispute among members. The implication is that the members opposite are not honourable and that they can be bought is unparliamentary, and I take great exception to it. Rephrase your question please and refrain from using those types of statements.

Ms. Hanson: Is the Premier prepared to release information on the number of meetings he and members of Cabinet have held with corporations donating to the Yukon Party?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: I have stood up in this House on many occasions and said that this government will continue to be open and talk to all people who are interested in talking to this government — whether it's business or whether it's an opportunity to enhance the social supports that we provide in this territory — and we'll continue to do so. The reality is that we don't solve problems, or perceived problems, with legislation and regulation, because we know that is what the NDP do. They think they can regulate and legislate and that solves all the problems. Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, we are not here to implement the NDP's platform from 2011.

Ms. Hanson: No, we are asking about this government's lack of transparency and it is a matter of public interest. The late Steve Cardiff first called attention to the lack of rules on lobbying and every attempt by the Yukon NDP Official Opposition that we have made to bring in lobbying rules has been rejected by the Yukon Party. This issue should not be a partisan issue. People on all sides of the political spectrum have called for rules to increase transparency in order to address the public's negative perceptions.

In fact, Guy Giorno, Prime Minister Harper's former chief of staff, weighed in and said, "Yukon needs lobbying rules." Our conflicts commissioner has pointed to the gaps in Yukon's law. It is clear the lack of transparency about lobbying undermines public trust in government and our democracy.

Is the Premier prepared to support rules to increase transparency or will he allow perceptions of ethical lassitude to cloud his time in office?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: This government is not going to make it harder for people to talk to the government. We're not going to put rules in that will make it more difficult.

As I have said, people wear many hats in this jurisdiction and it would become very confusing to enact such legislation. The reality as well is that I do believe that this is important legislation in larger jurisdictions where it is very, very difficult to have access to the government and access to ministers. All you have to do here in Yukon is go to the grocery store.

Question re: Alcohol and drug addictions

Ms. White: On Friday, the Member for Whitehorse Centre and I attended a forum on vulnerable people at risk that was organized by the City of Whitehorse and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation. The forum confirmed what many of us have been saying for a long time now: Yukoners with drug and alcohol addictions are not receiving the support they need from this government. In fact, the head of the RCMP in Yukon took the extraordinary step on Friday of calling for a new approach to alcohol and drug addictions in Yukon. He said that we need to deal with them in a compassionate, fair and supportive way without involving the police.

The chorus of voices calling on this government to do more in support of Yukoners with chronic drug and alcohol addictions is growing louder. Will the Yukon Party government listen to the police when they tell us that addictions are health problems and not police matters?

Hon. Ms. Taylor: First off, I would like to congratulate the City of Whitehorse and the Kwanlin Dun First Nation for taking the initiative to organize this very important forum. Likewise, I would like to thank the many individuals, the agencies and the representatives of the various organizations who took the time to participate in the forum.

A number of my colleagues and I were also present at the forum and indeed found the discussions to be thoughtful, to be engaging and to be very informative. Many of the initiatives that were referenced on Friday were in fact initiatives that our government has been working to deliver in partnership with many other governments and organizations over the past several years: Jackson Lake healing camp, collaborative health care clinic, Outreach van, working to expand emergency shelter, and creation of transitional housing for vulnerable persons. These are just but some of the examples as to how we have been working to support those most vulnerable in our community with those pertinent partners.

As the Mayor of the City of Whitehorse indicated, this is not about finger pointing. Rather it's about working together to support those we serve, including those most vulnerable in our territory. We will be engaging with all of those respective partners here as it comes.

Ms. White: It's about leadership and that's what I'm looking for. One-hundred-and-eighteen nights — that's how many nights a Yukon woman spent in police custody last year, and she doesn't even have a criminal record. There just wasn't anywhere else for her to go.

In 2010, the Yukon Party government asked Dr. Bruce Beaton and former Chief James Allen to co-chair a Task Force on Acutely Intoxicated Persons at Risk. Beaton and Allen were clear. It isn't the 1890s any more. Alcohol addiction is a health problem, not a criminal problem. Yukon's out-of-date alcohol legislation authorizes non-criminal detention for intoxication, and last week, Yukon's top policeman added his voice and told us that it's time for a change. It's time for the government to follow through on the Beaton and Allen report and rewrite Yukon's gold rush-era legislation.

Instead of being treated as criminals, when will the government let Yukoners living with addictions finally be treated according to their health care needs?

Hon. Mr. Nixon: I too would like to congratulate the City of Whitehorse and Kwanlin Dun First Nation for their leadership at the forum last Friday. A number of staff from the Department of Health and Social Services were in attendance as well. I would just like to note that we're taking steps currently to address many of the issues that were brought forth at the forum on Friday. We just need to look at recent announcements pertaining to the construction of the new Salvation Army, the construction of the new Sarah Steele Building, the construction of the new St. Elias group home, and the renovations and new programming offered at the mental health housing sixplex on Fourth Avenue.

Through a number of different departments, this government has been very proactive in working to address these issues, and we look forward to a continued relationship with the First Nations and the City of Whitehorse, as well as

other communities, in providing services, just as the ones that were discussed last Friday.

Ms. White: The inaction that allows the ongoing criminalization of addictions is our collective shame. Another of the Beaton and Allen report recommendations called on a downtown sobering centre attached to a medical detox. We know the government is rebuilding the Sarah Steele Building. It's a new space downtown that could, if properly planned, follow through on that recommendation and go a long way toward supporting the vulnerable persons who brought hundreds of Yukoners together for Friday's forum.

It's up to this government to tell us whether they're taking the right steps to help vulnerable Yukoners beat chronic drug and alcohol addictions. Will the new Sarah Steele Building fulfill this recommendation from the Beaton and Allen report and include both a sobering centre and a medical detox?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: I enjoyed the opportunity to attend the forum and hear from some of the panellists. I would like to acknowledge the work of Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the City of Whitehorse on that, and the many partners that participated. It's a valuable addition to the work that has been done to date.

I would like to just briefly recap for this House some of the significant steps that have been taken to date by this government in investing in a number of the services that were referenced and commended by people at the Vulnerable People at Risk Forum on Friday. Those include: the investments in Many Rivers; the investments in the Outreach van, which would not be running without this government's support; the investments in alcohol and drug services; support for the Salvation Army; support for the land-based treatment centre; the collaborative clinic; transitional housing supports; investment in the emergency youth shelter; support for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon, including stepping in when the former federal Liberal government cut funding; construction of the new Sarah Steele Building, which was referenced by my colleague; and, of course, the Community Wellness Court — all examples of a number of initiatives that have been taken.

I would also note comments made by the representative of the Anti-Poverty Coalition at the forum that, in fact, there are a lot of supports and investments available. There is more room for collaboration and connection, and we look forward to continuing to work with partners on taking the next steps in this area.

Question re: Housing programs

Mr. Silver: In this year's budget, there is \$240,000 for a housing action plan. This is good news. The bad news is that it has been over two years since a former Yukon Party minister proudly boasted his government's plan to develop a housing action plan for Yukoners. It was March of 2013 when this announcement was first made.

Two years later, Yukon residents who have, and continue to struggle with, housing issues are asking, "Where is the plan?" This is yet another item that falls under the unfinished-

business column when it comes to this government's track record.

The question is: When will this long-overdue plan be released to the public?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: As the member knows, the housing action plan is being undertaken by groups of NGOs — all of the partners involved in housing issues throughout the Yukon.

The plan is in final draft, but until the budget is approved, the department cannot proceed with implementation. We are moving forward and in due time, this plan will come to fruition.

Mr. Silver: With all due respect, it has been a few budgets now since this announcement of an action plan. I am pleased to see the government is spending the last of the affordable housing money. Some of it is actually even being spent on affordable housing.

It took nine years, so I'm sure the minister can understand my reluctance to jump to my feet and applaud and hopefully he'll answer some questions that I have here today. For example, it is interesting that the government chose to spend the money before the housing action plan was put in place. Proper planning would have seen a plan developed and then spending decisions being made to implement that plan. The government is doing it backwards and that comes as no surprise as we've watched this government over the years. It's the same approach that they have taken with respect to many issues — for example, implementing decisions in mental health without a plan.

Mr. Speaker, why did the minister make these major spending decisions without having a plan in place?

Hon. Mr. Hassard: I guess I don't understand what the problem seems to be with the member opposite, but this money is being spent with collaboration and tons of planning. Many organizations, many NGOs, many different walks of life have got together and given input on this. I mean, I didn't just step in as the minister and say, "Oh boy, we have \$6 million or \$7 million to spend. Let's get it done." This government has talked to a lot of people. The housing action plan is just a part of this. The housing action plan doesn't direct how all the money is going to be spent on Yukon Housing projects for the next 100 years.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of thought put into this and this government continues to listen to the people and spend the money wisely.

Mr. Silver: I will give the new minister credit for getting this money out the door. It is certainly more than his predecessors accomplished. The only serious attempt made at addressing affordable housing collapsed last summer due to political interference by this government. It is disappointing, however, to see its willy-nilly approach behind it. There is no coincidence that big announcements are being made as we near a territorial election. These pre-election announcements are typical strategies used by the Yukon Party. They believe Yukoners have a short memory and will forget that this money was hoarded away through some very, very difficult times for people who needed that money. At this point in time, one has to ask the Premier why he didn't help those who were in need

in the past and why he has chosen now to announce spending on housing issues only now that there's a lead-up to the next election?

Hon. Mr. Pasloski: There is no confusion on this side of the House, but there certainly is confusion with the Liberal leader.

As we've heard him say recently and through this session — telling us to spend the money; spend the money. Now he stands up and says, "How can you spend the money when you don't have a plan?"

The only confusion that we see is on the other side of the House. We have invested over \$150 million into housing. We have built seniors residences in many communities and we currently have a seniors residence under construction here in Whitehorse and also in Mayo.

This government has been committed to housing and committed to ensuring that not only are we building houses, but we're creating jobs for Yukoners.

Question re: Liquefied natural gas power project cost overruns

Mr. Tredger: When the Yukon Energy Corporation's new LNG plant was before the Yukon Utilities Board, many Yukoners came forward and questioned the claims that this new facility would easily pay for itself. These legitimate concerns were dismissed by this government as they pushed forward with their plans to increase Yukon's dependence on fossil fuels.

The new LNG facility is now \$8-million overbudget and the cost of LNG and diesel has fluctuated wildly. The president of Yukon Energy Corporation stated that the cost overruns of the LNG facility will be passed on to ratepayers through electrical rates and could wipe out much of the promised savings from the conversion.

Will the minister take responsibility for the increase in rates that will be borne by the Yukon public due to his government's inability to manage capital projects?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: First of all, the member seems unaware of the structure of the Yukon Energy Corporation. The Yukon Energy Corporation is a wholly owned subsidiary of Yukon Development Corporation, which is a government corporation. It is accountable, through the board of directors of Yukon Energy and through the board of directors of Yukon Development Corporation, ultimately to the minister responsible, but the corporation itself is a regulated corporation that is under the Yukon *Business Corporations Act* and it is regulated by the Yukon Utilities Board.

What the member in his characterizations has failed to realize, or failed to reflect to this House, is that in fact it was the boards of Yukon Energy and Yukon Development Corporation that reviewed the work done by staff and consultants and made the recommendation to replace the existing diesel engines with liquefied natural gas. That was based on their belief that that was the cheapest source of energy for providing that backup power. The member's characterizations of this project are quite incorrect, and I should note to the member that even with the increase in cost

— which as I previously noted, we're not happy about — this project is still the best course forward in terms of an economical solution to replace the 40- and 44-year-old diesel engines at Yukon Energy.

Mr. Tredger: Letters of expectations and directions are given from this government to the Yukon Development Corporation and its subsidiary, Yukon Energy Corporation. The fact of the matter is that this project was rushed through. Yukon Energy had already purchased the generators for the new facility before the permitting process even began. The Utilities Board hearings and the YESAB process were merely a formality for this government. At no point in the consultation process was the answer ever going to be anything but a yes to go ahead with the plan.

What alternatives did this government look at before pushing ahead with its now \$8-million overbudget LNG facility?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Quite frankly, the member's question and assertions are not only an insult to government, which we are used to hearing from the member, but are insulting to the dedicated Yukoners who serve on the boards of Yukon Energy Corporation, Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Utilities Board.

As the member should know, when the announcement was made of government providing a loan to Yukon Energy through Yukon Development to advance this project, it was noted in that press release that this was still subject to them actually being successful through the permitting process of YESAB and through the Yukon Utilities Board. If indeed they had not been successful, this project would not have gone ahead.

It is not just government, but in fact the boards of Yukon Energy, Yukon Development and Yukon Utilities Board that made the determination based on the best information in front of them — that liquefied natural gas engines were a cheaper solution than replacing the 40- and 44-year-old diesel engines with diesel units.

They made the choice that that was the best path to proceed with, and the member should check his facts before so casually casting aspersions, not just on government but on Yukon citizens serving on three boards.

Mr. Tredger: This government gives direction to Yukon Energy and the minister is responsible for Yukon Energy, so he should be taking responsibility for the cost overruns. Decisions on major capital projects should not be made before assessments are completed. It leads to delays and cost overruns, and in this case, those cost overruns are passed on to the ratepayer. The government sold this project to Yukoners on the basis that LNG would save them money over the long run. Now that the facility is overbudget and the price of diesel has dropped, the promise of decreased power costs is in question.

How will the LNG facility cost overrun and the fluctuating energy costs impact the promised savings that Yukoners were assured this new facility will provide?

Hon. Mr. Cathers: Again, what I would note to the member — and the member should be aware — is that, in

fact, this government, including me and my predecessor as minister responsible for Yukon Development, has strengthened the accountability framework to Yukon Energy Corporation and strengthened that governance framework from what it previously was.

I would again note to the member that Yukon Energy Corporation did go overbudget due to construction and permitting delays on the diesel replacement project. Even with those changes and even with those delays, the fuel source is still a cheaper, long-term choice than replacing the aged 40- and 44-year-old diesel units with another diesel unit. I again remind the member that it was the board of Yukon Energy, the board of Yukon Development Corporation and ultimately the Yukon Utilities Board that reviewed this project and made the decisions about it and determined that it was a cost-effective solution.

As the member should be aware, certainly people have served on these boards from all walks of life and from all parties, and members of those boards are certainly independent Yukon citizens who are providing their best advice and making decisions that they believe are in the best interests of Yukoners, and the member should not be quite so casual as to cast aspersions on them while he is flinging mud at the government.

Question re: Silver Trail improvements

Mr. Barr: This weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Silver Trail Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Association AGM with my colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun. The association represents the many businesses based in Stewart Crossing, Mayo and Keno, which provide services, meals, accommodation and shopping for locals and tourists.

This spring, the highway from Stewart to Moose Creek is in terrible shape. The association continues to call on government to invest in the Silver Trail, and for years these requests have fallen on deaf ears. This year's highways budget includes \$171,000 to develop a Silver Trail functional plan.

Will the Silver Trail Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Association be involved in this functional plan? Will citizens and businesses of Stewart Crossing, Mayo and Keno have the opportunity to have their say?

Hon. Mr. Kent: The Department of Highways and Public Works last year undertook a number of functional plans, including work on the Freegold Road, the Nahanni Range Road as well as the Klondike Highway. This year, as the member opposite referenced, there are functional plans for the Silver Trail as well as a number of other highways throughout the territory. They are engineering plans — they are not consultative plans — so they are highly technical. They are done by engineering firms so there isn't an opportunity for public input until after, perhaps, we're done and then we can take a look at it, but that helps to inform government, inform government decisions, and it allows us to make the best decisions with the transportation budget that we have.

Mr. Barr: The Silver Trail Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Association has written the minister on a number of occasions about the state of the Silver Trail and the north Klondike Highway. A June 13, 2012 letter states — and I quote: "Weather, road services and heavy ore truck traffic have degraded the roadbed to a point where there is no surface materials to work with and the soft spots are becoming dangerous."

At this year's AGM, it was the same refrain. The Silver Trail needs attention to many road signs that are out of date and damaged. We saw some falling on the ground, actually, when we went this weekend. Businesses want to see large up-to-date blue highway signs installed that tell the travelling public about upcoming services, accommodations, gas stations, restaurants and other services.

The summer tourism season is upon us. Will another season pass before these issues are addressed?

Hon. Mr. Kent: As members opposite know, the Yukon government manages thousands of kilometres of public roads throughout the territory, including important accesses for industry as well as tourism. The Top of World Highway and the Dempster Highway come to mind, as well as the Silver Trail. As he mentioned in his initial question, we are doing the functional planning to help us inform the improvements that we would like to make to the Silver Trail going forward.

If there are specific questions about signage or tourism signage that the member opposite or the individuals involved with the Silver Trail Chamber of Commerce would like to see, I'm certainly willing to welcome them to contact my office and we can put them in touch with the officials so that we can take care of those signage aspects. Signage is something that is important throughout the territory and we want to ensure that those businesses that would like signage in the highway right-of-way have the opportunity to do so. There are policies and procedures in place to have that done but, again, it's something that I'm more than willing to talk to constituents of the Silver Trail region about — with respect to the signage they're looking for.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Chair (Ms. McLeod): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 18, *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 18: *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*.

Department of Education

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's a pleasure indeed to rise in the House today to present the 2015-16 budget for the Department of Education to members present.

The Department of Education's mission is to encourage Yukon learners of all ages to develop a love of lifelong learning, a strong commitment to their communities and the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in our workplace and society.

As this budget will reflect, the department's focus in 2015 will continue to be on supporting success for each learner. Partnership is an important element in creating and delivering programs and services that are responsive to the current and future needs of Yukoners. The Department of Education works with a wide range of partners and stakeholders. Engaging partners about the department's programs and services fosters new ideas about how to support the academic, cultural, language, employment, training and accommodation needs of Yukon learners.

Before addressing the numbers behind the 2015-16 budget, Madam Chair, I would like to acknowledge the many partners and individuals who work with the department. Together we explore new avenues of programming and to enhance existing services, including the educators of Yukon, including the dedicated teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals, the Yukon Teachers' Association, and others.

It includes the Yukon school councils, students and parents, including Yukon First Nation governments and the Council of Yukon First Nations. It includes the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and the many community, business and other educational institutes and organizations that work with Advanced Education through the labour market framework, the Yukon literacy strategy, the community training funds and the labour market development agreements, among other programs.

Input from partners is invaluable to the Department of Education, and the department will continue to seek their involvement and feedback as it moves forward this year with the programs and services outlined in this budget.

The total budget for the Department of Education this year is \$181,325,000. I will begin with the capital budget estimates for 2015-16. The capital budget for 2015-16 is \$26,481,000. It's important to note, Madam Chair, that the capital budget is based on need and cash flow requirements for each project; therefore, the funding requested each year varies. Investing in creating and upgrading facilities for Department of Education programs represents the majority of this capital fund.

The largest current facilities project is the F.H. Collins Secondary School replacement, where construction is well underway.

\$7,478,000 is requested for 2015-16 for construction, project management and administrative costs. The new school building was designed with leadership in energy and environmental design, or the LEED standard principles, and will hold up to 750 students in a variety of learning spaces from the central gym to the First Nation elders' space. We just had a walk-through within the last month — and last week on the functional design each individual space was also walked through — and the uses and the facilities contained therein were explained. I am very excited to take a look at this school when it's finished. I was one of the very first classes that went into the old F.H. Collins Secondary School, and I will be very interested to see the upgrade between that school in 1963 or 1964, I think it was, and this one.

The Department of Education is also responsible for furnishing the new school building in order to prepare it for use. To furnish the school and provide the necessary IT and other equipment and services for students and staff, \$2.970 million is required. Once the building construction is complete, the furniture and equipment will be installed. Once installed, the department will advise staff, students and parents of the timeline for moving in and opening the new school building. Relating to the replacement of the school is the separate technical education wing, for which the department is requesting an estimate of \$3 million.

We are also proceeding with the planned updates to playground equipment at many schools. The department is committed to providing outdoor spaces where children can safely and creatively play, build friendships and strengthen their minds and bodies. In fall 2013, Suncorp Valuations inspected the playground equipment at Yukon schools. As recommended in their report, the department developed a two-year replacement plan that began last year in 2014-15. The department anticipates this project will cost an estimated \$1.46 million over the two years to provide new playground equipment at 18 Yukon schools. For 2015-16, \$600,000 is requested to replace an assortment of play structures, rope climbers, monkey bars and slides. The following schools are scheduled for playground replacements and upgrades in 2015-16: Ghùch Tlá Community School, \$70,000; Hidden Valley Elementary School, \$80,000; Holy Family Elementary

School, \$70,000; Nelnah Bessie John school, \$70,000; Teslin School, \$40,000; Johnson Elementary School, \$70,000 — that includes playground and slide; Del Van Gorder School, \$70,000; Selkirk Elementary School, \$80,000; and Elijah Smith Elementary School will receive \$10,000 for a slide only.

Funding is also being sought in this budget for capital projects that help maintain other public school facilities: \$2,575,000 is requested to upgrade the Del Van Gorder School roof to support the long-term structural integrity of the building; and \$500,000 is requested to upgrade the Watson Lake Secondary School roof. I'm also pleased to highlight the construction of the new facility for Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, for which \$2,401,000 is requested.

This new building, designed by Kobayashi & Zedda Architects Ltd., will include a workshop and a section with three classrooms, offices and reception areas. The building will be capable of accommodating a variety of trades such as millwright and heavy-equipment mechanic. I look forward to the completion of these capital projects over the next few years.

Thanks to the Department of Highways and Public Works for working with Education to develop and deliver the facilities that Yukon needs for its educational programs. These facilities are home to the many programs that contribute toward meeting the Department of Education's vision and mandate.

I am pleased to now discuss the main items and initiatives under the Department of Education 2015-16 operation and maintenance budget. A total of \$154,844,000 is requested for the Department of Education's operation and maintenance budget this year. This will support the activities of the Public Schools, Advanced Education and Education Support Services branches, as well as Yukon College.

From literacy to experiential learning to First Nation programming to language instruction to First Nation support services, the department is investing in the supports our students need to improve their learning outcomes and succeed in their education.

To support the Yukon Literacy Coalition, which runs the Family Literacy Centre programs such as northern tales for northern kids, Apprentissage par Coeur and multi-age Mother Goose, the department is requesting a total of \$280,000 in funding for 2015-16.

To increase support for students, \$285,000 is requested for the home tutor program, a \$20,000 increase for this excellent program that is available at all secondary schools, including the Teen Parent Centre and the Gadzoosdaa student residence.

To provide more equitable programs and support to Yukon's rural and First Nation students, \$75,000 is requested to support the continued implementation of the rural equity action plan. This plan also responds to data showing a gap in terms of rural and First Nation student achievement compared to urban Yukon students.

Many rural and First Nation students do not have access to the same range of social, emotional, physical and academic supports that are available to urban students in the Yukon. This difference has contributed to a lack of equity of outcomes and opportunities. The rural advisory committee meets regularly to discuss the plan and issues faced by rural schools and First Nation students in order to provide advice to the department.

A great example of the work being done under the rural equity action plan is the rural experiential models such as the one being hosted at the end of this month in Watson Lake. The rural experiential models offer rural students in grades 10 to 12 a terrific opportunity to learn fine arts, applied skills and applied skills training from local and First Nation experts while connecting with their peers from other communities.

The success of past rural experiential models are thanks to the dedication and efforts of many teachers, administrators and department staff who engage these students at the workshops. The Department of Education recognizes that rural and First Nation students have lower attendance and academic achievement outcomes compared to their urban and non-First Nation counterparts. The department is committed to supporting these learners in order to improve their learning outcomes and to respond to the call from Yukon First Nations for new partnerships and strategies.

The Council of Yukon First Nations and First Nation governments are important partners in Yukon schools and in the success of First Nation students throughout the territory. The department supports the Council of Yukon First Nations in their delivery of education services and is collaborating on the implementation of the joint education action plan over the next 10 years. The department's First Nations Programs and Partnerships Unit liaises with local First Nations to create programming for schools that is inclusive of First Nation cultures, languages and traditional knowledge.

\$1,566,000 is requested for the activities of this unit, such as developing First Nation curriculum and resource materials for Yukon schools. Examples of resource materials made available include reading books for different grade levels from NorthWind Books, such as *Making Tea at Grandma's*, *Kaska Day at School*, *A Winter Camp* and *Finding A Medicine Tree*.

Great examples of programs coordinated by this unit include: the bilingual and bicultural Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Southern Tutchone bicultural program for kindergarten to grade 2 at St. Elias Community School, the elders in schools program and the cultural inclusion program, which supports cultural activities in Yukon schools such as carving, moccasin-making, beadwork, bison hunts, canoe building and other cultural activities.

Through these First Nations Programs and Partnerships initiatives, students are learning about the history, cultural traditions and the important role of First Nations in this region. We will continue to work together to improve outcomes for First Nation learners and to provide all Yukon students with opportunities to learn more about Yukon First Nation cultures and traditions.

The department also provides students with access to opportunities to learn First Nation languages, including Gwich'in, Han, Upper Tanana, Tagish, Kaska, Tlingit, and Northern and Southern Tutchone. \$405,000 is requested for the Yukon Native Language Centre with \$3,037,000 requested for the salaries of aboriginal language teachers.

The First Nations Programs and Partnerships linguist is also working with First Nations to create and update multimedia resources and databases of materials to teach several First Nation languages. These include Kaska, Southern Tutchone and Han with partners such as Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Ross River Dena Council, Liard First Nation, Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia.

Language is a bridge that connects us to each other and to the world around us. Learning the languages of Canada's diverse communities helps connect Canadians together, including First Nations and French Canadians. The Department of Education is pleased to offer a number of programs for French language instruction in Yukon schools from the French first language programs at École Émilie Tremblay and Académie Parhélie to French immersion and other French-as-a-second-language programs. The department continues to use the comprehensive review of French second language programs as a guide to collaborate with the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Canadian Parents for French and other community partners to enhance French language education programs in Yukon. Language is one area where students may need additional support in order to succeed. Under this budget, the department is also requesting \$403,000 in funding to support additional instruction for English language learners.

The Student Support Services division coordinates other supports to meet language special learning needs of Yukon students. \$3,060,000 is requested for the activities of this division, which provides students with support for their learning successes based on their learning strengths and challenges. Teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators work together, often on school-based teams, to identify and assess the needs of individual students to adapt the regular curriculum to meet these needs. Student Support Services offers counselling, speech and language pathology, physical and occupational therapy, assistance for the hearing- or visually-impaired and paraprofessional support for Yukon students.

The funding request includes \$7,000 for the autism spectrum disorders prevalence national survey project, which is fully refundable from the Public Health Agency of Canada. Currently, comprehensive data on autism spectrum disorders does not exist in Canada and there is a need to address the significant emotional and financial challenges presented by these disorders as Yukon educators work to assist these individuals to reach their full potential.

Madam Chair, as you are indicating that I don't have all that much time, I will end there and go through the rest of the programs once members opposite have an opportunity to comment.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his comments. I will try to be brief so that he can finish up and we can move along with the others.

First, I would like to welcome the officials to the Legislature and the minister to his new position. Welcome to the Department of Education and to education in interesting times. I think education is always interesting, and there are always challenges as we work together. I commend the minister for his efforts in reaching out to the teachers, to the schools and to the school councils in his efforts to build a team. To me, education is about relationships, and the primary relationship in education is the relationship between the student and the teacher. Our goal is to build a team to support that relationship, and that goal involves the community, it involves the Department of Education and it involves parents and the school.

In order to make that relationship the most effective, we need to provide our teachers and our students with the supports they need to do their best in the classroom. What research and experience have shown us is that the closer those decisions are made to that classroom, the more responsive they are, the more effective they are, the more efficient they are and the more successful they are.

I think it is important that we look at how we can decentralize decision-making so that decisions are made closest to the source, so that they are responsive, quick to evaluate and the most cost-efficient.

A lot of people go into that support and I think the ways that we can support that are through research, through ongoing evaluations, through encouraging our educators and through trial and error to take risks, to be supported in those risks and to learn from them. The best education is a continuous education — continuous progress. In order to progress continuously, we need to have our educators and our students supported so that they can grow and learn from opportunities, so they're not afraid to take chances or to experience failure — because failure is a part of learning.

To quote Wayne Gretzky: "You miss 100 percent of the shots you don't take." I think that's so true in education. You need our kids taking shots, taking chances, trying to learn.

The Auditor General, in 2009 when he was evaluating the Department of Education and subsequent evaluations of different departments, pointed out that: "Strategic planning is a management tool that focuses on the future. It helps us set priorities and goals and develop a plan to meet those goals. It also helps a department to assess how resources are to be allocated and gives it the scope to adjust its direction in response to a changing environment." We need to be able to assess where we are, where we want to go, the risks involved — and plan for the risks, but move forward.

There are many good initiatives underway in the Department of Education. The minister mentioned some of them: the rural experiential model, what's happening in Old Crow Flats, the projects in Watson Lake and Dawson City, the engagement of Ta'an Kwäch'än, Haines Junction with Champagne and Aishihik. All these projects are to be commended. They show much promise. Let's ensure they are

given acknowledgement they deserve by properly evaluating them: what priorities, what outcomes and what goals are being met? Let's ensure the resources to keep these happening and maybe to repeat them in other schools or similar projects. Let's ensure the resources necessary and the challenges overcome are acknowledged, identified and provided, local involvement is supported and successes and challenges are articulated. This will ensure that that success is sustainable and, with proper engagement, repeatable in other schools.

So that will be the focus of my questions as we go through looking at this year's budget, articulating how we've arrived at a decision to spend some money. What were the considerations and, because we are fiscally aware, what choices did we make? How did we choose the programs we chose and which ones didn't we choose? Again, I welcome the minister to the Department of Education.

I welcome the new deputy minister and my long-time friend, Cyndy — thank you. I'll leave that now. I will let the minister finish his introductory remarks and then we'll begin the questions.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I will just continue on here and try to hit the highlights of every department. Under program delivery in the department, we are requesting \$295,000 to create an additional 5.5 full-time equivalents of educational assistance staffing. Paraprofessional support staff, as members know, are allocated to schools through a needs-based system and we are currently reviewing that system in cooperation with teachers and school councils as well. This process accounts for student needs, enrolment numbers, student achievement levels, rural equity adjustments and student learning profiles. School principals then assign the FTEs allocated to their school to specific classes, based on the needs of students in that class.

The people who work directly with Yukon students as they explore the rural world through the classroom and on the land, from teachers to administrators to paraprofessionals, are the most important resource in our schools. In order to provide opportunities to Yukon educators for professional development throughout the year, \$352,350 is requested. This funding will help to deliver in-service training and professional development programs like the summer academy, which brings together school teachers, administrators and paraprofessionals from across Yukon before the school year begins each year to meet and learn about new developments in the field of education. This program gives school staff a valuable opportunity for professional development and collaboration on the shared goal of success for each learner.

The Department of Education is committed to providing a safe, engaging and supportive learning environment for all Yukon students and staff, where staff has the tools and knowledge to support the success of their students. Professional development through programs such as summer academy highlights the value of lifelong learning for Yukon's younger generations.

I would like to now talk about the Advanced Education operation and maintenance budget. A diverse range of educational programs beyond the public school system are

available to Yukon learners. The Advanced Education branch promotes adult training, post-secondary and continuing education and student financial assistance programs, as well as coordinating immigration programs for this region. A total of \$15,347,000 is requested for operation and maintenance for Advanced Education.

The Department of Education is committed to building an inclusive, adaptable and productive workforce and to encourage people of all ages to embrace opportunities for lifelong learning. In order to achieve those goals, Advanced Education provides Yukoners with a diverse range of opportunities to upgrade their skillset or to continue their education, many of which are targeted toward the demands of the job market in this region. For example, the governments of Canada and Yukon announced the Canada-Yukon job fund and the labour market agreement for persons with disabilities in 2014 — two major employment initiatives to assist Yukon workers to access training and skills development to improve their employment prospects.

The Canada-Yukon job fund provides approximately \$1 million per year for the next five years in federal funding to sponsor the Canada-Yukon job grant, employer-sponsored training and employment services and supports. This fund takes an employer-driven approach to help Canadians gain the skills and training they need to fill available jobs.

The labour market agreement for persons with disabilities provides \$1.25 million per year over the next four years to increase the representation of persons with disabilities in the workforce through services that assist individuals with disabilities to find, gain, maintain and return to employment.

Yukon also continues to receive \$3.949 million in federal funding through the labour market development agreement to assist individuals eligible for employment insurance to seek employment or pursue training to improve their employment prospects. Partnering with the federal government through these agreements enables Advanced Education to offer an extended range of education, training and skill development opportunities for all Yukoners. Addressing Yukon's skilled labour shortages through these kinds of programs enables Yukoners to participate in the workforce and to contribute to Yukon's economy and communities as well as provide Yukon employers with the skilled workers they need.

Another avenue for filling the gaps in our labour market is by promoting Yukon as a great destination for immigration. Yukon is the best place to live, work, play and raise a family, and many immigrants choose to make this region their new home. In order to attract talented workers with the skills that Yukon needs from overseas, the Department of Education continues to find ways to support and streamline the transition process for newcomers to the Yukon. In new funding, there will be \$192,000 from the federal government for the foreign credential recognition program.

In November 2014, the Department of Education began a two-year contribution agreement with Employment and Social Development Canada to promote the recognition of foreign credentials in Yukon, specifically for foreign-trained accountants in this first phase of the process. The process for

foreign credentials recognition helps ensure that immigrants to Yukon are able to transition into the jobs that are available in their field of work. This agreement will include a number of initiatives, the main task being the implementation of a bridging program for accountants trained outside of Canada starting this summer. The Department of Education is also exploring a partnership with BCIT's international credential evaluation service as a service provider. Furthermore, we will lead a one-day northern summit on foreign credential recognition.

The department is also working with Yukon College to ensure that qualifications and credentials of Yukoners are recognized by Canadian standards and employers. As Yukon prepares to deliver its first made-in-Yukon degree programs in 2017, the department is requesting \$250,000 to support the necessary groundwork related to quality assurance for the granting of degrees. In order to grant degrees, Yukon College must undergo institutional assessment and assessment for each proposed degree to ensure that made-in-Yukon degrees meet the Canadian standards.

Institutional assessments look at governance, policies, planning and financing to deliver a quality degree program, legislative authority to offer degrees, qualifications of faculty, support for scholarly work for faculty and students and appropriate educational facilities. Degree assessment considers the financial viability of the program, academic quality, the program's objectives, structure, institutional appropriateness, resources, student outcomes and their relevance. The department is currently reviewing the assessment systems for post-secondary education in other Canadian jurisdictions to determine the appropriate system to use in Yukon.

Advanced Education is also reviewing the *Students Financial Assistance Act* as well as the apprenticeship program this year. The review process for the *Students Financial Assistance Act* and Yukon student financial assistance includes seeking input from current, former and future students, parents, First Nations and educational institutions, and others. The apprenticeship program review will look at the efficiency and effectiveness of the program to define the benchmarks that the department can use for further evaluations. We look forward to hearing the feedback gathered during these reviews.

\$6,965,000 is requested to support the Training Programs division, which is responsible for these programs. The amount of funding requested includes \$4,728,000 for the ongoing support of post-secondary students through Yukon student financial assistance programs such as the Yukon grant, Yukon excellence awards and training allowance.

A total of \$25,463,000 is requested for O&M of Yukon College, under Advanced Education's O&M budget for 2015-16. This represents a base funding increase of \$562,000 to support this leading northern post-secondary institution. This funding from Advanced Education will support Yukon College's programs at the many community campuses throughout the Yukon — campuses in Carcross, Carmacks, Dawson City, Faro, Haines Junction, Kwanlin Dun First

Nation, Mayo, Old Crow, Pelly Crossing, Ross River, Teslin, Watson Lake, Whitehorse and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, as well as Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining mobile trades training trailer.

Yukon College offers a number of post-secondary and training programs that prepare Yukoners to succeed in the workforce and in their careers, and that addresses the specific needs of our region. For example, \$75,000 is requested to support the delivery of the Yukon water and waste-water operator program. Yukon government is committed to maintaining and improving access to safe drinking water in Yukon. Training local people as water and waste-water operators ensures that there are qualified operators available in Yukon communities to safely and effectively manage water resources.

Yukon College also provides arts and culture programs and training to students. \$474,000 is requested to support the Yukon School of Visual Arts in Dawson City. At this accredited art college, aspiring artists complete a foundational year as the first year of study in a bachelor of fine arts/bachelor of design degree. This joint venture between the Dawson City Arts Society, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon College attracts students from Dawson, across Canada and beyond to pursue their arts education in Yukon. This school is also an active contributor with a strong presence in the arts and cultural scene in Dawson City.

Turning to science and technology, the Yukon Research Centre at the college continues to establish itself as a major centre for northern research for climate change, cold climate technology and environmental science, society and culture. \$1,189,000 is requested to support the Yukon Research Centre as it continues its work, a \$101,000 increase since last year.

In September 2014, the Premier announced five more years of core funding for the Yukon Research Centre in the amount of just over \$6.3 million. This funding will help the Yukon Research Centre to attract third party project revenues. We look forward to the continued growth of the research and development industry in Yukon through the Yukon Research Centre.

\$1,200,000 is requested to support Yukon College's Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining. Yukon College is implementing its five-year program plan for the development of the centre to integrate and house mining exploration-relevant and industrial trades training programs within the territory. Courses continue to be delivered to Yukon residents, including First Nation students at community campuses, and through the mobile trades training centre, which is currently in Ross River delivering a dual credit, heavy equipment technician course.

The Government of Canada also has continued the targeted initiative for older workers through Yukon College. This initiative provides an opportunity for workers between the ages of 55 and 64 to develop new skills to transition to new fields of employment or to return to work. \$240,000 is requested to continue this initiative for 2015-16. This amount is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada and 72 participants are anticipated for this round of funding.

This program helps older workers to determine what type of work is suitable, how to deal with changes and barriers, skills upgrading and certification. It focuses on job search training, such as resume and cover letter preparation, interview skills and employment counselling and offers a four-week work placement for experience. The class size is around 12 participants at a time and 75 percent of participants who participated from fall 2007 to spring 2013 were employed at the program's completion.

I would like to thank Yukon College for developing and delivering a wide range of quality post-secondary programming to Yukon learners of all ages. Partners like Yukon College and others help education to evolve in this region through direct engagement committees and consultation.

A total of \$8,075,000 is requested for the O&M of Education Support Services. This funding will support the activities of the branch, which oversees a number of areas of responsibility. These areas include health and safety, student transportation, finance and accounting, facilities management and planning, procurement, human resources, policy, communications, evaluation, records management and the executive management of the department. \$3,867,000 of the funding is requested for school support services, which includes staffing for facilities and student transportation, including the contract for busing.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, the department encourages everyone to keep sharing ideas and being involved in its programs, working together to build a diverse range of programs that reflect the needs, values and vision of Yukon. I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Department of Education staff and my colleagues here in the House for developing a budget that supports the success of all Yukon learners. A big thank you to all Yukoners for their continued support and participation in our education system through the various councils and engagement processes that we offer.

With this budget, the Yukon government will continue to deliver on its commitment of education today for jobs tomorrow. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Tredger: Thank you and I thank the minister for his thorough introduction. I would also like to thank the officials from the Department of Education for their pre-budget briefing. It was much appreciated and very thorough, so thank you very much.

There have been a number of changes to the senior management positions. I assume there are severance packages and cost to the taxpayers. I would ask the minister: Do those costs come out Education or from the Public Service Commission? Does he have an estimate on how much they cost? I believe we have a new minister as well as a new deputy minister, a new assistant deputy minister and a senior director has left. What measures are being taken to ensure the continuity of programming and staffing to assure the staff that things will proceed — that they receive some assurances that things are under control with that amount of movement and I guess assure parents and students that programming won't suffer?

Adding to that, has the minister undertaken a review of the hiring procedures and protocols; in particular, reference checks and background checks to ensure that the people who are making those decisions are trained to do so and that we don't end up with situations that cost Yukon people — the taxpayers — considerable money as well as students', teachers' and schools' time and effort when members of their community don't receive proper scrutiny before they are hired to the positions?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, I can answer a couple of the questions.

If severance packages were paid to any employees, it would come out of the Education department budget, not the Public Service Commission's. We don't discuss those things — the individuals or whether or not they received a severance package — but I can confirm that yes, it does come out of our budget.

An interesting comment was continuity of programming. Madam Chair, sometimes change is necessary because what's going on isn't necessarily working. I think that the continuity of the general operation of our schools and curriculum is something that is going on. It never slowed down.

As you probably know, I had a new deputy minister come into the department, but she had previous working experience at the department level — a senior department level — and could pick up in a fairly seamless manner, but the continuity of everything in the department was one of the reasons changes were made.

We will continue offering the basic services we have always offered, but we are making changes. There is no doubt about it whatsoever; we are making changes. We are involving more and more the school committees and our other partners in decisions made at the department level and some of those changes that happened very, very early in the process were the changes in protocols and procedures that we use during the review of hiring new people in the department.

I have also stated publicly that that even included a second look at how we are using various committees, such as the Teacher Certification Board. I'm not necessarily saying that we are going to make changes in that area, but we are taking a look at that. We will also be consulting with the YTA and with the people who are part of that certification board to determine what they feel that their role in the process should be. If changes to legislation and regulation are needed, we will proceed with those changes, but that is not something that we are going to rush.

At this time, we have made several changes in protocol and procedures around hiring to ensure that the number of mistakes — because mistakes can always be made — but the number of mistakes in the near future will be drastically reduced.

I think those were the three that the member opposite asked about — I hope those serve.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that and I thank him for moving on the issues, as he saw necessary. There has been a lot of concern about how positions are filled within the

department in particular, and I thank the minister for addressing that.

One question that was raised to me around this was one of the new procedures — and I haven't seen it personally; I'm getting this second hand — but I would like the minister to comment on it. It is a decision that teachers will not be removed from schools during the year to positions within the department. I can certainly see the reason for that, but I would like assurances from the minister then that the majority — or whenever is possible and perhaps to make it a priority — of staffing be done between school years, so that the qualified people within our schools receive that opportunity and because they've taken a position within a school, they're not, as it were, penalized for doing so.

Hon. Mr. Graham: One of the very first things I did was ask my deputy minister to institute the policy of saying that teachers should not be taken out of the classroom for jobs in the department, especially those jobs that were a short-term requirement for the department, because we found, in one particular instance, that not only was the school from which the instructor came disrupted, but another school was also disrupted because the position was backfilled from another school.

There are a number of children who suffer as a result of these things happening. I can assure the member opposite that we will attempt, in all cases, to avoid removing a teacher from a classroom to work in the department, except in extreme emergency. If there's an emergency, then we'll still reserve that right.

I agree also with the member opposite that we will be attempting to fill those department positions at a time when it's not going to be disruptive to the classroom. We would love to fill them all in the summer so that every instructor has an opportunity to bid on jobs such as that. Unfortunately, that's not always the way people leave the department, but our department plans and the school plans — we'll be working on. That's what we'll be hiring — according to those plans.

It's our intent to make sure those jobs are all available to Yukon teachers and that it's done before the school year. That's what the department plans to do.

Mr. Tredger: I appreciate the minister's answers there. It is a valuable opportunity for people who are working in the schools to be able to go into the department if it's a wonderful professional development opportunity. I appreciate the minister. It comes down, I think, in large part to planning in advance so you know what positions are coming up and when they are coming up. Sometimes in education, we have in the past reacted to spur-of-the-moment ideas. I can remember long struggles, even trying to set a school calendar, when professional development dates and others were only made aware of during the school year.

Being able to plan in advance and determine the positions that are needed before the school year begins would certainly go a long way. The other thought on that might be that any positions hired to the department during the school year for which teachers or school-based personnel might be qualified could be filled on a temporary basis until the summer, or until

between semesters if it were a high school, when those accommodations could be made.

Hon. Mr. Graham: That was part of the solution too — that we would be able to hire on a contract or casual basis until such time as we were able to make it a fair competition for all Education employees. We see that as something that's definitely doable because we realize that department personnel, or department needs, may change during the school year and, if they do, we don't want to handcuff ourselves into a position where we can't fill that position until the next summer.

There are a number of options available to us, but one thing that we would like to say about the department is we're always interested in promoting from inside where appropriate, and we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for his answer.

The next couple of questions are around the importance of community involvement and the need for a whole child support system. As we are becoming increasingly aware, the health of a student support system, the health of the people around a student, happenings within communities — whether it is Whitehorse or within the individual communities — a student's socio-economic status and position have a major influence on success. Poverty, isolation, access to resources all affect a student's ability to succeed in school. We all know the importance of early identification and intervention, which can change outcomes, especially if we have community involvement and support. Critical to that are the support of other agencies, the support of other students, families, and ensuring a safe and secure environment. One of the more successful ways to involve communities and agencies — quite often in the Yukon we have settled into our silos, as it were, and Education was education, Health and Social Services was health and social services, and Justice was justice, and we had our silos.

I wonder if — recognizing that, will the minister direct, or has the minister already directed, schools and other departments — or talked to his colleagues about directing other departments — to coordinate provisions of services to the communities and to ensure that there is time for school staff, particularly administrators, to participate? Each community will have different mechanisms. In each community it is important that it be a community-based exercise.

Will the minister make this a priority for his staff and encourage ministers from other departments to hold regular inter-agency meetings with community members or within the community to support school administrators to support teachers and students and, most importantly, to support students so that they are ready to learn when they are in class?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I can confirm that we are working with a number of partners. When we talk about whole child support, it is not called exactly that maybe in the department, but we are working with Health and Social Services and First Nations in a number of ways. While I was Minister of Health and Social Services and the Child Development Centre — and the coordination between the Child Development Centre and

their work in the community and the Department of Education. In fact, during my time with the Department of Health and Social Services, we had an employee of Education seconded to the Department of Health and Social Services to work on joint initiatives between the two departments.

Health and Social Services and Education — just to give you an idea of the collaboration on a number of joint initiatives, including how to improve our service delivery and coordinate efforts to meet the needs of our common clients — oversee the joint labour market agreement for persons with disabilities and health behaviours of school-aged children sureys in Yukon.

In addition, the complex needs committee is co-chaired by Education and Health and Social Services, and the role of this committee is to plan for school-aged children and youth with complex needs who access programs from Education and Health and Social Services in order to better meet the needs of the students and their families. To further emphasize that, there are over 16 issues that the two departments are currently working on, and senior managers of both departments meet regularly to talk about these joint initiatives. I will name a few: I have already talked about the labour market agreement; bullying behaviours steering committee; healthy families; home-based family support program; healthy living committee; Canadian Joint Consortium on Comprehensive School Health ; From the Ground Up is another program that they work on; complex needs committee; four corners partnership; and transitions to adulthood for students with disabilities committee, which is one I'm particularly proud of because there was not a great deal of support for students transitioning to adulthood out of high school, and that committee is working hard to correct that problem.

There is regular discussion between the manager of Student Support Services in Education and the supervisor of these family supports for children with disabilities in Health and Social Services. We also carry out joint meetings related to the funding renewal of the practical nursing program at Yukon College. I believe that in the last two programs of the practical nursing program, every single graduate was hired by Health and Social Services.

We collaborate as well on the children's dental program. As I said, health behaviours of school-aged children, learning together, parent-child preschool program, and the classroom diversity committee — so, in all of those areas, Health and Social Services and Education collaborate on joint initiatives. That's something that is increasing. I know we're currently talking in Health and Social Services and Education about the birth to five-year-old children too and exactly how we can collaborate more closely because we all know that the children from birth to age five is one of the steepest learning curves of all ages, and Education would like to assist in any way we can to improve the outcomes for that age group.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for those comments, and I think that's important.

One of the things I was getting at, and I was thinking of it from a community perspective and what has been proven — I know it happens in some communities and not necessarily in

others — but the importance of an inter-agency group within the community, a group that might include the RCMP, the nurse, the directors of programs within the community from the First Nation, the social worker — so that they can coordinate their activities within the community.

In order to make that happen, I'm wondering if the minister would make that a priority and look at the staffing allocation formula to ensure that principals have time allotted so that they were able to have an inter-agency meeting one afternoon a month, or something. It does take time and it is an effort, and I know administrators' time is valuable, but this reaches out and involves the community.

The second part would be to look at administrator allocation time to ensure that administrators in the community have time within their day to meet with the First Nations and directors of the various departments of First Nation governments, so they can include that and incorporate it into building a whole support system around the children and around the schools.

I guess my question is: Will the minister make it a priority, or more of a priority, to ensure that principals, in their time allocation, have time so they are able to do that without having to rob other jobs or programs?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I know that in many of the communities at the present time Health and Social Services works with an inter-agency committee that includes many of the people the member opposite just mentioned — the local nurse, RCMP and any of the other professionals in the community that have a concern about the community's wellness. As part of the joint education action plan that the Council of Yukon First Nations and Department of Education are working on, this forms a part of that plan — working closely with groups in the community to ensure that we're planning not only the students' future in the school system, but the supports and interwoven — I guess it is — wraparound supports required to ensure the success of the student in the community as well.

So yes, it is a part of the joint education action plan and it is a priority with this government. I don't know, really, what else I can say other than that. It is part of the joint education action plan.

Mr. Tredger: Administrators are very busy people. I know there's staffing allocation, and I know that in some schools the administrators are not full-time because of staffing allocation. Maybe we can move on to the joint education action plan next but just to finish up on this one — just to ensure that administrators do have time to do that without having to take from their regular work.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, Madam Chair, I can assure the member opposite that this is part of the negotiation process that will resume on Wednesday. We hope to be able to support administrators further in exactly the manner that the member opposite is talking about.

Mr. Tredger: I appreciate the answer. Is the staffing formula part of the negotiations with YTA?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, it is. That's why we won't be able to talk about it at this time.

Mr. Tredger: Just further with that and in terms of supporting the students, superintendent of schools — one of the long-term goals from the Yukon Association of School Administrators has always been to ensure or find ways that superintendents could be in their schools and understand their schools more. They were looking toward parameters that allowed superintendents a window into the schools so that they could see what was happening in the schools and how the schools were going, as well as a window into the department for the schools. They were sort of a conduit between schools and the department. Over the last number of years, there have been a number of structural changes that have given superintendents less authority within the Department of Education and less time to spend within the schools.

That has had a couple of consequences. One is that the schools, in going to the superintendents, weren't always any longer going to the right person. They had to go, again, back to two or three different directors whereas, in the past, the hope was that they could go to the superintendent, who would then know what was happening in the schools and be able to advocate for them and then be able to take that position.

When the minister mentioned all of the committees and activities going on, usually — or in the past — superintendents are on those committees, lessening the time that they end in schools. I've heard stories of — in the last year or two — superintendents only having time to visit schools in the communities maybe once or twice a year and, when they're in the schools, having only time to sit down with the principal behind his closed door. An hour or two with the principal doesn't constitute necessarily a school visit so, on this, I'm wondering if the department has collected statistics over the last years as to how many visits the superintendents are going to each school, what reports are coming out of that, who are they visiting in the schools and whether there is a move to return some authority back to the superintendents so that they can make decisions — again, with the idea that they are closer to what the students need than some other officials within the department. If we are going to try to decentralize the decision-making, it is important that our conduits have the authority to make decisions.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I can assure the member opposite that superintendents have been in schools more this year than in previous years and part of our changes recently have been made to ensure that they are out there more often than they have been in the past. We are attempting to ensure that now all things from the family of schools that the superintendent has responsibility for go through that superintendent.

What we would also like to see happen — well, what we will ensure happens — is that more of the people who work in the department as consultants and as support services for the schools will spend more time out with the schools as well. What we are very sure of is that all things will go through the superintendent, so the superintendent can advocate on behalf of their schools with the various other support services. It is really important, I think, and it is one of the really pleasant things that I have seen happen in the department lately — we just met this morning — that department staff see themselves

as supports for the schools. I am not so sure that always happened in the recent past. It is really great to see that they believe and they know that their role is to support those schools because that is where the action is.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. I encourage him in his endeavours. It has been a long-standing goal to get the dedicated employees in the department into the schools on a regular enough basis so that they can provide service, and it is also the same with superintendents. I hope they are going to spend more time in schools. I hope they spend some time in the staff rooms and in individual classrooms and get to know the teachers, get to know the school and be able to help the school work with the community.

I think that is the other aspect to that. I know your new deputy minister spent a fair bit of time in both Pelly Crossing and Mayo, building relationships that helped the new principals or the ongoing principal to work within the community. Those are the roles that a superintendent can play.

It is critical though that they have the time in the schools. One of the things that happens, I think, is that sometimes the department officials see their desk piling up and they work at it from — and it's a natural thing to work at it from your desk. I would encourage the minister to follow up on that and encourage everyone to get into the schools as much as possible and to find ways to support them on an ongoing basis, rather than a fly-by visit. I appreciate it and thank the minister for that.

The minister mentioned the memorandum of understanding with Council of Yukon First Nations and the joint education action plan. Do we have an update on that joint education action plan? How will that fit in — will the CYFN education committee and leadership committee have input into what the comprehensive review that the minister is undertaking will entail? What types of things are going to be looked at so that we can — if I understand correctly, there is going to be a comprehensive review — how is that going to interface with the joint education action plan? How will that lead in a few years down the road to the new education vision?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I will go back to the previous subject just for a second, because when we say that we are trying to bring the focus back to the schools, that is something that we are really actively trying to do. As an example, even Finance now has sent out some folks from the Department of Finance to assist schools in setting up their systems or improving their systems as well. We are trying to make it a department-wide philosophy. The schools are where the action is; we are here to support the schools and it is really important that everybody understands that and believes in it.

As for the joint education action plan with First Nations, we now have an action plan that has been signed. What we are doing — in fact, this afternoon there is a meeting. It is the implementation plan that will be agreed to in the very near future. As I said, there is a meeting just this afternoon, so department officials are attending that meeting. Once we have an implementation plan ready to go, we are ensuring, first of all, that the implementation plan is cross-referenced with the

strategic plan as well the rural education action plan. We are trying to make sure that the joint education action plan, the rural education action plan and the strategic plan are all interrelated so that each plan isn't saying something different. We want to make sure that they are coordinated, cross-referenced and proceeding lockstep down the same pathway.

When we talk about the new vision that we are proposing for education, I think it's fair to say that the joint education action group will become one of the foundation members for the group that moves forward. We said on a number of occasions that we'll be including all our partners in the consultation and in the planning for this new vision, and I think it's fair to say that the joint education action group will form a basis — a firm partner — for the initial discussions. I should also mention, because not all First Nations are on that, every First Nation will be part of it.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. Sometimes I need a deputy minister here, telling me which words go where. I appreciate the input of the deputy minister there.

If I understand, then, before we begin the comprehensive review, the minister will engage with the various partners. Will that be done in a formal or informal way? Will there be a committee set up that would then drive the comprehensive review, or would that be done in-house with opportunity for the various partners to have input?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I think it's important that we just take a step back because, as I've said on any number of occasions, the work being done in this area is in its infancy. We haven't set up exactly what process we'll be using immediately. What we do know is that, internally and with some assistance from a few of our education partners, we'll be setting out a very basic design of where we hope to go, how consultations will occur, when they'll occur and who they will occur with. We'll get together a small group that's easily able to come up with a basic design and, from that, we'll then go forward. At this point, the department really hasn't had a chance to implement any of the thoughts the Premier expressed the other day, or that I've brought forward to the department in our conversations.

The first part will be developing an outline of where we hope to go, timelines, who we will consult with — and we'll try to put together some points where we hope to have certain things done. I guess it will be an action plan, more or less.

Mr. Tredger: Will CYFN, Yukon Teachers' Association and the Yukon Association of School Councils, Boards and Committees be part of that steering committee? Has there been any money allocated to set this in motion, or is it going to be done in-house?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the member opposite is exactly right. Those are our primary partners that we'll be consulting with to put together at least the initial action plan, so it will be the Council of Yukon First Nations, the AYSCBC and the Yukon Teachers' Association. Those will be our primary partners in the very first stage. At that point, we'll decide where we're headed from this point on. As I said before, we have three reports plus the Auditor General's report that we have to take a look at. At some point, we have

to look at what we've accomplished or what the recommendations were from those three reports — what we've accomplished and what we have yet to accomplish, or even if we want to go ahead with some of the things that have not yet been done.

It's a big process just to even get started. We're really looking forward to it. We haven't put any money in — in discussions with the Minister of Finance and other caucus members. Once we get at least a preliminary plan in place with our other partners, then we'll be able to determine more accurately what kind of funding we're looking at, when it will be required and what kind of process is necessary.

Mr. Tredger: The Premier, in his Budget Address, referenced a new vision within a couple of months, but my understanding is that it's a beginning of a process that may, it sounds like, take — it certainly won't be done in this fiscal year but in future fiscal years, and it's an ongoing plan and, as it's being developed, there will be various pieces of action on it that will be rolled out.

Does the minister have any estimated timelines as to when we will see curriculum changes and when we will see the changes to the *Education Act* that were implied when the Premier said that 20 percent of local initiative wasn't enough? I believe that's in the act, so that would require a change to the act.

Those are fairly major undertakings and I assume they are going to cost money in the end, but do we have any timelines on that?

Hon. Mr. Graham: You know, Madam Chair, curriculum redesign is going on all the time, as the member opposite probably knows. We're working with the B.C. department at the present time with respect to some changes in the curriculum — that we'll be working with them on — and that will probably apply to Yukon schools as well. Just in the very recent past, we've had a First Nations unit in social studies 10. We've had a number of other items that have come forward in curriculum changes. I outlined some that were in my opening remarks today.

The curriculum design is something that goes on all of the time. We already said that — you know, I don't know where the two-month frame came from, because the Premier was very certain not to make any kind of time commitments until such time as we had an opportunity to work with the department. We will begin consultation with all stakeholders and all of our partners this fall in 2015 — we will begin the process. This is not a process that is going to take place over the next six months or even a year. I have also said that the initial bite will be to look at high school programming. I don't see a great pressing need to completely revise the kindergarten to grade 7 curriculum. We are making small changes in there — we are adding more Yukon content, more Yukon First Nation content — and we will continue to do that.

However, one of our real priorities was the high school curriculum. We are going to take a look at the best that's offered in academic subjects in western Canada — well, all over Canada — and we will learn and we will draw from the best as we see fit over the next little while. That is one of the

reasons why there is no money in this budget. We just haven't really had the time to do it. We will bring together some of our partners — our core partners, I'll call them — probably by the end of May, to ask: "How do you think we should proceed with this? This is what we would like to see happen." Then we'll expand that process by this fall. Again, as I said, it is not something that we are going to rush into because we want to make sure it's done properly, it's planned properly and we include everybody — including students. That is the one facet that I probably didn't mention before, but students have some very good ideas about where we should be heading as well — especially how they learn and what they prefer to learn in schools. We'll be working with students as well, but we intend this fall to bring the majority of our partners together to begin discussions.

Mr. Tredger: I do appreciate the minister's comments. I believe Education is going through a continuous process and continuous evaluation and is moving forward. I understand that the Premier did say — and I guess this is where he said: "Over the coming months, we will be rolling out a new vision for education in the Yukon." I much appreciate the clarifications from the Minister of Education saying that indeed we will begin the process in a few months and this will be a matter of ongoing — and lead to sustained education.

I guess we will see how that goes, and if we get to action that will be good. I guess part of me was pleased to hear what the minister said, because so often we jump into things in Education very quickly and we follow the latest thing and quite frankly, teachers, department staff and administrators would like to do their work and to evaluate their work and to make improvements on it there, not on stuff that sort of rolls through on a periodic basis. We'll be talking about some of the programs in a bit.

I did want to follow-up on one of the things the minister talked about in terms of changes in the department and over the last little while there has been quite a concern about centralization of decision-making around individual education policies and special programming. The *Education Act* is quite clear that the school administration, in consultation with professional staff and parents, will make the determination as to whether a student is a student with need of special education or if an individual education plan is appropriate to meet the student's needs. It also speaks to the involvement of parents in individual education plans and any changes to them. It has always been through the school-based team that that has occurred.

I just want to make sure I have my right spot here.

What is the minister doing to ensure that decisions around IEPs and individual student education plans and needs are being made at the school administration level, in consultation with professional staff and parents, and to ensure that parents are apprised of their rights and included in school-based team meetings, IEP meetings and alerted to any changes in the child's IEP?

Hon. Mr. Graham: These were a number of concerns that came to me at the very first school council meeting I went to and I also heard from a number of parents who felt that —

well, I went to the autistic society's meetings and there I was also apprised of the concern by parents that they weren't being involved in the IEPs, so we've heard those concerns. We made sure that we've taken those concerns back. We've asked the questions within the department about why these things are not happening. I know we had some staff shortages and perhaps we weren't getting out — or the department professional personnel weren't getting out or didn't have the opportunity to get out — and do as many of these assessments as we should have. We will be meeting in the fall with the ASA group and teachers to talk about this a little more, but we have every intention of including not only the parents, but the professionals in any further discussions around SLPs or IEPs programs, consistent with the legislation — because if that's the law, why would we want to do it any other way?

I think it's fair to say that we've heard the concerns of the parents and administrators and we will be changing the way we're doing things.

Mr. Tredger: One of the goals of Yukon Education has been to put children in the most enabling and least restrictive environment. When the minister is conducting his review of education and looking to a new curriculum — as he mentioned and referenced, there has been much concern about how special needs students and their needs are being met within the school curriculum, within classrooms, and the effect it has on school classrooms.

Will the review that the minister is doing look at the role of special programs and special needs students, how they are incorporated into our classrooms, and what the least restrictive environment is, and the most enabling, and where we can proceed with that — and also look at how we can return the decision-making to the school level with support from the department, rather than the decision-making being done at the department and dealt with at the school level?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I think I said in my opening remarks — we talked about a safe, caring environment with the best possible learning outcomes for all children. I should pass on a comment from a parent here, with an autistic student, who said that there are problems within the system, but some people are very satisfied with the way the system works. This parent, in particular, says they have always been included in their children's individual learning plan and they are very happy with the way things are going.

There are difficulties in the system — there's no doubt about it — but it's good to hear there are successes as well. I don't know if the first part of my answer answered the question that the member opposite had, except to say that, yes, we will be taking a look at how these people are integrated into the classroom.

It's very important to us too that not only they have a great learning experience, but that the children in the classroom aren't disrupted and their learning experience destroyed because of the integration.

Mr. Tredger: I know I moved off the education curriculum and the Premier's Budget Address, but I just wanted to refer back to it. He calls it a made-in-Yukon K to 12 education curriculum. The minister said that the primary focus

wouldn't be on kindergarten or elementary schools, but more on secondary schools, although that doesn't preclude, as the minister said, some changes at the elementary level. I understand from the minister that the review will focus primarily on, say, the secondary — grades 7 to 12.

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's correct. I think I said that we would focus, at this time, on secondary school.

I'm not saying that we won't return and take a look at what's happening in primary education, but that will happen at a later date. At this time, our focus is on the grade 7 to 12 curriculum and the pathways — how students are directed into certain pathways and how they are counselled in selecting a stream of education.

Mr. Tredger: I have just one further question. The Premier does state, "We will be rolling out a new vision" and, toward the conclusion, he says, "We do have the vision." I guess the vision is to conduct a comprehensive review.

Back to special programs — the concern I have heard expressed is that there was an effort on the part of previous ministers to have the number of special needs students designated with IEPs reduced, and we ended up with a categorical system rather than a needs-based system. I hear the minister is moving toward more of a needs-based system rather than a categorical system if students need support. If they need help as determined by their local school administrator, then the role of the department is to support them in those needs. Given that there are limitations in terms of our resources, schools won't receive instruction to reduce the number of IEPs — I believe that a number of them were moved from individual education plans, which are recognized by the *Education Act*, to individual learning plans, which aren't — thereby not having to meet the *Education Act* in meeting the needs of those students.

Would the minister confirm that we are moving toward a needs-based assessment of students rather than a categorical?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Yes, I would agree with the members opposite. The individual education plans for students will be needs-based to ensure that we have equity and fairness for everyone.

As an aside, at one of the school council meetings that I attended, the school council members indicated to me that it was interesting to see who was coming forward to ask for an individual education plan for their children. Non-First Nation parents saw the individual education plan for their child as a step to get some additional resources to help their child further their education, yet some of the First Nation parents did not want to see their child on an IEP because they felt that it was somehow degrading their student or their children's learning abilities and identifying their child as a slow learner.

The school council in this particular area is doing as much work as they can with individual parents to ensure that they understand the reason behind individual student learning plans. I found it quite interesting, but I think also that one parent or one school council member said that, in a perfect society, every single kid in the school system would have an education plan because every single kid learns in a different way and at a different rate. I thought that was an interesting

comment. We don't have the funds for that nor do we have the resources. As you can see, we've added some resources this year to bring in more educational assistants, but to implement a plan such as having an individual learning plan for every single student in the system, we would have to double the number of educational assistants and that simply isn't going to happen.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. A couple of comments on it — the trust that is built up between parents and the school emphasizes the need for local school decision-making on situations because each student is different and comes with a different set of parameters. In many cases, parents have not had successful experiences in the school system and that makes them somewhat wary of the situation. One of the best ways to overcome that is through school-based decision-making.

The other part to what the minister said is — yes, each student is on, in a sense, an individual education plan. I have to take my hat off to the teachers who have differentiated instruction in each one of their classes. They have performed performance reviews three times annually on 20 to 25 students. They assess where they are, where they're going and how they're getting there, so, in a sense, each student is on an individual education plan. Thanks to the work of our teachers and their support system, we're able to deliver on that, but there are some students and some situations where they need extra assistance and that's what we recognize in an IEP.

I guess this sort of leads into our staffing policies. If I can just go back through some of my experiences, at one point the decisions were all made within the department and a school would receive a number at a particular time in the spring — about now usually — saying you had 23 or 21 or 10 staffing allocations and to go ahead and make your plan.

There was a lot of concern that some schools were getting more than others, and wondering back and forth, so the department at that point in time chose just to give each individual school their numbers. That certainly did not work. It wasn't in keeping with an open and transparent policy, so a staffing allocation committee was developed and that staffing allocation committee would review all the numbers. They came up with a staffing formula with the intention that they would continue to meet and evaluate to see how that would happen.

The other aspect to that — and it was a very important aspect — is that all of the administrators were given all the numbers for all the schools, so that relieved that idea of competition and they were able to say that's fair and that with this school — "I can see what's happening there; they need these kinds of resources and I can see what's happening there" — and the department has moved away from that under previous administrations. I'm wondering if the minister would entertain a return to that open and transparent system, where the cards are laid on the table and the administrators can work as a group, as a team, and feel included in the decision-making to do away with some of the competition or the who's-getting-what kind of thing, so that we're in this

together, we're part of a team. I would ask the minister if there are changes in that regard too.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The simple answer is yes, we're going to make it available to all schools.

The staffing allocation formula was developed back in 2011 and there have been tweaks to it since, but I think that at some point it will require another meeting with all the partners again involved in the allocation formula to ensure that nobody is being shortchanged.

I know I recently met with a rural Yukon school council and the principal was there too and, when she went through her staffing allocation — the principal went through the staffing allocation as well — and she said: "We don't know how we got as many people as we did, but we have to tell you that we're extremely happy with the Department of Education." When I asked her what their staffing requirements were, she outlined exactly how many people they had and I had to kind of — it took my breath away knowing the size of the school.

We also realize that enrolment is changing in schools all around the territory and, as you know, in the staffing allocation process you cannot — even though you may lose a large percentage of your students or a significant percentage of your students, your staffing allocation cannot drop by more than one FTE in any one year. It's to protect the smaller schools from a number of staff members all being moved in one year.

Enrolment is changing. We see that. All we have to do is take a look at the high schools and the changing enrolment in the various high schools. Those things are supposed to be compensated for within the formula, but I know schools such as Hidden Valley School recently made a request to us, because they have had a significant drop in their enrolment, and they see it affecting their school population, or their school programs. So they made a request to us to recruit students from the Crestview area, which is very close to Hidden Valley. Knowing there are going to be pressures on Porter Creek elementary schools this year, because of the expansion down in Whistle Bend, we thought it would be a perfectly good idea to take those kids, if they were interested, from Crestview and move them back to Hidden Valley, allowing the Whistle Bend children to come to the other Porter Creek schools.

Evidently, from my conversations with them, they have had a great deal of success in that area, so the department next year may be looking at increasing the staffing allocation in that school, just because they are successful in recruiting a number of students.

The staffing committee will be coming together in the fall. It's part of the process, I guess, but it's very important to me that it's transparent. As I've said to the member opposite on a number of occasions, we don't have anything to hide in the Department of Education and we're only too welcome to have people take a really close look at what we're doing. We're pretty proud of some of the things that are occurring in the department and we'll continue to do those things — and we're always looking for new ideas.

Mr. Tredger: There have been a number of studies done on school catchment areas and the effects of moving them around. I'm glad the minister is open to changing the catchment areas, because it does involve things like busing, siblings, tradition and all manner of things.

If the minister is changing catchment areas and looking at that again, I would encourage consultation with school councils and with the administrators of the schools, so that can be rolled out in a planned way. I thank the minister for reconvening the staffing allocation committee. I know, at one point, it was dissolved, and it's good to see it back and in operation. It's important, again, to involve local decision-makers in local decisions.

Another area that gets affected with this — there are a couple of transitions that our level of support changes at, and there are expectations. One of the transitions is from early childhood to kindergarten; another is from elementary school to high school. This is identified in resiliency studies and all manner of studies as critical points for students; points to particularly pay attention to.

Students moving from early childhood to kindergarten are going from being around their parents or in daycare to a kindergarten environment. They are going from the support of the Child Development Centre, which is excellent, to the support of the school system, which is also excellent, but of a different nature. The transition there is critical, as well as the transition from an elementary school — which tends to be smaller, which tends to have one class for the whole year — on to a high school.

Those are two very critical areas. Has the minister had discussions with ASA, with schools councils and with early childhood in terms of developing a transitional plan that would look at how we move students through the system and how we support them through the somewhat troubled times? I'll stop there.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The question is quite interesting because my grandson is currently attending the Child Development Centre. When anybody calls it "daycare", he is very, very quick to correct us and tell us that it is school that he attends at the Child Development Centre and it is just that this is the little school and soon he'll be going to the big school. He's not so sure that he wants to go to the big school. The transition will be that the Child Development Centre makes sure that these kids are introduced to the big school — as they put it — and they actually get to spend a little time in there and feel more comfortable when they go on an ongoing basis.

Porter Creek and Vanier schools both have transition plans. At Porter Creek, grades 6, 7, 8 and 9 are all together with a single program, so they are constantly working together to assist these kids in the transition. I think probably one of the greatest transitions I know as a child — I do remember that far back from time to time — was, quite frankly, going from elementary school to high school. That had to be the most difficult thing ever for us as children. We were fortunate, actually, for quite some time because we only had one school

in Whitehorse and it was kindergarten to grade 12, so the transition for some wasn't as difficult.

It is something that is on our radar. I don't know what else I can say about it, other than we will continue to work to make sure we have transition plans from elementary school to secondary school, to make sure we have school counsellors that are aware of the difficult time and especially to have the kids visit their new schools. One of the good things that I saw in the department when I first joined it was the idea of school families, where you have under one superintendent a number of schools and the elementary schools are feeders into the high school. It is actually a great system because they are working with the same kids throughout the system. That is something that a minister before me must have approved and I think whoever did it, did a good job.

Chair: Before we proceed, would members like 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. We are going to resume general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education.

Mr. Tredger: Just a quick question for the minister regarding the Yukon literacy strategy — when we talked about it in the supplementary, he mentioned that the Yukon Literacy Coalition, the Yukon literacy strategy working group and the First Nations Education Commission held a joint meeting. They are working to complete the strategy. He had a report three weeks ago. There was a great push to get the literacy strategy in place before this session. It wasn't done, but is expected in the near future.

Is there an update on that from the minister?

Hon. Mr. Graham: Madam Chair, the last draft will be coming over to me in the next little while and, shortly thereafter, we'll have something ready for my own caucus to take a look at and then would be only too happy to share it with everyone.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer.

Teaching literacy in the classroom — in the past, we've had a number of programs that targeted specific children with problems, like the Reading Recovery program. There was a move over the last five years or so to go to integrated literacy, classroom-based, and delivered by classroom teachers. It did have a training component and it was successful in many ways. But there were concerns raised that there was still a need at times for one-to-one instruction away from the distractions of the classroom and there's a need for more specialized teachers to support and promote literacy and numeracy with certain individual students.

The Reading Recovery program has years of data, anecdotal as well as empirical data, on the successes of that program. There was a concern that the program would be

neglected and thereby fade away. Reading Recovery — I would warrant most people in the Yukon are aware and know of stories of how much it has helped children who they've known and certainly teachers and administrators have spoken very highly of it. It does have some limitations; it's not the be-all and end-all, but it certainly has been a very, very effective program. Part of Reading Recovery that is important to remember is it needs ongoing support and ongoing training. The various governments — I believe all three governments over the last 15 or 20 years — have invested heavily in Reading Recovery. It means training trainers, it means ensuring that each school has a Reading Recovery teacher and that Reading Recovery instruction is ongoing. It has produced quite a few dividends.

If the minister could give me an update on Reading Recovery — the number of teachers currently being trained, the number of schools that are offering Reading Recovery and if there are any elementary schools that don't have Reading Recovery at this time — if he could also note that — and plans going forward. Are we going to continue to make significant investments for significant returns in this program?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The short answer again is yes. In 2013-14, four new teachers were trained in Reading Recovery. The department felt that at the time that it provided a sufficient number of trained teachers to address the needs of the programming and consequently no additional training happened in 2014-15. That will be reassessed again to determine whether or not additional training will be necessary. I'm informed that it is actually in process for next year.

The balanced literacy approach is an instructional tool and it is now being implemented in all classes, but we agree that supports for Reading Recovery — and I had an interesting anecdote given to me by a teacher in an elementary school where they had a number of children who were not reading at the assigned grade level. I think it was a grade 2 teacher who had been trained in Reading Recovery so, utilizing that approach, she took these students and worked with them over a number of months. At the end of the time that the teacher worked the Reading Recovery program with this small group of students, she said she found that grade 2 students were able to read at a grade 4 or 5 level, except they didn't know what the words meant. They could read them absolutely accurately, but many times they didn't understand what the larger words meant. To me it was an indicator of how good that program really is. If you can teach kids to learn to read at that level before they even understand what they're reading, it's amazing.

I'm a believer, just based on that story — and, of course, I've had some anecdotal stories from within the family too about Reading Recovery. I think it's very good.

We will definitely continue it for all kids who don't have the necessary reading skills. It was interesting that, in 2013-14, 132 students received Reading Recovery, and 70 percent were discontinued, according to the program's parameters: 21 percent were recommended to the school-based team for long-term support; three percent moved away from the territory before completing their lesson series; and six percent were

progressing but unable to continue for some other reasons. To me it was interesting that 70 percent were successful in the Reading Recovery program. This year — that number is an old number.

Last year, \$109,000 was allocated for Reading Recovery. That amount didn't include the salaries of the teachers involved, but included site licences, program materials and travel for training, and that kind of stuff. There were 14 staff positions last year allocated to Reading Recovery, and it hasn't changed this year.

Mr. Tredger: Are there any elementary schools that do not have a working Reading Recovery teacher at this time — which I assume would be on the list, which is why we're doing more training in 2015-16?

Hon. Mr. Graham: That's the intent — to have at least one in every school, but sometimes there are not sufficient numbers of students. It is program-based as well. It makes it very difficult, but it's one of the reasons why we're providing more training to try to keep up the number of Reading Recovery teachers in the territorial school system.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. The Reading Recovery program and its companion in the Yukon, Wilson Reading, have many benefits besides the improvement of the individual student. Often the professional development teachers who have taken Reading Recovery and have taught in grade 1 use it, as the minister indicated, sometimes in grade 2 or in their regular classrooms. The direct instruction is a nice complement to the balanced instruction happening in the classrooms. The balanced instruction works for many of our students. Reading Recovery catches more.

I'm going to talk a little bit about Wilson Reading because it too is a very important aspect to many students in the Yukon school system.

I remember having a conversation at one point with, I think, the assistant deputy minister of the time — this is 10 years or so ago — and he mentioned that for the majority of students, reading comes through classroom instruction and we don't have to put a lot more money into it. For 20 percent, we need to put in more money and payback. As we get further along for another 10 percent, we need even more investment, but it is worth it. Those kids who need that extra investment benefit and become proficient, they become very able contributors to our society and, perhaps most importantly, through that instruction they feel good about themselves.

I guess I'll just ask the minister if he could give me an update on Wilson Reading and whether or not that is receiving the same care and attention that Reading Recovery is, because it is a similar kind of program, once it is built up at considerable investment. We need trainers and classroom teachers who are trained in the venue. It never did quite get its foot in as solidly as Reading Recovery did, and I think a large part of that was because Jeanette McCrie, who is recently retired, was a real champion of Reading Recovery and she put a lot of time and effort into that and inculcated Reading Recovery into all of our brains. I have seen Wilson Reading work in schools where it has been adapted and I know the

department was moving toward ensuring that it was available at all schools.

If the minister could comment on that and then we'll decide if we have to come back to it.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Wilson Reading system is still supported in Yukon schools, but as I understand it, recent research on the long-term success of the Wilson Reading program has shown that it is very effective for a smaller group of students with specialized learning challenges. What the Department of Education has suggested is that it should only be provided by learning assistance teachers to a smaller group of people, but we fully believe — as the member opposite has said — in the Reading Recovery program, because any intervention provided for students that clearly shows it improves results is something that we should support.

We are continuing to support it and when the member opposite talked about the training and the requirement for training for Reading Recovery teachers, it is interesting to see that training for new teachers in Reading Recovery requires four half-day assessment training sessions, 18 in-service sessions, and the receipt of five school visits over the year by the Reading Recovery teacher leader.

It should be noted that participation in all of the training can result in some rural teachers being out of their schools as much as 20 full days in the school year. It is a substantial investment in time and funding to train someone in the Reading Recovery program, but the results — as I enumerated earlier — 70 percent in this one cohort in 2012-13 appears to me, at least, to suggest that that training and investment is well worthwhile.

Mr. Tredger: It is very well worthwhile. As I mentioned earlier, as we go through our student population, we get to a percentage where I believe it is worthwhile, but it is increasingly more expensive for a fewer number of people, as the minister alluded in terms of Wilson.

I can speak from my experience in our school about a long-time grade 7 teacher who took the Wilson Reading training program. She took a lot of it on her own time because it wasn't available, and managed to use some of her prep time and some comp time as well. The results she found were spectacular and probably in her mind — and I go to her opinion as a long-time teacher, she felt it was extremely worthwhile. After she retired from teaching, she went to LDAY and continued to tutor in that way.

I am going to read a letter from a former principal who was involved in the Wilson Reading program by way of trying to emphasize that we are dealing with not a great number of students, but a significant number — and a significant number who are being held back by their literacy, not by their ability to perform. That is where the extra investment, I believe, pays off long term.

So if you will bear with me while I read the letter, I'll skip the parts that identify persons or schools or things: "The Wilson program was brought into Yukon Education by the Department of Education, initiated and supported by LDAY, quite a few years ago in an attempt to deal with a very serious issue: a considerable number of our students were leaving

Elementary school with a significant gap in their reading skills — a gap that then put them at profound disadvantage in Secondary school, with the all too predictable outcomes. Many of our students — especially First Nations learners — start dropping out by Grade 9 when the frustration of dealing with secondary school requirements with their deficient reading levels grows too great. Wilson Reading began to address that issue.

At the time of its inception here, Wilson Reading and later Foundations were provided with solid support: Learning Assistance teachers were trained to work with students in groups and individually, and classroom teachers were provided with training in Foundations. It seemed to work. Each school which embraced Wilson Reading started to provide evidence of progress — often dramatic — and parents began requesting that their children be given the benefit of the program. Then, after several years, things started to change. The Department of Education began de-emphasizing Wilson and making it clear that it was only one part of a larger integrated Literacy Strategy. That approach succeeded in elbowing Wilson Reading to the periphery with fewer and fewer schools having the resources to offer intensive Wilson Reading time to those of their students who needed it the most. Not long ago, I asked why Wilson Reading wasn't being used in a certain school and was told by one of the Administrators that it was no longer allowed! Maybe that is so, but even if it isn't, the benign neglect with which the program has been treated in the past few years means that effectively there are fewer and fewer teachers to deliver Wilson Reading and virtually no one qualified to train staff members.

“You and I know that many of these students stand out as early as Grade Three and Four. These are students who had difficulty with reading from the outset and who often went through Reading Recovery in Grade One ... and were frequently ‘exited’ and then put in the hands of Learning Assistance teachers for years thereafter for part of each school day.”

I noticed in the statistics about 20 percent of the students in Reading Recovery are exited rather than discontinued.

“They continued to struggle until the end of Grade Seven, often masking their lack of achievement by acting out or by withdrawing completely.

“I encountered a significant number of students — mainly boys, often but not exclusively First Nation learners — who fit into the above category. A few of them were able to get some intensive Wilson Reading training and it paid off for them every time. Learners who reached Grade Four as non-readers began to see the patterns of readings through the Wilson approach, and plenty of practice. The chances are these students had a profound reading disability — dyslexia, for example — which prevented them from seeing the letter patterns that you and I take for granted. Wilson Reading was able to unlock that door and give those students the foundation needed to continue through school.

“There are many parents out there who have seen the dramatic effect that Wilson Reading has had on their child's

progress and have been willing to attest to the fact and I'm sure will be still willing to come forward.”

I guess that's a testimony from a long-time educator. I would back that up with what I've seen in the schools. I'm pleased to hear that the educational assistants are being trained in Wilson. I would encourage the minister to take a very close look at it, to read some of the anecdotal reports and talk to some of the people who have been involved in the program. It is expensive, but it's more expensive to let these kids drift through the system and graduate with gaps like that.

If I can make a plea on this floor for Wilson Reading and Foundations to become more integral to our school system, then I would do so and I thank the minister for looking at that.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The statement that Wilson is no longer allowed in the schools isn't an accurate statement. That is simply not true.

The department is taking a look at what alternatives to Reading Recovery there are for kindergarten to grade 3 students. The member opposite mentioned one, and he probably knows that Foundations is one of the ones extensively used in Grey Mountain school — and it is a Wilson program. They have found it to be extremely beneficial to a number of students.

I think it's really important that we keep Wilson alive in the school system, but it's only one of a whole suite of interventions we need to put in place to make sure that literacy skills are great for Yukon children. That's where we have to focus — making sure that the program we use is tailored for the children who are there. If we can get 70 percent, as we did in 2013-14, with Reading Recovery, then what we have to do is take a look at the other 30 percent and determine which of the interventions we have currently at our disposal are correct for those students.

I can assure the member opposite that Wilson is not being killed off in the Department of Education. As I said, in one school in particular, Foundations is an integral part of the Reading Recovery program. It's something that's going to survive, but it's only going to be one of a number of initiatives that we have.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. As the writer of the thing noted, he couldn't attest to whether or not it was an anecdotal thing. I would emphasize again that Wilson is not an alternative to Reading Recovery. It enhances our suite of options. It does require a fairly intensive investment, both in time and money, and it does require a buy-in from the schools. Grey Mountain is not the only school that has embraced Foundations and found great success with it.

The beauty of having a program like Foundations, and like Wilson Reading and like Reading Recovery, is that it sets a foundation in place so, when you have schools in rural communities or schools where there's a higher turnover, there's a basis already, it is a department-supported initiative and the process is in place to enable that to happen so that when you have new staff in Pelly Crossing or in Ross River or in Haines Junction, they don't have to go and reinvent the wheel. This allows us to invest and have a consistency of approach that helps us reach those hard-to-reach learners in

schools where there is more of a turnover and where, in many cases, there is a more evident need.

So thank you to the minister and I appreciate him looking into it. I'm wondering if the minister can give me an update on Learning Together.

I assume from his earlier comments that it is continuing to expand. I know that in 2013 there were three schools where it was implemented. Has there been an evaluation of the program identifying what were the successes; what were the challenges? Did it work in every school where it was used? What supports do we need to put in place? I am very excited about the program. I think any early childhood, family-oriented program is very important.

Again, if this is the program that we are going to use, let's ensure that it is available and that it is supported, and we know where the challenges are, we know where to expect the successes, and we can build that into the system. If I can just refer again to Reading Recovery — Reading Recovery has survived our school system with all its changes for 20 years because it was evaluated, because it was tracked very carefully, and there was anecdotal evidence, empirical evidence, and it was well-researched.

So when we have a program that we find works like, from my reports, Learning Together does, how do we make it so that it is going to have sustainability and that we can support it through generations?

Hon. Mr. Graham: The Learning Together initiative was something piloted for the very first time in 2010 in Whitehorse. It is similar to programs from other jurisdictions in the country. I think it was basically modelled along the StrongStart BC program from our neighbours to the south, but it was adapted to Yukon by the Department of Education. Since 2010, it has been offered at a number of locations. It is a drop-in style program. It was offered in Selkirk and Hidden Valley elementary schools in Whitehorse, Eliza Van Bibber in Pelly, and Johnson Elementary School in Watson Lake. From what I have seen, the creation of the programs in Watson Lake and Pelly included parent, community, First Nation consultation, and the program has since expanded to the Family Learning Centre at Kwanlin Dun First Nation and it first opened in October 2014 last year. The program appears to have been a success in many areas, so what we are doing is evaluating the program now to determine the effectiveness. From all anecdotal responses, the effectiveness has been pretty good, but we are going to evaluate it on a formal basis to determine and to see, because we also believe there are some modifications to the program necessary now that it has been running a number of years, so we'll have to tweak the program to ensure that it meets the needs of all of the learners, especially rural learners who are involved in the program.

So, evaluation and then, if the tweaks are necessary that we believe are indicated, those will be carried out as well — but there is no intention of cancelling the program. In fact it could even be expanded.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that and again I would just say that it's important to evaluate. If it is a direction that, after weighing the evidence, after seeing the

effect it has on kids and watching them for a number of years — which I assume we're going to see in a very positive light — but it's important that we have that information at our disposal so that we can make a decision, because in order for it to go system-wide, it is a considerable investment and there are other alternatives out there so we want to be sure that we get the right one or one that is adaptable to the varying needs in varying communities and for different parents. I thank the minister for looking into that.

I wonder if the minister could give me an update on the Teen Parent Centre. It has been a wonderful program. It has met the needs of many young parents and their children. I know a number who have benefited from the program. Is there any intent to upgrade the facilities? Are there plans for the future to expand? Are there any plans for involving or stretching that out so that it's more inclusive of communities and for young parents in communities to be able to attend and be supported in a more supportive environment and work with the staff at the Teen Parent Centre to enable them to continue at school?

Hon. Mr. Graham: At this time there is no intent to diminish the program or reduce the program in any way. We are continuing the program. It has a reasonable success. What we're attempting to do is increase the number of options that are available to students attending through on-line offerings that will be available, and we're also looking at the staffing of the centre.

Those are the things that we're attempting to do right now, but we're increasing the number of offerings — no intent to reduce the program in any way — and we're looking at staffing at the present time with an eye to changing the makeup of the staff to some extent.

I believe it was part of the educational review or the educational reserve review as well. I will look into that and provide an answer but, as far as I recall from those meetings, there was no intent to move the Teen Parent Centre from where it is at the present time until and unless a new Selkirk Street School is constructed. At that time we would have to evaluate exactly where we were to place the Teen Parent Centre.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer. Again, I would commend the staff at the Teen Parent Centre for the work that they are doing and the difference they are making, not only for the young parents but particularly for their children.

Just a couple of quick questions on Gadzoosdaa: Can the minister give me an update on the numbers attending and whether or not — I believe I have that — but whether or not there have been any students turned away? Is there a waiting list? How many rural people have found other accommodations? I know that the department does provide subsidies for rural students from some communities, especially those who are not able to get into Gadzoosdaa. There is a living allowance provided. Could the minister tell me how many fall into that category?

Last year, I asked about attendance at Wood Street programs and specialty courses. A number of times people

move in from the rural communities just so they can attend Wood Street or the specialty courses that are offered only in Whitehorse. Do those students qualify for residence in Gadzoosdaa? At one point, if they were from a community that already had a high school, they weren't given priority for Gadzoosdaa. Does that still remain? I guess the other part to it is that I had talked to a number of students at one point and they were under the impression that if they went to Gadzoosdaa, they weren't allowed to attend the Individual Learning Centre, which is a — well, we will talk about the wonders of the Individual Learning Centre after. I am not sure if that implies that I didn't know what to answer — so if the minister could tell me?

Has the graduation rate at Gadzoosdaa been compared to the graduation rate in the communities or territory-wide? Has Gadzoosdaa improved our graduation rate? Is it something that is working that way?

Finally, on Gadzoosdaa, is there an exit survey? I know a number of students begin the year at Gadzoosdaa and then leave and return to their communities through the year. Is there an exit survey done to see what causes them to leave, if there is a reason — whether it's just family back home or being homesick or whether there is something that the residence can do to convince them to stay longer in the residence, some type of programming or support that we could put into place to help the students who are living away from home at a young age and experiencing a large school compared to where many of them are coming from?

Hon. Mr. Graham: There are 38 beds in the Gadzoosdaa residence. As the member pointed out, they are for senior secondary school students who don't have a secondary school in their home communities. The first question he asked was about students who do not stay in Gadzoosdaa. There are about 15 rural students receiving living subsidies for residences other than Gadzoosdaa at the present time.

The member opposite probably is aware that we're currently conducting a review of the residence. In fact, the review may be over, but we haven't gotten the results yet. As part of the review, the students at Gadzoosdaa would have been consulted. As soon as we receive the results of that review, we'll have something upon which to base any further changes in the program.

I'll have to come back to you with answers on the graduation rates and if we have ever done any exit surveys. I simply don't know if we have. I'll get back to the member opposite with answers to those two questions and anything else we read in the Blues that I haven't answered while I'm standing here. We'll make sure that we answer all the questions.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that. I wasn't aware there was a review going on, but that is good news, indeed. It's an important part in the lives of youngsters who are living away from home, and anything we can do to support them and support their communities in that — and part of that is the continuous progress. I thank the minister for that. I look forward to the review, when it does come out.

While we're talking about residences, Dawson City has an excellent resource. They have built a real arts and culture centre there. The Yukon School of Visual Arts, the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the City of Dawson and local residents have really made an effort to make Dawson City a centre of excellence. I know the Member for Klondike will be speaking to that when it's his turn to come up. Where I'm coming from is I had a number of students from my riding, from my constituency, who wanted to attend SOVA and programming in Dawson and weren't able to find a homestay or to live with someone. The parents suggested — have they ever looked at a residence in Dawson that would allow students from across the Yukon to come to Dawson and participate in some of the wonderful programming that is being offered there?

I wonder whether the department has looked into that or whether they will look into it — if I could get an update from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Graham: Some years ago, we did have that problem, where there simply weren't enough spaces for students taking the program in Dawson City. What happened then is the college contracted with a local hotel — or motel — that regularly closed down in the winter months and, for a fee, they stayed open — this motel did — in order to house the students going to the program. Actually, the dates worked out fine, because it was from mid-September until April, and the hotel opened only for the summer months anyway.

That has since gone the way of the dodo bird, I guess, because the last I understood, that was something that was no longer happening. I'll check to make sure my facts are correct. At the present time, that program in Dawson costs about a half million dollars a year. That cost is to the government for up to 12 students, so it makes it a fairly costly program for the government to run, and I'm afraid that, if we planned to open a residence there at the same time, it would have to be cost recovery. It is, as I said, a very expensive program for the number of students we are graduating every year.

Mr. Tredger: It is a centre of excellence and may be unique in the world — certainly in the Yukon — and it's an opportunity that we need to invest in — those kinds of opportunities. It has many different effects. It helps communities — in this case, Dawson. If we develop centres of excellence in various other communities, be they around mining or skills training or fine arts, it will be expensive, but I think it pays off in many different ways. I encourage the government to look at options. Maybe a residence is too expensive, but maybe there are other ways to go about supporting the program. I thank the minister for that.

Last year, when we were talking, the Premier spoke — rather than augment the Canada Pension Plan, he felt that an emphasis and a re-emphasis on financial literacy for our students would be important. We talked about the importance of credit cards and of debt management. I've heard similar comments from many sources — parents, in particular, and many students who come back and say, I wish I had learned about investing and finances in school.

We talked about the lack of formal financial planning courses in our school and education for our students. Given that the Premier had cited this as a direction to go, rather than through augmenting the Canada Pension Plan, my impression is that we were going to improve the financial literacy in our schools. I know there are individual pockets of classrooms — I can think of a particular teacher who taught my daughter at one point, and had a wonderful class on financial literacy — but it seems, from my understanding, that it doesn't get to all the kids across the system.

I'm wondering if, in the past year, there have been advances made in financial literacy courses, and whether we followed up on those promises from the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Graham: The apprenticeship and workplace math 10 and 11 currently offered has some financial literacy component and we're currently looking at new math programs in other jurisdictions that have, as part of their core competencies, the financial literacy component. We are still in the process of looking at these new math programs and, at this point, haven't made a decision or even a suggestion as to which programs we should be following or which ones we should be utilizing.

I'm not sure — I haven't spoken to the Premier lately to know if this was an actual promise, or perhaps it was just a suggestion that he felt should be done, but it's a suggestion being taken seriously by the department in that we're looking at some programs that would offer, as part of the core competencies, financial literacy.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister for that and I concur that financial literacy is an important aspect, and I would look forward to all our students receiving some training in financial literacy, given the importance it plays.

I would just like to go back to the shared resource room. We had been talking about IEPs and special programming. Last year in September, the school councils were told that strategic goal 3 for Yukon education is: "Yukon Education demonstrates organizational excellence through alignment and accountability. Within the spirit and intent of that strategic goal, a plan to review Shared Resource Programming within Yukon Education will occur between October 2014 and January 2015, completed by an external consultant.

"The purpose of the review is to: review best practices in special education as they relate to Yukon policies and procedures relevant to shared resource programming; review existing service, policies, procedures and programming for students in attending shared resource programs; provide recommendations for shared resource program improvements; facilitate a plan to implement recommendations in shared resource programs that best address student needs."

I guess my question for the minister is: Has that review been completed, and will it be incorporated in the staffing and the planning for the coming school year?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's an appropriate question, because we just completed the review. The review is currently in — or has just been delivered to the department, so the timing is excellent. The department hasn't even had a chance to look at it and consider the recommendations at this time

but, once we've done that, we would be happy to share it. I can't give you an exact timeline, but I would say that we'll take a look at the recommendations and we will be able to share it with the member opposite as quickly as we can.

Mr. Tredger: Last year, there was considerable controversy on the public schools' Safe and Caring Schools policy, especially as it related to the One Heart policy in Catholic schools. I am wondering if the minister has an update. Have all the schools now adopted Yukon's Safe and Caring Schools policy? As an adjunct to that, I know last year we were working on a hiring policy for Catholic schools and teachers in Catholic schools. Has that policy been finalized and updated?

Hon. Mr. Graham: I can say that there appears to have been a glitch in the system in working with the Safe and Caring Schools policy. It has been put on hold for a little while, while further discussions are undertaken. I did float the idea, though, and I did mention it this morning on a CBC radio interview, where one of the suggestions that I have made to the department is that we take a look at a Yukon-wide student behaviour code of conduct — call it whatever you want — but this is something that we would develop as a department.

It may be that we set a minimum level of what we consider acceptable student conduct. That would mean that you know the very basics of anti-bullying — no sexual discrimination, no violence in the school, respect and tolerance for others, and no violence toward teachers. That is where it basically came up, because of the perception that there has been a large increase in violence toward teachers. This was an idea that I brought to the department and said that we should be looking at this. I'll take some time over the next month to discuss it with school councils and see if they're generally in favour of it. It's not something that we would be able to impose, but it would be something that, if we instituted a code of conduct, would be the bare minimum. Then we would ask school councils — this is the bare minimum — to increase or to expand on our basic code of conduct if they so desired. It's something that we will be looking at over the next month or so, and I will be consulting with partners to determine if this is something that would be acceptable in the schools in the territorial system.

As far as the teachers and the violence toward teachers, as I have stated before, that is part of the collective bargaining process that is happening again on Wednesday, so I will stay away from that one right now.

Mr. Tredger: I was particularly wondering about the Safe and Caring Schools policy. The previous minister had talked about it being the policy that would be in all schools. At the time there was some concern about the LGBT incorporation of that — so that children weren't bullied or discriminated against based on their sexual orientation or their gender — and the adoption of a supportive policy for students in our schools that way. At the time, there was some discussion around whether or not the Catholic schools would be included. The minister of the day said that the Safe and Caring Schools policy would be in place, but there were

discussions about — I believe it was the *One Heart: Ministered by Love* policy that the Catholic school system was proposing instead of it. I wondered whether the minister has an update on whether the Safe and Caring Schools policy would enable LGBT students wherever they were to attend schools under a Yukon-wide Safe and Caring Schools policy.

Hon. Mr. Graham: I should just say that we will get back to you with an answer because I am quite sure that that policy has not progressed too far. I will assure the member opposite that my personal commitment to the whole school community is that that policy will be enacted or a code of conduct will be in place that will include such things as an LGBT — anyway it will include that policy for all schools in the territory.

Mr. Tredger: I thank the minister very much for that.

I have just one question on the college that I would like to get to before we reach the end of the day. In 2011, the then college chancellor was speaking about the future of the college and his hope of receiving a large portion of the McIntyre Creek area as endowment lands so that the college could move toward the development of a university. Since the fall of 2013, when the college received a letter stating that they had five years to complete their land use plan, they have been working hard at leading an inclusive planning process.

I must say that they have been working hard. They've held a number of open houses and planning processes that I know members — from Takhini-Kopper King and myself — have attended — and from Whitehorse Centre — to take part in that. On March 31 of this year, they held the second as part of their ongoing design-your-campus project. Once they complete their planning exercise, the Yukon College will be bringing the completed college land use plan back to the Yukon government where they hope that the conditions will be lifted and the college will receive the held land as endowment lands. This land transfer will bring us another step closer to a northern university.

Will the Yukon government lift the conditions and transfer the promised endowment lands once the Yukon College brings their final plan to the table?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's not something we've discussed as a caucus. At the time the land use plan is completed, we will determine, in cooperation with — again, there are a number of players in land use planning and in zoning in that area. We'll have to come together to talk about what we're going to do.

We have already committed, in the longer term, to working toward a university of the north. I have to say that I am being a stickler to ensure that the things that have made the college so popular to this Yukon are continued. That means that the trades and technical training programs that were offered, that Yukon students attend, has to be continued. The upgrading programs that we would love to get rid of in the long term are still essential. Those programs are attended by a huge number of students and they are an entryway for many of those students into the world of employment. Those things have to continue and so I want to make sure they are not lost in a rush to become a university.

Consequently, I am not saying I would slow down the process, but I want assurances that those things are continued and I guess we have to look at a way forward. The other interesting part of the equation will be the cost — the cost of a university is going to be probably substantially higher than what we're currently paying for the college — and I want to have some kind of assurance that we are not funding a university of the north that will be utilized strictly by people from outside of the territory. I want some assurances that Yukon students will utilize the college too. If we're subsidizing students' tuition fees to the extent that will be necessary in order to make this a viable thing, then I want to make sure that Yukon students fully intend to come to university in the Yukon.

As a young guy growing up in the territory myself, I know that probably one of the last things I wanted to do when I completed grade 12 was to stay in Whitehorse and attend university here. I don't know, at this point, how many graduating students in the high schools here in the territory are wildly enthusiastic about coming to a school here.

Those are the kinds of things that we have to take a really close look at in the next while, and our decisions will be predicated upon that kind of information coming forward.

Mr. Tredger: In 2013, three schools piloted a project around self-regulation and social emotional learning. This was a pilot project. Can the minister report on how that pilot project turned out, and whether that program has been expanded to other schools? Is it a program that we're looking at and will put into all our schools? If so, what supports are going to be necessary to keep it viable going forward, so that it doesn't become something we do for three or five years and then we move on to the next event?

Hon. Mr. Graham: It's interesting to hear the member opposite use that particular phrase, because it's one of my favourites. Too often in the territory, we go along with the fad of the day and we implement too many things. We don't evaluate them properly, and then we simply build on top and keep layer after layer after layer.

As you probably know, since 2013, we have been working with the Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative to implement the self-regulation initiative here. Eight schools are involved at the present time. There was a first wave of schools, and now the second wave of schools — Takhini Elementary, Ghùch Tlâ, Teslin, Hidden Valley, Ross River, Johnson Elementary, Robert Service and École Whitehorse Elementary. During the summer of 2013, Dr. Stuart Shanker and Mike McKay from the Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative presented a keynote address to all Yukon education staff on self-regulation practices.

They provided in-depth support this February — February 2015 — in the area of anxiety and self-regulation. Over the next three years, all Yukon schools will be involved in the self-regulation initiative. The total budget will be approximately \$85,000 a year. It's being funded within our existing budget.

At the end of this time, we will evaluate the program to see if it has actually met the objectives. The goals were to

improve outcomes for all Yukon students, training and working with individual students and school staff in the use of the self-regulation framework; identifying children for focused clinical work; and helping to generate community interest in the self-regulation framework and its sustainability.

Those are the goals upon which the program will be evaluated, but an interesting aside was when I was visiting a rural school. I chatted with a young fellow who was pedalling a bike and I said, "Oh, is this your punishment for being bad?" He very seriously turned to me and said, "No. No, I wasn't bad, but I knew I was going to be pretty soon." It is an interesting concept, Madam Chair.

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Graham that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

Chair: It has been moved by Mr. Elias that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 18, entitled *First Appropriation Act, 2015-16*, and directed me to report progress.

Speaker: You have heard the report of the Chair of Committee of the Whole. Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Mr. Elias: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.