



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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1<sup>st</sup> Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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March 3, 2022 to April 28, 2022

NOTE

The 2022 Spring Sitting of the First Session of the Thirty-Fifth Legislature occupies two volumes

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# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

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# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 58

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, March 30, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Wednesday, March 30, 2022 — 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 made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 358, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Porter Creek North, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as the action requested has been completed in whole or in part; and Motion No. 359, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is out of order.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In honour of the tribute to Canadian and Yukon soccer, I would like to welcome to the gallery Fabian Glyka, president of the Yukon Soccer Association; Cindi Cowie, who founded the Haines Junction football club 14 years ago; and Carly Carruthers, who is a coach with Special Olympics Yukon.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would also like to ask the Assembly to welcome some individuals who are here today for our tribute to the Yukon Heritage Awards, both organizers and recipients. With us today is Sally Robinson, who is the president of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association; Cathy Hines, who is also a member and was there to help and organize last night; Janna Swales, who is an award recipient; and Anne Morgan, who is an award recipient and also previously an award recipient — I think that it was her second award from the organization last night. So, let's give them a warm welcome.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Canadian soccer**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise today to pay tribute to the accomplishments of Canadian soccer over the past year. On August 6, 2021, many Yukoners woke in the early hours of the morning to see Julia Grosso's winning penalty kick in the Olympic gold medal match for the women's national team. It felt like a culmination of decades of potential.

This past weekend, the Canadian men's soccer team proved that we are not finished making our mark on the game,

as Canada clinched its first berth in the FIFA World Cup since 1986. It was as uniquely a Canadian success story as anyone could have dreamed. It included star player Alphonso Davies, a former refugee whose family made their home in Edmonton, and Stephen Eustáquio, who was born in the tomato capital of Canada but raised in Portugal and chose to represent his birth country as the midfield maestro. Of course, we have manager John Herdman, who led our women's team from 2011 to 2018 and embodies the fact that these achievements in Canadian men's soccer stand on the shoulders of the groundbreaking efforts made by the women.

The squad represents the new Canada that we all strive for — diverse, multicultural, representing all corners of our country together. It is truly a moment that all Canadians can be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, none of it would have been possible without the most important figures in Canadian soccer over the past decades, local organizers, coaches, fans, youth, and children. This is a hockey country — just, perhaps — but more Canadians play soccer in Canada than any other sport.

Canadian organizers and coaches volunteer time, and many operate on shoestring budgets with facilities that pale in comparison to our competition, yet they persevere and, in doing so, provide the platform for new generations to take our nation to the next level.

Here in the Yukon, we have our own stories emerging, with Yukoner Joe Hanson making his professional debut last week for Whitecaps FC2 and Yukoner soccer player Christine Moser, who was also just inducted into the Lethbridge Sports Hall of Fame.

We are home to a thriving soccer community that I am proud to be part of. I would like to recognize Fabian Glyka, president of the Yukon Soccer Association, along with Executive Director Andrea Fischer. Cindi Cowie, who I mentioned previously, founded the Haines Junction football club 14 years ago and is still a director and coach. Carly Carruthers and Ken and Jodi Binns give their time and energy to coach soccer with Special Olympics Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed in any way to these achievements. I and the entire Assembly, I am sure, look forward to cheering on our World Cup team with my fellow Yukoners later this year, watching Canada's soccer story unfold on the biggest stage of all.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise today on behalf of the Official Opposition to recognize the historic achievement of Canada's men's national soccer team qualifying for the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

Canada last qualified for the World Cup in 1986 — the lone time we appeared in the prestigious world competition. The women's national team has, of course, achieved international success led by the legendary Christine Sinclair. But large participation numbers in boys' youth soccer across Canada has never translated to success at the higher levels, much to the frustration and consternation of Canada's soccer community.

So, for long-suffering Canadian soccer fans and the dedicated national fan club, The Voyageurs, World Cup qualification has been a long time coming. Canada's men's soccer roster now boasts international stars like 2020 Lionel Conacher Award and Champions League winner Alphonso Davies or Lille striker Johnathan David, who is expected to transfer to a famous club this summer.

It's also worth recognizing team captain 39-year-old Atiba Hutchinson, who has been balancing a European club career and national team appearances since 2003. Nearing 100 appearances for the national team, Atiba's appearance in the World Cup in the twilight of his career will be a well-deserved moment.

Canada's rise hasn't been limited to on the pitch. The success of the program coincides with the rise of former Canada hockey president Victor Montagliani, who ensured that both national teams were better funded. Victor left to take on the presidency of CONCACAF in 2016 and also sits as vice-president of the FIFA Council, both firsts for a Canadian. His review of World Cup qualifying in CONCACAF revised the format to be more competitive and no recognition of this achievement is complete without a nod to the coach, John Herdman. Herdman was recruited to coach the Canada women's national team in 2011, but in 2018, he made a surprising jump to the men's national team where he has shared a vision and brought pride to the players wearing the uniform. Herdman boldly declared to the Canadian soccer community that no one should be content with automatic qualification for the 2026 World Cup that Canada will jointly host with USA and Mexico.

Qatar 2022 was the target. Herdman and his players have delivered on that bold vision. This Friday, FIFA will draw the groups for the World Cup and real predictions will begin to be made on Canada's chances, but they have captured the imagination of a nation by qualifying.

We join Yukoners who are looking forward to watching the Canadian men's national team in November and December this year at the World Cup. Congratulations to the entire team.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** On behalf of the Yukon NDP, I would like to congratulate the Canadian men's national soccer team on their qualification for the FIFA World Cup which was confirmed in a 4-0 win over Jamaica in Toronto on Sunday.

While the men's national team has a long way to go in trying to emulate the achievements of Canada's women's soccer program, this is a historic moment nonetheless. Until now, the Canadian men's team has only ever qualified for the World Cup once, and that was way back in 1986. This year, with a team that reflects the many strengths of Canada's diversity, the Canadian men's national team captured our imaginations with huge performances and unprecedented results. Not only has the team qualified for the World Cup, it is also likely to finish on top of the North American qualification table for the first time ever. Players like Alphonso Davies, Jonathan David, and Milan Borjan have become national

heroes and international stars, and we look forward to watching them compete at the World Cup this winter.

The Yukon has a proud and passionate soccer community, one that has seen great results in the development of more and more players finding success outside the territory in recent years.

The Yukon under-15 boys' soccer team secured a historic seventh-place finish at the 2018 national championships, and there are numerous young Yukon players at university level across Canada. In early March of this year, Joe Hanson of Whitehorse even became the first Yukoner to become a professional soccer player when he signed a contract with major league soccer's Vancouver Whitecaps FC2.

Soccer in Canada and the Yukon is getting stronger every day, and we hope that this result for the Canadian men's national team and the ongoing successes of Canada's women's soccer program will inspire even more young Yukoners to embrace the beautiful game and grow soccer in the Yukon for years to come.

*Applause*

### In recognition of 2021 Heritage Award recipients

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 2021 Heritage Award recipients. Each year, the Yukon Historical and Museums Association presents heritage awards to recognize the individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to conserving and celebrating the Yukon's heritage.

Preserving our multi-faceted heritage is a significant and vital pursuit. This year's recipients are exceptional and exemplary in their enthusiasm, dedication, and passion to preserve, interpret, and protect Yukon's heritage legacies. The Annual Heritage Award was awarded posthumously to Art Johns in honour of his contributions and depth of knowledge of the geography and resources of the Carcross/Tagish traditional territory. He provided immeasurable assistance to the Yukon archaeological and historic sites programs and was an active participant in heritage planning and management.

The History Makers Award was presented to Bruce Mitford and Beth Hunt for their care and efforts to preserve, manage, and interpret the Lansing Post historic site. Since 1979, they have been diligent stewards of maintaining the historic cabins, tending the gardens, and welcoming visitors to the site.

The Helen Couch Volunteer of the Year Award went to Kaitlin Normandin for her dedication to the sector and her volunteer efforts on a number of boards and heritage committees, including the Yukon Historical and Museums Association, the Yukon Council of Archives, Hidden Histories Society of Yukon, and the Association of Canadian Archivists.

The Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award was presented to the Yukon Transportation Museum and Janna Swales for the project *Yukon Spin*. This was a popular pandemic-inspired digital wellness activity that combined the history of Yukon biking, home-based exercise, and interactive digital tourism.

And finally, the Heritage Conservation Project of the Year Award went to Jamie Toole and Anne Morgan for their conservation of the *MV Sibilla*. The *MV Sibilla* is one of the few largely intact British Yukon Navigation Company vessels still in the Yukon. The rehabilitated boat can now be viewed in Carcross.

The work accomplished by the award recipients is so important, and I thank each of you for your contributions. Because of your efforts, the Yukon is a richer place today and for future generations.

I would like to thank the board and staff of the Yukon Historical and Museums Association who continue to provide leadership in heritage programming and collaborative opportunities for Yukon museums and the cultural sector.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 38<sup>th</sup> annual Yukon Heritage Awards — five awards to seven dedicated community members and one organization for their efforts in preserving and sharing Yukon heritage.

On March 29, 2022, an in-person ceremony at the Beringia Interpretive Centre, as well as an online option, was held. The late Art Johns was awarded the Annual Heritage Award for his assistance to the Yukon archaeology and historic sites program. He loved to share his knowledge of the Carcross/Tagish traditional area, artifacts, and any discovery of historical value.

The History Makers Award to Bruce Mitford and Beth Hunt — having trapped and lived at the Lansing Post historic site near Mayo since 1979, they help take care of and maintain the site. With approval from Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, they have proven to be diligent stewards, helped with the management plan process, and now are duly recognized for their work.

Kaitlin Normandin was awarded the Helen Couch Volunteer award for her tireless work with the Yukon Historical and Museums Association. She also volunteers for other relevant boards and committees and, since 2021, is the secretary of the Association of Canadian Archivists. Kaitlin has an impressive CV. She has a master of museums studies and — a new one to me — a master of information.

Janna Swales and the Yukon Transportation Museum — the Innovation, Education, and Community Engagement Award for *Yukon Spin*. Janna recorded personal bike rides — 45-minute videos for at-home use. Realizing an opportunity for the unique revenue stream for the museum due to the pandemic slowdown, she took next steps, producing six videos from her recordings. With a timer, elevation and route maps, as well as Yukon historical facts, it recreates a journey and provides exercise — an awesome initiative.

The Heritage Conservation Project of the Year Award went to Jamie Toole and Anne Morgan for their conservation efforts of the *MV Sibilla* in Carcross, a great addition to Yukon's navigation history, as they ensured moving the vessel would keep the heritage character and preserve it for public viewing.

The Yukon has an incredible history and we say keep up the good work, Yukon Historical and Museums Association.

To all the award recipients, we are proud to honour you today. Thank you for all you do to make us understand the importance of doing something now to preserve and to those innovators who explore new ways to share what we do know. Congratulations.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the eight Yukoners and organizations honoured with one of 2021's five Yukon Heritage awards.

My colleagues have spoken about the award winners and I want to add our appreciation. In their work, we see creativity and adaptation to a new and challenging time. We honour lifetimes of dedication and the kind of knowledge that can only come from years of lived experience. We value the commitment of the behind-the-scenes work. Most of all, we celebrate people with a deep love for the stories of their home and the passion for sharing them. Thank you for bringing us these stories in all their forms. The Yukon is a richer place for your work.

*Applause*

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

#### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a CHON FM report affirming the conservative Yukon Party leader's support for confidence and supply agreements, including rent controls, greenhouse gas reductions, and safe injection sites — support at odds with that of Conservative leader Candice Bergen.

**Mr. Kent:** I have for tabling a report of the Task Force on School Bus Safety, dated February 2020, and its title is: *Strengthening School Bus Safety in Canada*.

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

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to consider adding the following safety features to school buses, as identified in the 2020 Canadian Task Force Report on School Bus Safety:

- (1) infraction cameras to help prevent dangerous incidents caused by passing motorists;
- (2) extended stop arms to further deter motorists from passing while children are entering or leaving the bus;
- (3) exterior 360-degree cameras as a means of better detecting and protecting children and other vulnerable road users around the exterior of the bus; and
- (4) automatic emergency braking to help reduce the severity of a collision, or avoid it entirely, with consideration

given to exploring ways to pair this feature with other technologies for increased safety.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Child Development Centre to find a location that will accommodate all of their staff and programming in a single space and begin planning for a permanent space for them to occupy over the long term.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with cybersecurity experts and the federal government to immediately assess the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure, including our health care sector and electricity grid, and take the necessary steps to protect it from potential cyber attacks by Russia and others.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Village of Haines Junction on options for a new pool in Haines Junction.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to dedicate a portion of the 2022-23 capital budget for upgrades to the north Alaska Highway.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure that the pool in Beaver Creek is opened this year.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a timeline and the mechanism to subsidize fertility treatments and fertility treatment-related travel for all Yukoners.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### COVID-19 testing at border crossings

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** A few short weeks ago, the COVID-19 health measures in place at our borders were threatening to cause substantial delays for international visitors entering the Yukon this summer. The situation was particularly acute at the busy Fraser, BC port of entry, where large numbers of cruise ship passengers are processed while on their way to land excursions in the Yukon. The expected delays were so substantial that our tour operators felt that many Yukon excursions would have to be cancelled.

Two weeks ago, I spoke to this House about the matter of COVID-19 testing requirements at Yukon border crossings. Testing hundreds of cruise ship passengers in Skagway each

morning before crossing at Fraser was simply not realistic. Through a full-court-press approach of advocacy with the federal government, the pre-entry test requirement was dropped. Today, I have further updates.

I can now confirm that the random COVID-19 arrival testing will not be conducted at any of the Yukon's land borders or airports.

The COVID-19 arrival testing also threatened to cause delays that would have disrupted Yukon excursions. While certainly an important tool in monitoring COVID-19, random testing is only helpful in defining epidemiological trends with a significant sample size, and the traffic through the Yukon's points of entry falls well short of those thresholds. Additionally, I can also confirm that the pre-screening declarations filed by cruise ship passengers using the ArriveCAN app will be honoured throughout their journey, meaning that they will not have to be checked again at any of Yukon's borders.

Streamlining tourist arrivals is big news and a relief, as the Yukon tourism sector begins to once again welcome visitors from around the world to enjoy our territory. This is good news for our neighbours in Alaska, who we have missed seeing and hosting.

In making this announcement today, I want to thank our partners in the border working group, the Canada Border Services Agency, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the White Pass & Yukon Route, Holland America, and the Borough of Skagway. I also want to thank Yukon's Member of Parliament, Dr. Brendan Hanley, for his expertise and dedication in advocating for the Yukon at the federal level, and federal Minister Jean-Yves Duclos for making this exception for the Yukon possible.

With these and other recent announcements regarding the international flights and border staffing, Yukon's tourism industry is set to rebound in the 2022 season. Our government looks forward to continuing success working with our partners to see our tourism businesses thriving, our economy continuing to grow, and showing the world what a spectacular destination the Yukon is.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It goes without saying that the Yukon's tourism industry relies on visitors from outside the territory and from around the world. The more visitors, the better chance tourism operators are able to meet their bottom line. I am biased when I say that we certainly have the most beautiful area in all of Canada to feature for tourists.

Tourism, after all, is the Yukon's second largest industry besides mining. That is why I was pleased to sign a joint letter earlier this month, along with the Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Third Party critic, affirming our support for measures that would support this industry and attract more visitors to our area.

One of the measures outlined in the letter included border control. The letter called for the removal of testing for international air and land arrivals. I'm very pleased to hear from the minister today that random testing will not be conducted at any land borders or airports.



I'm also pleased to see the process streamlined for travellers once they are in the territory in that their pre-screening declarations filed by cruise ship passengers using the ArriveCAN app will be honoured throughout their journey. They can relax and enjoy their journey, knowing that the only way they will have to be tested is if they are showing symptoms.

Can the minister provide clarity of the ArriveCAN app and if Yukoners will need to use it for trips to Alaska, for example, during a day trip to Skagway? As well, there's the matter of one famous but uncontrolled border crossing between Alaska and the Yukon. There have been some questions about the use of the Chilkoot Trail this summer.

Declarations need to be vetted and processed by, or at, the official ports of entry, so that limits hikers to the Canadian side or the American side only. Can the minister tell us if he is working to also lift the requirement for the Chilkoot Trail so that hikers will be able to hike the entirety of the trail?

I'm also wondering if the minister can outline what will happen regarding testing for the Klondike Road Relay. Organizers could use help to help ensure that the event gets back to running the full course from Skagway to Whitehorse. I know that Yukoners and Alaskans look forward to this race. I would appreciate the update from the minister, and I am also very much hopeful that the Yukon will have a very successful tourism season.

**Ms. White:** I know that I'm not the only person who has missed our neighbours and friends in Skagway and Haines these last two years. The requirement to get a COVID test before coming back to Canada has been a barrier for many. Last weekend, I, like many other folks, was up in the Fraser Pass enjoying the mountains, and I was sad that, at the end of the day, I couldn't just zip down to Skagway to hug friends and support some of the businesses that I love so much down there, but starting on April 1, we'll be able to head down for a day, no problem.

This change at the border has far greater implications than just allowing Yukoners the ability to head to Alaska for an adventure. Coupled with today's announcement of removing even more barriers, Yukon's hospitality industry can hopefully breathe a sigh of relief. Skagway is expecting over 800,000 visitors this summer, and having a fraction of them visit the Yukon will be of huge benefit to local tourism businesses and Yukon's economy — or at least we hope it will.

One thing that we've heard over and over is that businesses in Carcross feel like the Department of Tourism is leaving them behind. The average turnaround time for cruise ship passengers in downtown Carcross is just 15 minutes — just enough time to line up for the bathrooms, take a picture, and get back on their way, leaving Carcross with few of the benefits and all of the cleanup.

In 2020, the Department of Economic Development announced that they would be giving money for tourism advertising in hopes to bring more visitors to the territory. A chunk of that money went to the White Pass & Yukon Route — in other words, Holland America. If the Yukon government is paying Holland America for advertising, could they not

negotiate longer stops at the Carcross train station to benefit all Carcross businesses?

As excited as all are to finally go to Alaska or to see our local hospitalities benefit, many are wondering: Where do we draw the line? We are by no means out of this pandemic, and the fact that the Yukon government has decided to stop testing doesn't mean that it's over. Now, with almost one million visitors expected to be getting off the boats in Skagway, how will we be monitoring the spread of COVID across our borders? From what the minister is saying, we just won't.

Although we're all excited to see the tourism industry breathe a sigh of relief with the reopening of our borders, the government needs to make sure that it's not a short-lived good news story. Folks are nervous and looking for direction.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll start with some of the questions from the Official Opposition — actually, I will start by saying thank you to the members opposite. We work collectively, and I think that, in my opening statement when I said “for Carcross”, it really was this Assembly coming together in penning a letter, and we probably should be coming together more to do this. Certainly, I think it was an effective tool for us to work together.

I also think it's really important to touch on the fact that the border working group — we had a border working group that was in place, and these were key individuals who worked to come up with solutions. It was chaired by Denny Kobayashi from the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, who pulled it together; Blake Rogers, executive director of TIAY; Tourism Yukon was there; Sarah Marsh from the Department of Tourism and Culture for Yukon government; our Assistant Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture, Jonathan Parker; Tyler Rose, who is with White Pass team; Denise McHale and Dale Colbran, both with Caribou Crossing; and Sharon Spicer and Mike Hardie with the Canada Border Services Agency; as well as Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey; Kari Erickson from Holland America; Kim Stavert, who is an advisor in my office; Jen Gehmair, who is with IGR here in the Executive Council Office; and Robert Furlong and Cathy Stannard from the Health and Social Services department at Yukon government, as well Robert Morgenstern.

So, all of those individuals came together and every two weeks were making sure that they could come up with solutions — again, Brendan Hanley, having his expertise and speaking with his colleagues and helping them understand the uniqueness of the Yukon and where to really be focused on — when you look at the epidemiological data collection versus what was happening in the Yukon, that was key. He needs to be commended because it was tireless work.

I will get back to you on the Chilkoot Trail to find out what the situation is this summer. My understanding, as well, for all of us, is that there are definitely some fish that are not safe in Haines. I think we have all been tied up for two years, and certainly we want to get there. But I can get back to the House. My understanding is that we will have to use our ArriveCAN pass, but let me get back. So, I certainly will get back to you on those two items.

I think, with the conversation and the questions concerning Carcross, I did speak with a local area governance team, with the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes in the last month, I believe — maybe a little bit longer — and they voiced their concern with me. There are millions and millions of dollars that are spent in Carcross, and I think it's important to say that. Although we can maybe see more impact there, there are some businesses that do have thousands of people who stay there and stay there for longer than 15 minutes. It is depending on the private sector and how they define the product that they want to have within their journey and visit. But I take the member opposite — we want to make sure that we get as much money spent in the Yukon — whether it's in Carcross, Dawson City, Whitehorse, or any of our communities. Certainly, I am always game to push those items.

We know that the situation is not over when it comes to COVID-19. We all have to be aware of this. I think we all are probably aware of events that have taken place in the last couple of weeks where COVID-19 has certainly spread quickly, whether that be at cultural or recreational events. So, yes, we all should stay very focused. At the same time, we want to use the best measures and the best energy and effectiveness when we are pulling data together. We don't believe that random testing at that border is key — also understanding that the cruise ship lines are second to none when they are monitoring this — and vigilant and monitoring this. Kudos to the tourism industry.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Yukon Fish and Game Association funding

**Mr. Dixon:** Many Yukoners in the hunting and angling community had hoped that the new minister in his portfolio might bring about a change from the fractious relationship the former minister had created. Instead, we unfortunately see more of the same. This minister has been quick to shut down hunting opportunities but slow to actually consult with those affected. He has been quick to toss out the decades-old process of outfitter quotas but slow to actually let outfitters know what this is going to mean for their season this year, let alone next year. And let's not forget the symbolic gesture that this government gave the hunting community when they cut the funding to the Yukon Fish and Game Association by a quarter.

So, perhaps the minister can start by explaining that decision. Why, in a \$2-billion budget, did the government think that it was necessary to cut the budget of the YFGA by \$20,000, other than to send an anti-hunting message to this community?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Actually, I have good news with respect to this specific question, but in any event, the Government of Yukon has a working relationship with the Yukon Fish and Game Association. Staff at the Department of Environment are in regular contact with the organization's leadership. The Yukon Fish and Game Association is an important partner in educating hunters and anglers and participates in fish and wildlife planning and other related meetings important to wildlife management.

We continue to support the association's operations through an annual funding agreement. While the annual budget for this agreement remains unchanged at \$60,000, the department is working with the association on an additional \$10,000, based upon a work plan, for a total of \$70,000 in funding for 2022-23.

We certainly recognize that the Yukon Fish and Game Association represents — I think that it is close to 2,000 persons, perhaps even more. I have met with the Yukon Fish and Game Association and will meet with them again. We certainly recognize and value the great work that they do.

**Mr. Dixon:** I would note for the minister that it still represents a cut in their funding two years ago.

Another reason that the hunting community has been concerned with this government's approach has been their singular focus on limiting opportunities for licensed hunters. They have refused to step back and take a more holistic approach to this issue, and it is not just me saying this, Mr. Speaker. Here is what the Fish and Wildlife Management Board said in their letter to the minister — and I quote: "Many First Nations and Renewable Resources Councils have expressed serious concerns over the continued 'whack-a-mole' approach and urge the government to look at moose management from a broader perspective."

So, will the minister take a step back, stop fighting with the hunting community, and take this advice from the Fish and Wildlife Management Board?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have no intention of fighting with the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, but in any event, as we know, moose is the most harvested species by Yukon hunters and is an important species culturally.

In some areas, the combined licensed and subsistence harvest of moose is at, or above, sustainable levels, particularly in areas that are easy to access. Starting in the 2022 hunting season, moose hunting will change in three moose management units, as indicated.

When determining a sustainable harvest amount for a particular moose management unit, we use assigned space guidelines for the management of moose in the Yukon with other moose population information that is available. We combine information gathered from harvesters, First Nations, and community partners that results from our targeted scientific studies so that management decisions are informed with the best and most currently available data.

In 2021, the Department of Environment conducted four moose surveys for the lower Stewart River, the Teslin River, Sifton-Miners Range, and the Whitehorse south area, including Fish Lake, Wheaton River, and Mount Lorne. We are currently analyzing the data from these surveys, and preliminary results from the Sifton-Miners survey indicates the population is at risk of being overharvested there.

**Mr. Dixon:** One of the most notable aspects of the last regulation change was the considerable interest raised in the hunting community. The public consultations that began in December 2019 were packed, night in and night out. Many people remarked that this was the most fired up anyone had seen the hunting community in years. Unfortunately, the

consultations were cut short due to the emergence of the pandemic.

When the board made their recommendations regarding the South Canol permit hunt, they advised the minister to defer this proposal until the next regulation change cycle. This would, in their words, provide adequate time for the government to conduct consultations with First Nations, boards, councils, associations, outfitters, and the general public. The last minister rejected that recommendation, but this minister can correct that mistake.

Will he agree to defer these regulation changes until the next cycle to allow for proper consultation to occur?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As I have said in previous responses, I will always be guided by the best information that I receive from the dedicated wildlife biologists at the Department of Environment.

We have invested over \$700,000 in aerial surveys this year and we will do so again. The total amount to be invested in all surveys in general is similar from one year to the next, but it's about \$1.2 million for this fiscal year and \$1.3 million for the upcoming fiscal year that we're just about to enter.

There is obviously an abundance of moose in the territory, but there are problems with respect to abundance in areas that are easily accessible by road. So, I'm taking the best information that I am receiving from the professionals at the Department of Environment and we will govern ourselves.

You cannot have conservation and abundance at the same time in some areas. I will be guided by those opinions and I have every intention of continuing to engage with all interested stakeholders.

#### **Question re: Contract procurement**

**Mr. Hassard:** The previous Minister of Highways and Public Works introduced a change to the way that bids are opened and released in the procurement process. Previously, the practice was to publicly open the bids and post the bid prices on the government's website immediately after. This was open, transparent, and accountable. Under the new process, bids are opened behind closed doors and the prices are not released immediately. In some cases, the release of prices can take weeks and bidders are left hanging.

When we asked about this last year, the current minister seemed to not understand the issue, so I'll give him another chance. Will the current minister undo the change the former minister made regarding the opening of bids and posting of bid prices?

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

The Yukon government posts construction tender bid prices as quickly as possible. Once a tender closes, the department reviews for compliance, confirms that the project can proceed within the budget, and then posts the bid. This usually takes between four to five days. When there is a delay, it is often because bids come in overbudget and it is necessary to determine if additional project funding would still represent value for the money.

Highways and Public Works ensures consistency and integrity of the procurement process by reviewing all public tenders for compliance before sharing bid prices. This protects the supplier pricing and ensures effective competition. If the tender is cancelled and the bid prices have not been posted, the Yukon government can retender as needed. If a tender must be cancelled and the bid prices have already been posted, the government cannot retender the same project with the same scope right away. Doing so would undermine competition, as bidders would know what the low price to beat was in the retender.

**Mr. Hassard:** Last year in the leaders' debate on the economy hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, a question from the Yukon Contractors Association was put to the leaders. In what appeared to be a foreshadowing of the current leadership struggles of the Premier, the former Deputy Premier attended the leadership debate for the Liberals. In response to that question, the former Deputy Premier said that it seemed like a good idea and committed his party to act on it.

Why did the former Deputy Premier make this commitment if the Liberals had no intention of acting on it? Will the current Minister of Highways and Public Works agree to reverse this decision and go back to the more open and transparent policy of public bid opening and posting of bid prices online?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As indicated in my prior response, the posting of construction tender bids is being provided as quickly as possible, with the usual turnaround date of four or five days. That is responsive.

In relation to the fantastic projects that we are going to get out the door this summer, we have \$15 million that has been earmarked for the 10-unit mixed-use housing in Old Crow. We have \$26 million in lot development. There will be an additional \$27 million for the fantastic work that is being done on Yukon Dempster redundancy. I had the honour to attend with my team at Highways and Public Works on the Dempster Highway in September of last year and saw the work that was being done. It is certainly a technological marvel. I look forward to going up again and seeing the progress that has been made.

We have \$10.8 million that has been allocated to Resource Gateway projects, primarily the Carmacks bypass for this year. We are also providing \$71.6 million for repairs and improvements to bridges and highways. It is a busy, exciting year.

**Mr. Hassard:** So, no answer as to why the former Deputy Premier made this commitment.

The fact remains that the government has changed its practice when it comes to opening the bids of tenders and posting of prices. That change has made the process less open, less transparent, and less accountable. We have heard from several businesses that would like to see the policy change back so that bidders on government work aren't left waiting for days and sometimes weeks to hear whether or not they were successful on a bid.

Will the minister agree to reverse this policy change that the former minister made and actually live up to the

commitment made by the former Deputy Premier at the leaders' debate last year?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I would just briefly reiterate my response. My first response was that my information is that those bid prices are being provided as quickly as possible and that the general turnaround time is four or five days. I can certainly meet with the member opposite if he has some constructive solutions as to how this system can be improved.

So, once again, in this budget, we are providing \$25.2 million for the construction of the new Whistle Bend school. We are providing \$2.2 million for digital learning technologies and infrastructure to help students thrive. We are providing \$1 million to continue work on the new school in Burwash Landing. There are exciting projects pursuant to the northern trade corridors fund so that the rebuild of the Alaska Highway is going from a tier 1 BST to tier 3 BST in a lot of areas, providing better load capacity for trucks so that they can run in certain parts of the north Klondike Highway with fuller loads, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions because of the need for fewer loads.

It's an exciting time in the territory this summer.

#### **Question re: Species at risk**

**Ms. Tredger:** Keeping with tradition, it's another Sitting and another question about the non-existent species at risk legislation in the Yukon.

From the Yukon Party to the Liberal government, over the years, lots of promises have been made, but nothing has been done. The Yukon still does not have species at risk legislation, and Yukoners want to know why.

The minister will probably hide behind the federal legislation, so let's be clear: Canada's species at risk legislation only covers federally regulated land in the Yukon, which represents about eight percent of the territory; the 92 percent left is up to this government.

What will it take for the Minister of Environment to bring forward species at risk legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite.

Most other jurisdictions have specific tools to list and conserve species at risk. Such legislative tools are also a priority for the Government of Yukon.

With foresight and planning, the Yukon has an opportunity to benefit from the hard lessons learned in other parts of Canada and the world and to prevent the endangerment of species, such as woodland caribou and grizzly bears, as our territory makes decisions about how to further develop our infrastructure and economy.

A timeline to complete a new legislative framework for species at risk depends on several factors, including determining how the new legislation would interact with existing federal and territorial laws and requirements. Completion will also require time and effort from our many partners. Respecting the current need to focus on more immediate priorities, we will continue to enhance our

knowledge and research so that we are ready when our partners are to develop this new legislation.

**Ms. Tredger:** Every time the government has been asked, we have been told that they are taking this issue very seriously. To quote a previous Minister of Environment, who is now the Leader of the Yukon Party — quote: "... we are looking to our partners and our neighbours who have legislation and examining what experiences they have had before we proceed with our own." And, to quote the current Minister of Environment both from the last time I asked and today — quote: "Most other jurisdictions have legislative tools to list and conserve species at risk."

It's like they are trading speaking notes from one bad government to the next. In the meantime, one thing is certain: Our species at risk are still unprotected. When will this government bring forward species at risk legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We continue to work collaboratively with our partners in the territory, including First Nations, Inuvialuit, wildlife management boards and councils, interest groups, and other government orders on species at risk. The member opposite will know that the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) — that we are in the process of confirming their management plan for the eastern side of the North Slope. The western side of the North Slope is already substantially protected by the *Inuvialuit Final Agreement*, so a large swath of the northern territory is very much substantially protected. I thank the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) for their dedicated work, including Lindsay Staples, who was their chair for 33 years. So, that is certainly a success story.

Our efforts to ensure that species such as wood bison, woodland caribou, and grizzly bears continue to have viable populations in the Yukon are guided by management plans that the Government of Yukon developed with First Nations, Inuvialuit, the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope), as I indicated, and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

**Ms. Tredger:** The minister seems to be saying that it is not that easy to do, and of course it's not, but 26 years in the making is ridiculous. The last real glimmer of hope that Yukoners had about a species at risk legislation was in 2019, when this minister's predecessor said that the legislation was underway. Since then, it has been radio silence. Nobody knows where that draft legislation is, if it even exists, what negotiations with First Nation governments are underway, and what consultation with partners and experts is being done. It is like the government doesn't want Yukoners to know that they are not doing anything but at the same time doesn't care quite enough to actually do something either.

So, I will ask again: Where is Yukon-specific species at risk legislation and when will Yukoners finally see it?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** With respect to Yukon-specific animals, Yukon South Beringia is home to many rare, unique, and at-risk species found only in this region, including plants known nowhere else in the world and wide-ranging species at risk, such as caribou, grizzly bears, and wolverines. Currently, 43 species listed as being at risk under the federal *Species at*

*Risk Act* exist in the Yukon and another 10 species have been recommended for listing.

Species assessed and listed under the federal *Species at Risk Act* as threatened or endangered have legal protection and undergo mandatory recovery planning at the national level under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. The Government of Yukon receives funding from the federal government for species at risk research, monitoring, and stewardship, including \$343,000 for bats, bears, bison, caribou, and wolverine, and \$188,000 for boreal caribou. Much work has been done or is underway, but of course, conservation of these species requires an ongoing effort.

The Department of Environment has undertaken research and policy work, including a jurisdictional scan to review existing legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and management tools to address species at risk. This initial work has also included consideration that Canada and national conservation organizations may look to the Yukon to protect populations.

#### **Question re: Whistle Bend school**

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat. As we have discussed several times, the Whistle Bend school is significantly overbudget and late. However, last year in their election platform, the Liberals promised to create a Whistle Bend school council by spring 2021. That promise is a year late. When will Whistle Bend get a school council?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I'm always happy to rise in the House and speak about the important work that our government is doing. I am very proud that our government has made building schools a priority in our territory. We are building the first new Whitehorse elementary school in over 20 years in Whistle Bend. This will provide students a modern learning environment and support a thriving and growing community. We're very proud of this.

A school council and attendance area will be established for the new Whistle Bend elementary school in preparation for the May 2022 school council elections, and once established, they will participate in the selection process of a principal and exercise the other duties of a school council in guiding this school to become a reality.

We are very proud of this work and I want to thank all of the hard-working public servants who have worked hard on this. Again, I am very proud that we have \$25.2 million in this year's 2022-23 budget for the construction of this school. I am really looking forward to this new school council being established.

#### **Question re: COVID-19 pandemic business relief funding**

**Ms. McLeod:** Throughout COVID-19, Yukon municipalities assumed a number of significant roles and responsibilities to assist the territorial government in responding to the pandemic. These roles and responsibilities, along with public health restrictions, have had significant impacts on the bottom lines of municipalities. Through lost revenues, increased operational expenditures, and more, the

financial burden felt by municipalities was significant. In 2021, the federal government provided \$4.3 million to the municipalities through safe restart funding, but there has been no relief since that time.

Will the government agree to provide additional relief to all municipalities to assist with recovering from the pandemic?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am happy to talk about the funding we are providing to municipalities across the territory as we move into a new era of the pandemic. The member opposite is absolutely right. Last year, the federal government and the territorial government contributed to provide kickstart funding for municipalities across the territory. I believe that the number was in the vicinity of \$4 million that we used to actually help our municipalities to come out of the pandemic. That money was very well-received. I do know that municipalities are asking for more funding. I actually had a meeting with the mayor this morning. We had a very fruitful meeting. I have been talking to mayors across the territory for the last several weeks.

I can say that the comprehensive municipal grant that we provide to municipalities was last reviewed in 2018 and resulted in changes to specific factors within the grant formula. These changes led to increased grant payments to municipalities each year since 2018. We are absolutely committed to making sure that our municipalities are whole and that they are doing well. We will continue to listen to and communicate with — talk with — our municipal leaders to make sure that they have the funds they need to run their municipalities. I will leave it there.

**Ms. McLeod:** The loss of revenue for municipalities could take many forms, including the loss of space rentals and the ability to conduct recreational programs; costs associated with starting up hockey or curling rinks only to have restrictions prevent their usage while still having to maintain the ice plants; or the loss of transit revenue — and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

If municipalities are unable to recoup some of these losses, they will be forced to raise property taxes or increase fees to prevent a shortfall. So, does the government think that it has already provided enough financial relief to municipalities or will it commit to provide additional funding to support those municipalities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said earlier, the comprehensive municipal grant is really the vehicle through which we fund our municipalities across the territory. It was reviewed in 2018. It has increased grant payments to municipalities in each year since 2018.

For 2020, Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive municipal grant totalled more than \$20 million in funding to Yukon municipal governments. At the request of the Association of Yukon Communities, Community Services is working on another review of the grant. The review, once completed, will provide guidance for the negotiation of a renewal of the comprehensive municipal grant for 2023 and beyond. I am continuing to talk with all of our municipal leaders to make sure that they have the funds they need to run their municipalities in a way that benefits all of their citizens.

These are Yukoners and they need to have the proper funding. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that this year, the amount of money we are investing in our Yukon communities is absolutely extraordinary. We are doing a 10-unit mixed-housing unit in Old Crow; we have a public works and fire hall building being built in Faro; we have Lapie River bridge replacement happening in Ross River; we have a fire hall being completed in Teslin; we have green energy retrofits in that community; in Watson Lake, we have the housing first project. There is so much work we're doing for municipalities, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue that work.

**Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter**

**Mr. Cathers:** We continue to hear concerns from local businesses about the surge in criminal activity in the downtown core of Whitehorse. In particular, businesses in the area surrounding the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have noticed an increase in crime since the government took control of the facility in 2019. Last year when we asked about the community safety plan for the facility, the minister said the government was exploring options to achieve the plan's goal of — quote: "Creating a safe and harmonious community for shelter clients, and neighbouring residents and businesses..."

However, we haven't seen any measures that do that actually taken by this government.

Can the minister tell us what actions the government has taken since last year to achieve the goal in their plan?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** All Yukoners deserve to live in communities that are safe. The Department of Justice is working with Yukon First Nation governments, federal and municipal governments, the RCMP, local organizations, and Yukon citizens to address crime in the territory through a balance of enforcement and prevention-based approaches.

Statistics Canada's annual national report on crime rates provides a valuable measure of trends in police-reported crime. The 2020 statistics show a slight decrease in the Yukon's overall crime rate, but increases in some offences related to drug trafficking, firearms, fraud, and aggravated assault and an increase in the youth crime severity index. This is well-known to the Department of Justice, as well as to the RCMP, which continues to work to ensure that there are adequate human resources and financial resources to respond to crime and public safety emergencies in all Yukon communities.

Increased visibility of police actions during the past year is in part due to the work of the RCMP's crime reduction unit, which I look forward to speaking of when I get on my feet again.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, talking points aren't action. The community safety plan released in 2020 highlights a number of the challenges. It says those include large and sometimes unruly gatherings outside the shelter, property damage, vandalism, theft, sexual acts, and littering within the shelter's proximity, as well as increases in openly shared public drinking and drug use, and the list goes on.

The feedback we've heard from neighbouring residents and businesses has been that nothing has changed since that report came out.

Will the minister agree that more needs to be done to achieve the goals in the shelter's 2020 community safety plan? Will the minister actually begin to take real action to address the commitments contained in this community safety plan?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think what is incredibly important is to speak about the services and the community that's provided by the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Many of the individuals who spend time there or receive programming through that process do so because they have really no other place to go. We work extremely hard and the employees at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter have compassion and care for those individuals. They provide services for those individuals. They work to make sure that those individuals have housing and food and that they have programming and services that will ultimately serve them to have a better life — have a healthier life — and to deal with the trauma that is often part of the reason that they are spending time there or street-involved in the first place.

The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter provides an amazing service for our community. What I can remind the members opposite is that they planned to build the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter but had no operational maintenance funds in any budget to do any programming there. A building is not a place of safety and we have provided that.

**Mr. Cathers:** The government's own plan notes that the problem got worse after they took over the shelter in 2019. That plan also acknowledges that the change in policies at the shelter caused problems in the surrounding area, including property damage, public drinking and drug use, theft, and the list goes on.

The community safety plan includes a number of action items in response to the growing number of negative behaviours and incidents that resulted from the shift in programming introduced by the Liberals three years ago. Those include analyzing the potential of expanding Yukon government security services to include the shelter and exploring the feasibility of implementing a community program to provide a uniformed presence in and around the shelter. It is also clear that the RCMP need increased resources.

Can the minister tell us what actions, if any, have been completed from this plan? Will she acknowledge that the steps taken to date have been inadequate and that more action is needed?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is important for Yukoners to know, particularly those who live in and around the downtown area, that increased visibility of police actions during the past number of years is in part due to the RCMP's crime reduction unit, which responds to territorial policing priorities and targeted enforcement efforts to combat serious, drug-related, and organized crime. This is also an incredibly important piece of the substance use health emergency.

Our government recognizes that we must respond to crime in our territory not only through enforcement, but also through community-driven, prevention-focused initiatives to address underlying causes, and community safety planning is part of that system. Providing a compassionate place in downtown

Whitehorse for Yukoners to receive food, shelter, and programming is also a part of that plan.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

#### Yukon Housing Corporation

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. Good afternoon, everyone.

As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to outline the spending requested as part of the second supplementary estimates for 2021-22.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and the board of directors at the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication. They are working hard to make more affordable housing options available for Yukoners while continuing to deliver innovative housing solutions.

Before I begin my address, I would also like to acknowledge the officials who will assist me today: Mary Cameron, president of Yukon Housing Corporation, I would like to state has worked tirelessly with her team over the last year that I've had the opportunity to work with her. I'm

honoured to be able to work with her. She is so, so professional and such a hard worker. And, as well, Marcel HolderRobinson, director of finance and risk management at the Yukon Housing Corporation.

We have asked a lot of our finance team. You will see now and — in the weeks to come, we will talk about the mains. You will notice that there is exceptional spending and a very robust budget. It's not easy to steer, but it has been steered so professionally. I thank them both for being here today.

Our supplementary estimates will provide Yukon Housing Corporation with an opportunity to be responsive and proactive to the emerging housing needs as we strive to find practical housing options. We know that healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities are a priority for this government, and this can only be achieved if Yukoners have homes that fit their needs, are affordable, suitable, and are adequate.

The budget continues to work toward these goals. However, we know that the continued pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic have increased challenges for housing in the Yukon. Lumber and construction costs have increased dramatically, not just in the Yukon, but across Canada. We also continue to experience the significant demand and competition for the labour force in the construction sector — a trend that we expect to continue for the near future.

This supplementary budget reflects our government's response to both our current challenges and how to address solutions that are tied to our key guiding housing strategies. The housing action plan for Yukon and the corporation's five-year strategic plan are bringing the future into focus.

On all fronts, we know that we have more to do as we work with our housing partners on stabilizing the affordable housing market. Although the housing landscape continues to change, we remain committed to fiscal responsibility, and we continue to adapt, mobilize, and find solutions to these fluctuations.

Like many jurisdictions across Canada, the Yukon is experiencing a high demand for housing. Most recently, we saw the Yukon's population increase over the last five years by over 12 percent — the highest growth rate across Canada. Although we can agree that this is great for economic development, it also comes with a need for housing. As such, we are also seeing increased demand for Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing stock, which continues to exceed the supply of our units. Our wait-list continues to grow. One of the ways that we are responding to these challenges is by working on the goals of Yukon Housing Corporation's strategic plan and supporting our housing program priorities, which has resulted in over 600 newly constructed affordable housing projects and initiatives. In addition to the corporation's strategic plan, our approach has further addressed the goals and objectives of the housing action plan for Yukon, the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness, the aging-in-place action plan, and the recommendations from the *Putting People First* report.

However, we know that this is but one of the housing activities in the territory, and that is not enough. If we are going to be successful in resolving housing issues, it will take all partners in the housing field to work together.

From the Housing Summit in October 2021, I can tell you that our housing sector partners are indeed working on responses to the need. From First Nation development corporations to the City of Whitehorse, private developers, and NGOs, we know that housing solutions are underway, and I look forward to our next discussions at the June 2022 housing connections summit.

As such, in our financial year 2021-22, the corporation balanced the need to address emerging priorities while also supporting existing and ongoing projects.

Our first pillar was “Housing with Services” of the housing action plan. A key example of this work of the Yukon Housing Corporation, in partnership with the Government of Canada and the City of Whitehorse, is to support the Safe at Home Society’s renovation of the High Country Inn to provide our territory with 55 supportive housing units. Located at 4051 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the project will receive \$10 million through the northern carve-out of the National Housing Co-Investment Fund and \$5 million under phase 2 of the federal government Rapid Housing Initiative. These two funding streams allowed for the acquisition and the coming renovation of the property into stable, secure, supportive housing for women, youth, and indigenous Yukoners who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

More specifically, Yukon Housing Corporation, with the City of Whitehorse’s endorsement, entered into an agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to administer the Rapid Housing Initiative fund contribution for this project. This one-time payment of \$5 million to the Safe at Home Society is partial payment for the purchase of the High Country Inn and is fully recoverable from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation under Rapid Housing Initiative 2.0.

Second was rental housing. Under pillar 2, “Rental Housing” — in particular, non-market housing run by the Yukon Housing Corporation — the COVID-19 pandemic has posed significant challenges within the housing market. This is why the budget reflects a decrease of \$1.1 million under the northern carve-out. These funds have been moved to the next fiscal year to better manage the pandemic’s challenges, including increases in raw materials and labour availability.

Despite these challenges, Yukon Housing Corporation proceeded with the scoping and design of some community housing projects that are slated for construction in 2022-23. The associated scoping and design costs are managed within the existing 2021-22 budget as part of the government’s 25-percent contribution.

Our third pillar is “Home Ownership”. This is something we’ve discussed quite a bit here in the Assembly. We know that Yukoners are experiencing challenges in home ownership, and we recognize that housing affordability and availability are primary difficulties for many Yukoners seeking stable housing. Again, reflective of pillar 3, “Home Ownership”, of the housing action plan, this budget demonstrates an increase of \$300,000 to the rural home ownership program. It is the type of funding initiative that not only better aligns with the home ownership commitments in rural communities, but also allows Yukoners the ability to purchase or build their own home. Since 2020, the

rural home ownership program has successfully supported 18 Yukoners to realize their dreams of owning their own home.

Again, some milestones — we are also excited to share with you some of the significant achievements over the past year. Several of our Yukon Housing Corporation community housing projects under construction will be completed in 2022. This includes our project at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street, Yukon Housing Corporation’s new 47-unit housing project at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street that’s estimated for completion in late spring 2022. This addition of this multi-unit building to the corporation’s community housing stock supports the addition of a healthy and vibrant housing community in Whitehorse.

Also, three triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse, which are partially funded by the federal Rapid Housing Initiative, are well on their way to be completed later this spring. These new builds will contribute nine units toward supporting affordable community housing options for Yukoners. Yukon Housing Corporation’s Housing First residence was a major change in the approach to housing for the Yukon and the north and successfully addressed a long-standing gap in our housing continuum. That is why I am pleased to share that we are embarking on the next Housing First project in the community of Watson Lake with construction beginning in the summer of 2022.

As well, we’re moving forward with data and analysis that the corporation uses for the community housing needs assessments to ensure that the housing solutions are relevant for each community while addressing the identified gaps that come from the individual community housing needs assessment. These assessments are a tool used to guide and identify housing priorities for the communities. The community housing needs assessments are the start of work with communities on housing solutions. From there, consultations with the communities through direct meetings and open houses will commence to review the next housing options that will be designed and built. The communities of Watson Lake, Teslin, Carcross, and Dawson City are each involved in the design stage of housing projects.

In November 2021, we launched the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund. To date, through four successful intakes, the housing initiatives fund supports approximately 470 total housing units that are being built by First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, NGOs, and the general public. I am pleased to report that the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund received 29 project applications. This is just another example of the robust housing development year ahead of us. I commend the commitment from the community developers to work together to develop affordable housing for Yukoners.

In conclusion, the changes to our supplementary estimates have enabled the Yukon Housing Corporation to be innovative, resilient, and responsive to housing needs in the territory. Our people-centred approach to wellness helps Yukoners thrive, and we are committed to new initiatives that will help Yukoners find the housing support that they need. We will continue to provide housing options by building on our partnerships, by



exploring innovative approaches to help address housing supply solutions, and by making strategic investments for healthy, vibrant, and sustainable communities.

We would not have gone this far without the people behind the housing solutions for Yukoners. I would like to close by applauding all the housing development community partners for stepping up and delivering on housing solutions and to thank again the staff and the board of directors at the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication to making more affordable housing options available to Yukoners.

**Ms. Clarke:** Thank you to the officials who are here today. I have many, many questions, but I will save them for the mains.

**Ms. White:** Today I have a guest appearance in the housing file, which I am super excited about.

I am just following up to the reference that the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street housing complex will be open in late spring 2022. Can the minister be a bit more specific? I think we're in the middle of spring, so are we talking about the end of April or are we talking about May? I would say that June becomes summer. So, if he can be a little bit more specific — and I won't hold him to it, but I'm just curious as to what "late spring" means.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just for the record, hold me to it on this answer or — okay.

So, we're looking at the end of June or mid-July — that is where we're at right now. Mid-July — probably having most folks in there. I think there are some discussions that have occurred around just ensuring that we support individuals when they move in. What we've seen to date, in any of our buildings, is to have a staggered approach so that you don't have a number of individuals all coming in at the exact same time.

Again, I can just touch on a little bit of information about that build out. It is 47 units in total, which we've talked about, and included are a mix of bachelor suites and one-, two-, and three-bedroom units supporting various household needs, including 10 units built for low-barrier and accessible housing.

Of course, this will require some operational changes including amending eligibility for the Yukon Housing Corporation units by adopting the affordable housing income limits. As previously stated, the broader tenant configuration will house Yukoners with low to moderate income together, while also ensuring that those who need supports receive them.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street building will be the first to adopt this new mixed-income and mixed-use allocation model.

It will be used more broadly through other Yukon Housing Corporation buildings as units become available through time. The current buildings that generally house seniors will remain so for the time being. These changes come with the Yukon Housing Corporation staff's continued attention and commitment to safety and security for all tenants. This will be further supported through the existing and new partnership agreements that are required under the community housing framework.

I also want to thank the Leader of the Third Party for discussions and advice on some of these issues. We know that there have been some flags, because this is a bit of a new type of housing configuration and it is very diverse in the people who are going to make it their home. I think that one of the things that was shared with me — we have had some folks reach out to us and, as identified by the Leader of the Third Party, people who have good advice and have been around the housing continuum for a long time. So, we are contemplating any advice we are getting from community members. Again, because this is something that is innovative, we want to ensure that all individuals there are going to have a strong quality of life, that they are supported, and again, that their safety and happiness are paramount.

I look forward to further questions.

**Ms. White:** I am glad that I asked for clarification, because I would refer to mid-July as summer, so if I had been holding on for late spring and we rolled into July, I am not so sure how I would have responded. So, summertime — mid-summer, that will open. The minister just referenced that there are bachelor units, one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, and well as 10 low-barrier. Can he give me the breakdown of what those are? I'm just looking for the numbers of those units.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will get back to the member opposite with the exact breakdown on those units.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister. Really, if he is able to send that to the critic for us, that would be great. I am sure that I will just look over her shoulder for it.

Something that happened was kind of — I don't want to say "emerging issue", because it wasn't emerging at all. But we saw a lot of seniors buildings, some in the downtown core and some not in the downtown core, dealing with vandalism and theft. The Housing Corporation — I'm grateful to say — started installing cameras. I know that there was a whole process of having to go and making sure that it was okay through information and privacy, but can the minister update us on that? Particularly, I took a fairly what I thought was a hilarious photo, when I was up at 600 College Drive, of a beautiful camera that had been newly installed covered in something that there's no way a camera lens could see out of. That's when I realized that, although there were cameras installed in the building, they were not yet operational.

Can the minister update us on that issue?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We're working with the Department of Highways and Public Works right now. The privacy policy is going to be submitted to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, for those who are listening. The member opposite, representing the constituents who live within that area at 600 College Drive — part of the — the thing that we have to be very cautious about is — we have our hardware and our infrastructure installed, but we have to be able to have that sign-off so that we're not collecting images of individuals without making sure that we're following the laws of Yukon.

I will say as well that there has been a lot of different scenarios that have occurred, both at 600 College Drive, which we have spoken about a bit, but also in the downtown core, where in some cases there has been some mischief around some

of the seniors buildings, but in other cases as well, which becomes difficult. You have tenants who are living in these units and are, in some cases, giving access to family members and those family members, at some times, don't always follow the rules the way they should and that has led to some challenges in some of our buildings.

What I can report to the Assembly is: In every one of those cases where there have been significant complaints, I have reached out and, in some cases, have spoken directly with either tenants or family members of those tenants. Part of what I want to be doing — we were kind of cautious because of where we were on COVID — is spending time as well in my role but going with our teams to make sure that we heard first-hand.

I think that's important that those tenants get a chance to speak directly to the individual responsible for the Housing Corporation. Certainly, that is going to be some of the outreach that we do, now that we're in a bit of a safer situation coming out of COVID and having the ability to bring people together.

So, once we hear from the privacy commissioner, we can report back. I think we're going through different timelines for all of our buildings. I don't believe they are all at exactly the same pace. It's something that I'm more than comfortable to report back to the Assembly.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that answer.

I honestly think that it's a good way. As an example, 600 College Drive, back in the day, had a camera above the door. It was the most watched television channel in that building. People always knew when I was coming, because they saw me come through the door. So, I understand the privacy issues.

I also know that there has been more than one Yukon Housing Corporation building that has had theft of government property — furniture, hardware — things that should not have been stolen from a building have been taken, and so I think this will just make people feel better.

Along the lines of that safety though is having a working buzzer system. I know, for example, that the buzzer at 600 College Drive is often down. So, what is the corporation's policy on repairing buzzer systems?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** That's pretty detailed. What I can say is that — and I think in the interaction that we've had where the Leader of the Third Party is advocating on behalf of constituents, we have been, within the Housing Corporation, extremely responsive just to be able to go. One of the things that we looked at was there were some concerns with a lack of lighting. I will commend the team — I think, within probably 24 hours, we were back and we had somebody on-site.

I wouldn't just narrow it down to the mechanisms for the buzzer. I think what we need to always be doing is ensuring that when clients reach out to us, whatever is happening — whether it's a buzzer, it's a lighting system, our camera system, or the garbage can has been taken or there is a challenge with some of the items that are normally shared-use within those facilities — that people reach out to us and that we respond efficiently.

It goes without saying, though, that over the last two years it was very difficult because we were balancing the safety, support, and comfort of our clients, but we were also ensuring that we followed the direction of the Public Service

Commission in how we deployed our staff. In many cases, of course, in the early stages, there was a lot of staff who were at home. They were isolated and working from home and that gave us a bit of challenge when normally we would have our folks out there quickly. We didn't have the same capacity that we normally did, and that is something that we all felt badly about, but at the same time, we were trying to balance the structure, rules, and policies that were in front of us.

With that, I am pleased — anytime members of the House do hear from clients about any sorts of challenges or gaps in the infrastructure that is surrounding them and that is affecting safety or quality of life, please reach out to us. I think that our team has been extremely, extremely responsive, and again, we are always going to ensure that we get out there as quickly as we can. I will say that, in some cases, it is important to understand that if it is a very technical fix or the capacity that is used — the technicians who are required — may just not be in Whitehorse. That sometimes brings other challenges. What I think about is not so much the buzzer system, but for anyone who has had to oversee buildings with elevators, that could be a real challenge, depending on who you source the elevator infrastructure from and who the technical supports are from — whether they are subcontracted here in the Yukon or you are looking to fly somebody in.

We do our very best at all times. We know that, especially in our seniors buildings, these are people who have contributed so much to the Yukon and we respect them immensely. We are always going to do our very best to look after their needs.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. The reason why I bring up the actual door buzzers is that it is a concern — it is a safety concern — and it is not just — I am using 600 College Drive because I can speak very directly about it — but I can tell you that I attend seniors buildings in not just Whitehorse but outside of Whitehorse. The reason why the buzzers are so important is that if you have poor mobility and you live on the third floor at the end of a hallway and someone calls you and the buzzer doesn't work, that means you have to go from your apartment to the elevator, down the three floors to the front door to let your friend in — so it becomes a safety issue as well. Highlighting the buzzers — in the case of College Drive — it opened to Yukon Housing in 2007 — it is 15 years old. It was designed as athletes' housing for the Canada Winter Games.

In some cases, technology advances, and in some cases, it will just kaput. I could say that, in our recent tour of the new Challenge Cornerstone building, the buzzer system — the security system — is very cool. If that is the cutting edge of what it's going to look like, I guess I'm just urging that we look at that for safety purposes.

One other thing while I have you here is that when we talked about the reconfiguring of where the current Macaulay Lodge is — we've talked about how it's going to go out for that tender — I don't disagree with that at all, but I did have a really interesting conversation with a senior friend after that. The senior friend highlighted to me — he said that Yukon Housing still has an obligation to seniors, because a senior can't necessarily afford what median rent is these days, and they

don't necessarily have that option to move into private market rentals because they can't afford it. His concern was that, when we were talking about it: Well, what about seniors? He also had the question: How many seniors are we expecting to go into the new Jeckell building? The reason why he highlighted that is that, because of the Yukon Housing Corporation's 25 percent, it means that someone who is on a fixed income with maybe only one pension — the Canada pension, for example — is still able to afford to live, but if you had to pay private market rates, you couldn't.

So, his real encouragement for us was to make sure that we take into account seniors when we plan buildings in the future because his point, which is definitely reflective of my experience as a kid, is that grandparents didn't stay in the Yukon. They migrated south. We went to go visit our grandparents. Now grandparents live here, and in some cases, grandparents are moving here because this is where they want to be when they get older, which I really appreciate. He urged us to make sure that we consider seniors in our construction, our building, and our numbers.

The last question that I will ask — because that was a lot of talking without many questions — is: What is the current wait-list for seniors right now? Actually, what is the current wait-list, period?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will start with Macaulay Lodge — just that conversation. Our approach on that was that we wanted the most efficient approach. My sense and our team's sense — and what I've tried to share with everyone that I'm working with — is, of course, a real sense of urgency.

Understanding processes that would happen, we knew that Macaulay Lodge was in a position where there had to be a demolition. What we first contemplated was that, if we could actually look at demolition and have — either through partnership or the same entities, also be the developer. I guess the rub, you would say, was the fact that we knew there was a potential for some remediation that had to occur. We don't have a complete scope of what that is. I think it was a tank fill-up. It wasn't something that was too robust, but still, we knew that if somebody was going in post-demolition and then wanted to develop it, it could be really problematic if they couldn't pass their environmental one or if there was some liability to the lots. That is, of course, why we've gone with the approach that we have.

In our work at the Housing Corporation, our approach is that we're not vacating the field, I will say, when it comes to the complete continuum when it comes to aging in place and providing different opportunities. We have supported — and we've had a bit of dialogue — a private sector solution. I would say that if we had all the pieces together, right now, we would be also supporting the Vimy project. We have not stopped working. I haven't answered any questions in the Assembly about it. It has been brought up a couple of times just where it is. But we have continued to be right there with the Vimy team throughout their process. I think I can say that they are very close. We are continuously monitoring the resources that we have. I commend the stick-to-itiveness of Ranjit Sarin — and his leadership there — and others on that project. I think we're

going to continue to be looking at all kinds of different models. We understand that we need to be looking at a diverse set of options for individuals.

In many cases, we're getting our direction from seniors who are out there and who are coming to us, whether they are seniors who are comfortable with looking at a private option, seniors who are comfortable with looking at an option that has been provided by an NGO, or folks who are going to continue to want to come to us.

You touched on our wait-list. Our wait-list in December was 453, and for seniors it was under 200, but I want to be very open with the House: That has gone up. At times, we're at 475 people on our wait-list. We have had a very high wait-list, but I will also ask my colleagues in the House — because it makes for great questions at Question Period to sort of "I got you", but the reality is — what we're finding — a couple of things. Number one, my team and I are trying to monitor, with our data, how many people have just moved to the Yukon. You have to have a health care card in order to come to Yukon Housing Corporation and apply. As we have seen really dramatic growth in our population, and we have talked about this — I'm sure that folks might be getting tired of it and it might be a little redundant, but we're leading in the growth of states, provinces, and territories, really, in the G7, and that's significant.

We have seen cities grow faster than this territory, and the one city — if anybody listened to the news early this morning, they talked about what's happening in Halifax, this immense growth, and prices are really outpacing people's abilities.

Here in the Yukon, we have seen big growth. We have to be respectful of people's private information, but we're trying to see where the trends are. One of the trends that we are trying to keep a handle on is: How many people who have just moved to the Yukon in the last two years, for opportunity, are now coming to Yukon Housing Corporation first? How many people — and that's one of the things we're trying to extract.

The other thing that we're seeing — and this is more through our discussions with individuals. We're finding out that we have seniors who have housing, but they know that the housing wait-list is long, so pre-emptively — they might be seven years away from needing to access Yukon Housing Corporation — they are applying now. So, that is also exacerbating our numbers on our wait-list.

Thirdly, we have many individuals who are receiving our rental benefit — about 200 people. We've talked about that a bit. We're not at a wait-list, but it's 200 people, and we have a good portion of those individuals who have an appropriate spot to live. They may not have all the services and wraparound — and exactly the ecosystem that a senior wants — but they have a spot, and we're supplementing the rent with a benefit.

The list, just as a number, I don't think tells the complete story. When you're in a position of the level of growth that we've had, you're going to have these pressures, and from a national conversation on housing, we also know.

So, I think that's important to share with you, but I also want to be able to give you accurate information about the pressures that we are seeing. We've gone up on months and we continue to go down. What we're looking at is — I think the

key will be what happens in 2022. I'll be here to speak to this, and it's my responsibility to provide you with that information, but once we see Jeckell open and we see our continued work with Boreal Commons, which is very big, completing out our work with Da Daghay, what happens then to our list? That's really what's going to be interesting.

I think we've debated a little bit around our views on seniors housing. So, what does happen from a private position? Does it fill the need? That's what our view is, but that is going to be based on cost factors, which we've talked about.

So, I think in 2022 we're going to learn a lot. We're continuing to learn a lot. We're going to try new things.

When we get into the mains, we're going to discuss the housing trust and concepts like that where we can help people build equity in assets and then be able to transfer that while still keeping — transfer what they've earned, we'll say, or what they've saved in that relationship with that asset into something else, but yet continue to make sure that those houses through the trust are attainable. I commend the folks who are taking that on.

We'll have lots to talk about, but again, those are some of our thoughts, at least.

I think the crux of it is — I know I've expanded on what you were looking for — but I will say we still understand that there is a portion of our seniors who need us at the table with them.

**Ms. White:** Just for clarification, you need to be in the territory for three months to be able to get a Yukon health care card. Do you not need to live in the territory in the Yukon for 12 months before you can apply for Yukon housing?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, it's one year, yes.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that clarification.

So, prior to the 2016 election where the minister joined this Assembly, what we saw was some really tragic situations happen where seniors were pressured to sell homes that they were in before they could apply to housing. What we saw then is we saw people who were safely housed become unsafely housed because they sold the only place they were at, because they were told that they needed to do that to get on the wait-list.

I appreciate that the minister said that in some cases people are seven years away from needing housing. I will say that in some cases they are seven years away from being able to get housing. I have to tell you, I encourage people to apply for that wait-list when they own a home that they can no longer care for and they need that. I know that they are safely housed, although they can't maintain it — if they sell that asset, what happens to them before they move? I am telling you right now, based on what I learned here when I first got elected, I encourage seniors not to sell homes until they are offered that unit. The reason I do that is because we can take people who are safely housed, they sell that asset, and then they become insecurely housed. That can be a tragic thing. I just wanted to put that out there. We may have a difference of opinion on that, but having supported people who have sold their house and then had nowhere to go, that was an awful time.

I want to say thank you for the opportunity today. A big thank you to the officials who are here. I always appreciate the

ability to have these conversations. Of course, I want to thank people at the Yukon Housing Corporation office. In my years, I have had a lot of support and have really seen people go above and beyond to support Yukoners in need, and I appreciate that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would just like to clarify that I am not in disagreement with the member opposite on that topic of people holding on to their houses. Where I wanted to get to with our team and with the Assembly was that it always sounds very salacious when there's a number out there. There are always these interactions in the Assembly during Question Period where it's a big number. There is a big number, but I also want to disseminate that data and provide it to you. I want our team's feet to be held to the fire around our work ethic, our innovation, our ability to execute, our ability to listen to folks, and our ability to partner. Inevitably, I don't get to identify how we are graded, but I think that those are the things that we are really focused on.

I want to be able to provide you with the information as best as I can, because that is what we really have to do. The Leader of the Third Party has been a proponent focused on housing and making sure that people have had what they need, and when they haven't, she has gone out to fight for those things and for what they need.

I think that we are in agreement on a lot of these pieces, but again, those are the things that we are trying to do. We are also going out and trying to ensure that we have a broader sort of a macro view of what is going on in housing. So, we are cross-referencing building permits. We are looking at where new density is being done in each neighbourhood. We are really trying to get a broad scope and I think that this is something fairly new as a lens to look through what is going on in Yukon.

I have to say, the other thing, going from community to community or in Whitehorse, we have also offered is: Who wants to build housing with us? To date, I can say that we haven't turned folks down who want to work with us on building housing. Sometimes there are little hiccups where they want to build and maybe they don't own the land, and maybe we have to work through that or there is something within the scope and criteria from Canada that they have to meet, but I think that is rare.

I think that we will have a very robust conversation around housing when we get to the mains. Again, I thank the officials for all your work. I really, really appreciate it. We have asked a lot of the Yukon Housing Corporation and they have been meeting the challenge.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation?

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

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

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

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous

consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$4,200,000 agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$4,200,000 agreed to***

***Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to***

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any general debate?

**Department of Justice**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would very much like to have Members of the Legislative Assembly help me welcome John Phelps, Deputy Minister of Justice, and Luda Ayzenberg, who is the director of Finance, Systems, Administration and Records for the Department of Justice.

I'm pleased to present the Department of Justice Supplementary No. 2 for the 2021-22 fiscal year. This supplementary budget funds projects that are vital to the improvement of our justice system and the services it provides and continues the work that was presented in the 2021-22 main budget.

The Department of Justice has continued to work toward a justice system that is accessible and easier to navigate for Yukoners in a fiscally responsible manner, while also responding to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have been significant.

Our objectives have remained clear, and we will continue to work with our partners to ensure that the justice system is administered effectively, supports Yukoners with quality community-minded programs and services, and finds ways to make our communities safer.

The supplementary budget operation and maintenance expenditures include the following: increases to judicial

compensation; funding for the justice partnership and innovation program; strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime; funds for outside legal counsel; and RCMP wage increases and incremental funding requests.

Supplementary capital expenditures include funding for the new office and morgue for the coroner and strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime.

The 2019 Judicial Compensation Commission, sometimes known as the "JCC", recommended increases to compensation for the Yukon's judiciary. Recommendations from the Judicial Compensation Commission concerning judicial remuneration are binding under section 17 of the *Territorial Court Act*. I should note that they apply to the territorial court judges.

The supplementary budget also contains a one-time increase of \$590,000 for outside legal counsel support. These funds are used to contract the services of outside counsel when needed. In addition, there is almost \$1 million in costs related to a document production for the *Mercer et al* case, filed in June of 2020, challenging the COVID public health measures.

The justice partnership and innovation program supports the modernization of the justice system, as well as effective responses to changes that affect Yukon and the Canadian justice policies.

The Government of Yukon has allocated a time-limited increase of \$150,000 to support the Community Wellness Court. This program is 100-percent recoverable from the Government of Canada. Additionally, our government has directed a time-limited increase toward strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime. The time-limited increase to the operation and maintenance costs total \$625,000, a portion of which will go toward three full-time equivalent positions. Additionally, capital expenditures of \$60,000 will enhance testimonial aids for children, youth, and vulnerable victims and support the development of child-friendly and culturally safe interview and support spaces. This funding is fully recoverable from the Government of Canada.

The RCMP, which is contracted by the Government of Yukon to be our territorial police service, has finalized a collective bargaining agreement that included a 23.5-percent salary increase for RCMP regular members. To address the salary and benefits increase for RCMP M Division, regular members, and regular members serving in support of the First Nation and Inuit policing program, our government has directed an ongoing increase of just under \$1.9 million. Beyond this, the Government of Yukon has also directed an ongoing increase of just over \$1.1 million in incremental funding increases for the RCMP. This includes an ongoing \$1-million increase and a time-limited increase of \$105,000 for watercraft replacement.

Finally, I would like to make mention of an increase of \$70,000 for the design phase of the new morgue and coroner's office. Construction of this project is set to begin in 2023-24.

I would like to recognize the hard work of everyone who continues to ensure that the justice system is administered for the benefit of Yukoners and thank them for their dedication and compassion. Yukoners deserve a justice system that works for them, is responsive, and is fair. Department of Justice staff and

employees work every day to make this a reality. The extraordinary demands that have been put on staff during COVID-19 for the last two years, which potentially will continue, has been so demanding and required so much of them. At every turn, they have risen to the challenge. Yukoners cannot really thank them enough. Lots of this work will be unknown to them, but I have seen it every day for the last two years and want to take the opportunity to thank them truly for being so responsive and always keeping Yukoners at the centre of their work.

Our government continues to support good governance through relationship-building with our partners and we strive to provide culturally relevant services, foster safe communities, and encourage innovation.

I am very proud of the work of the Department of Justice and I'm proud to represent them here as best I can. I look forward to answering questions from the members opposite with respect to this supplementary budget.

**Mr. Cathers:** In the interest of expediting debate and moving on to the mains where we intend to ask more questions, I'll be saving my questions for Justice until that point.

**Ms. White:** I am delighted to be here in an area that is not typically my own.

The questions I have today on Justice really focus on the substance use health emergency and transition homes.

Background information — in 2009, I was the life skills coach at what was then the specific women's unit that is still on the correctional ground, which then became Takhini Haven — which, to the best of my knowledge, has been empty for more than two years. I appreciate that there has been the announcement that there will be a women's transition home and that it's going to go into that space, but why has there been a two-year gap of that building being empty without that being used?

Also, just as a reference, in my very first speech here in 2011, I focused on the importance of having a place for women to go when they leave corrections. That has been talked about at length in the last decade that I've been here. Why was that building empty for two years before this announcement was made?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. I will make reference to the building that is on the grounds of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as "Takhini Haven". I think that we both know what we are speaking about there.

First of all, let me just say that this building, under the structure of the departments of the Government of Yukon, was a building that was assigned to Health and Social Services for the most part of the last few years. I can indicate that it was used for a mental wellness and substance use unit of the Department of Health and Social Services as offices for some period of that time. I don't have exact dates with respect to that, but it wasn't necessarily empty for two years. It certainly was used for part of that time.

It was transferred to the Department of Justice's responsibility in late 2021, understanding that we would be wanting to use it for supervised housing for justice-involved women. We will proceed to do that. I am very pleased to be

able to speak about the importance of this program. There were a number of program models considered. The goal was to determine gender-responsive, culturally appropriate, and trauma-informed services and supports for women who did not require high-security custodial care. Takhini Haven is somewhat ideal for that. There is still an element of custodial care, but the security, format, and layout of that system that is inside the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is not what is needed in this case. The goal was to determine supportive, safe, supervised community housing and the program has been developed to recognize the unique needs of women involved in the criminal justice system and will aim to support them as they transition from custody to the community, or provide for an alternative to custody, and support their participation when accessing services through Yukon's treatment courts.

Discussions with our partners, local stakeholders, and subject matter experts increased our understanding of how we can support the unique needs of justice-involved women in the territory. We will be providing supervised community housing for justice-involved women at Takhini Haven. I am just looking quickly to see if I have a date. Maybe the deputy minister can remind me of when we think that this is going to happen.

The other notation that I have, which I had forgotten to mention, is that when Takhini Haven was turned over to us, we knew that the plan was for this program to be run from that location. There were, and are, some renovations that are necessary for that space to make sure that it is meeting the needs of this program. The expectation is that it certainly will be in this calendar year, probably closer to the fall, but we are hoping for it to be sooner.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. I guess the concern that I have with being told that it was used as office space is that we have been in a housing crisis since 2011 and it is five bedrooms. When I worked there, it was used as housing. So, it is mostly that if we talk about a one-government approach, that this has been critical, so much so that the John Howard Society has a transition home in E-block, which is now designated as not a part of the correctional facility, although it is still on the land and it is still in the building, so there is that aspect of it.

Just in reference to the men's transition home, is there any plan on finding a location that is removed from the correctional facility itself?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Certainly, conversations happened at tables that I was at with respect to that being designed for five bedrooms, or in that space, when I last toured what is known as Takhini Haven. It was a very long time ago and it was dormitory-style bedrooms — it wasn't separate bedrooms, so I am not sure of the actual design.

Of course, the difficulty with using it or assigning it for any kind of housing, other than this project — which is why it is ideal for this project — is that it is inside the grounds of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. So, a housing option is not appropriate or was deemed to be not appropriate even though there might have been five beds that could be there. That is why this program will be well-housed there.

I just wanted to make reference to the John Howard Society, because for more than 60 years, they have been called

the John Howard Society. They have recently changed their name to Connective — I think Pacific branch or Pacific unit of what was formerly the John Howard Society. That's not by way of correcting the member opposite, but there might be information or materials that would not necessarily compute, because certainly I have had trouble getting used to the new name, but they both have the contract for the men's facility, providing the same kinds of services.

I think it's important to remember that the services that are provided by the Connective with respect to supervising men who are community-housed and ultimately women, is that they're required to be there by court order. That's the security and the opportunity for them to receive the services there, including a number of programs that will increase life skills and coping and some mental health services. They have an opportunity to cook some of their own meals and to live in a community space, but to have individual spaces, which was never something that was available in what was formerly known as the "ARC housing", or the housing that was run by the —

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

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you — by the services that were previously provided for there.

The incredible opportunity — some jurisdictions in this country don't have any of these types of programs. They provide such an important service for individuals who need some supervision, need some structure, need some skill development, but otherwise might be held in custody. Certainly, having worked in the criminal justice system, it was always a great option if somebody could go and reside at the supervised community housing and not be held in custody or get provided for a bail release to that type of opportunity.

We have never had those services for women. I am very excited that we will have them for women. There are no current plans to move the supervised community housing unit for men. It is operating quite well where it is. There has not been any impact on the community that we are aware of. We certainly worked very hard with the local community when the services were going to be housed there. There has not been an adverse effect on the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and the program operators and those individuals who are availing themselves of those programs seem quite satisfied with the location. There is bus service; it is generally centrally located; individuals can come and go and yet still receive programming.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I agree that we need transitional services. I don't disagree at all. I guess one of the questions that I have — when you said "consultation with the community", as a representative of the community and a person who lives around the corner from it, there was never anything in my mailbox, and there was never anything in our community association. Maybe if the minister can expand on how that conversation happened with the community, it would be helpful.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will note that when the decision was made for this unit, which was not being used by the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, to be converted into the community housing for men, there were some renovations that

were going to occur, and ultimately it was done fairly quickly. Maybe Highways and Public Works would say quite quickly. I think we were certainly pushing for it to happen quickly.

The focused community outreach was to the college at the time — the university — and to Takhini Elementary School. We provided some tours to specific groups. I think Members of the Legislative Assembly were invited. I recall being there, I think, with a former representative for Whitehorse Centre.

The questions that arose, I think, were of concern, and rightly so, to the community. Ultimately, there was some comfort in the idea that there is an assessment component in the requirements for Connective to assess, not only their programming, but ultimately how it is operating in the community. What I can indicate is that with COVID, of course, there have been some data gathering and some assessment information that has been gathered by Connective, but we are going to emphasize that a full assessment needs to continue in, I don't know what — I certainly don't want to say "normal times", but maybe post-COVID crisis or COVID-focused time — to determine how the program has been operating. Are they providing the service that we have required of them? Are they providing the service to the men who live there? Are the men who live there achieving their goals in this transitional phase of their involvement with the criminal justice system?

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I did do a tour back in the day and I did know that they had reached out to the elementary school and, at the time, the college. But again, it's surrounded by a residential neighbourhood and there was no reach-out. I had made the suggestion at the time to the John Howard, and now Connective, that they do reach out to folks and to give a tour so that people could feel better. It never happened.

Hearing that there was community outreach leaves me questioning how and when, just because (a) I live in that community and (b) I represent that community and I haven't seen anything.

The one challenge, I guess, that I have — I spent two years working in corrections, and I did run a life skills program. I did run a cooking program. I think there were so many good things that were happening at the time for that women's unit, and there are so many good things that could have been built on it. Things change; the new facility opened and that program stopped. I was elected. I was never going to be a correctional officer because I'm not very good at punitive — I'm more of a cheerleader — so I was never going to transition over to that facility. But two years in corrections taught me a lot of things. It taught me how much better off people are when they have things to do and how much they are with programming, so all of those are really important aspects.

So, when I went up and did a tour of Connective — you know, the transitional housing — it was so starkly just like the other blocks in the building. I think it might be baby blue. Whatever colour it is, the point is that it is cinder block, it is tall, and it is echoey. I do appreciate that the renovation happened and that we took out the one-piece stainless steel toilets and sinks and put in ceramics — I think that is really important. There are still common showers — the showers are

on each floor in the corner — and there is no real privacy. But, more than that, what happens when someone leaves corrections and they are transitioning out is that they literally get walked out of one door — they carry their stuff in like a Tupperware container and they walk through a jail-height fence. It is not blocked — it is true that it is open — but it is a passage through jail fencing, and you leave behind your garden because you can't work the garden anymore because it is behind the fence, and you go toward a single-person entry door and you get left. The correctional officer brings you in, you get shown your room, you dump out your stuff, and then the correctional officer leaves with your container and there you are. You are in your new housing unit.

So, what I am asking is — when it was the Adult Resource Centre that was run by the Salvation Army, there was that space. I don't disagree; I don't think that it was in the best spot. You are talking about how accessible Takhini is for buses. I agree, but when we are talking about wanting to transition people back toward community and back toward those things, when you still live on the grounds of the correctional facility, you are still at jail. One of the criticisms that I had for such a long time about Takhini Haven as a group home is that, if you ask people at the group home where they lived, they said that they lived "at jail". It is still on the grounds of the correctional facility.

What I am asking — let's talk far in the future — is: Is there the hope or the expectation that we move that off? I understand that this is part of the requirement, and I think that it is really important that people have that option — to be able to be out on parole. That is really important, but it doesn't have to be on the correctional land to the best of my understanding. Is there a hope at one point of looking at more community integration? To be perfectly honest, it's near a community but it's not in the community.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I certainly appreciate the perspective of the member opposite with respect to this question. I did spend some time in the old Salvation Army house. It was known as "the ARC", which stood for Adult Resource Centre. I can say with my own experience, and certainly I'm not the expert in providing this kind of programming — but the current situation, I think, is far superior to that. We can recall that there was very little common space, and it was a crowded, small room with a couch and a television. There were no private rooms whatsoever available to individuals there. I don't think we need to get into a comparison of the two, but I think that, when we were faced with the idea that the location was going to close, our primary goal was to make sure that there was no disruption in the programming and no disruption in a place for individuals to go.

I can also indicate that Connective, the people who are contracted to provide this service — they are in fact the experts in providing this service. They have had 60 years of experience in all kinds of services and programs for individuals who are involved in the justice system and at various levels and parts of that justice system.

I appreciate more community integration. I will say this: I hope that there is never a period of time when we need that unit

at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for the Correctional Centre, because frankly, the Correctional Centre is large. It is medium security but probably high security in many of the circumstances of individuals who spend time there.

Using a portion of that building for a progressive programming option for individuals who reside there — I appreciate that there is fencing — was not only a good decision, but it was one supported by Connective. Clearly, we will follow their lead if they are looking for something that is more community-integrated, but I can tell you that the long-term vision — and it may be past my days at this desk, though I hope not — is for the Whitehorse Correctional Centre to become more community-based in general and have other services provided for in that space and on that piece of land. I note, of course, as well that the youth facility is next door to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

It is all centrally located space and land that can be, and hopefully will be, developed to provide real, fair, just opportunities for not only reconciliation — the question mentioned the gardening options that are there — the outside space that has been developed, the central fire pit, and the four corners, four directions, that have been implemented there by First Nation inmates and supported by the directors of the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. There is a lot of programming like the member opposite was involved in years ago, and it continues to this day because we completely understand the evolution of corrections. Certainly, in this territory, the evolution of corrections involves reconciliation and transitioning to home communities in a safe way where individuals who have spent time there are able to transition home and become contributing members to their communities.

**Ms. White:** Just as a point of clarification, I actually just reached out to my colleague, the former Member for Whitehorse Centre. She said that unfortunately, no — she was invited for a tour and she waited at the facility and no one was there. She wasn't actually able to tour that facility, which is unfortunate but may be better for those who would have given her a tour. I will let her know that I just said that in Hansard, but she will probably take a look anyway.

So, she did not get a chance to tour. I was the only one.

Again, I think when we talk about community integration — I look forward to seeing what that is.

Many, many years ago when we started, long before the new facility was built, there was a really groundbreaking report — the Beaton and Allen report. So, Chief Allen and Dr. Beaton wrote this report about justice and about reconciliation. The one thing they said is that there needed to be a sobering centre built in downtown Whitehorse. Unfortunately, what we got was an arrest processing unit and it's at the correctional facility.

Are there any plans to create an alternative to the arrest processing unit like the sobering space that was recommended by Chief Allen and Dr. Beaton?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think the member opposite is referring to a report that was done back in 2010 with respect to some recommendations. It made note, in particular, to the provision that's being mentioned here to a sort of a home, or a place, downtown where individuals who were intoxicated



could go to spend some time until they were not intoxicated or not of concern for their own safety and perhaps others.

I don't know that the processing unit that is currently at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre came as a result of that. I would have to do the research in the history, because I know that what we call "the APU" at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre came as a result of an inquest into a death of an individual when they were in RCMP cells. There were a number of things that happened, ultimately resulting in the current situation or the current services that are provided today.

But I think it's important to note that with *Putting People First* and the focus therein of providing the best possible services to Yukoners, including services that will improve their health — mental, physical, and otherwise — in conjunction with the declaration of a substance use health emergency — that all options are currently on the table for consideration. A number of partners have come forward — people who know me and the work that I do know that I often make reference to a spider web of solutions to any complex problem, because I think there are many, many, many. There is never just one solution and one solution wouldn't work anyway.

But we have seen the Kwanlin Dün First Nation speak about opening a residence for individuals who are struggling with alcohol and allowing them to reside there and hopefully change or improve their health as a result of that. I think that's an amazing idea. I know there have been discussions about a government running such a unit — those, as I've said, through the substance use health emergency work through the work with our communities across the territory. I think it is incredibly important that we rethink how we can deal with addictions, and alcohol and drug addictions, and that we must make progress in thinking of things in a different way for the purposes of meeting people where they are, providing the services that they need, and helping them get to a healthier lifestyle.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that.

The Beaton and Allen report is about acutely intoxicated individuals. It was after the Silverfox incident, I believe. But again, it was that there should be a sobering centre and not an arrest processing unit, and certainly not at the correctional facility.

One last thing before I end today: The minister referenced that there was an evaluation going on at Connective. One of the concerns that we had highlighted in previous Sittings was the fact that Connective is evaluating themselves. I just wanted to know if there is going to be independent evaluation criteria set for measuring the success of that program.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Certainly, Connective needs to collect data and evaluate its efforts, its programming — and in particular, their history is one of evolution and responding to people's needs. The John Howard Society had not operated here in the territory before that, although they have skills in smaller communities. We were wanting to make sure that they understood the Yukon way of life and Yukoners in particular.

Connective has gone — as I said, and this has likely been delayed because of COVID, but we will check in on the timing of this. Connective has also undertaken efforts beyond those of their own assessment and data collection. This is also required

by the transfer payment agreement or the contract that we have with them to establish an external review process, such as engaging Howard Sapers, the leading expert in corrections work here in Canada and an independent corrections expert. The discussions were that he would develop an evaluation framework for them. In addition to that, the information is that Connective hired three local independent reviewers to review program operations and to provide Connective with a written report.

Connective presented the findings and the recommendations from that evaluation on January 25, 2022 to officials from the Department of Justice, and the information has not yet been made public, because we have not yet had an opportunity to review it. I expect it to be satisfactory to meet the requirements of the transfer payment agreement, but because of the type of information they will have during COVID times, we will likely be extending that requirement. They will no doubt want continuing information as well. I should say that I don't know the full extent of Mr. Sapers' review, but we will look into that.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. I guess one of the concerns is that — because now we are really talking about that facility — typically when you set up a program like that or you go into a contract, my guess is that you have criteria set out: This is the list of things that I need you to hit. My understanding is that Yukon government didn't have that full list of criteria set out when then-John Howard took on that responsibility — now Connective. So, I guess — and it is good to hear that Howard Sapers is doing some of that work, but how do we make sure then that the criteria that we need to be met is being met if we didn't set out the criteria ahead of time?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am not sure about the assumption that the government didn't have satisfactory criteria when this contract was made. The Government of Yukon was satisfied that the reporting requirements were built into the agreement and would provide the necessary oversight and information required to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Quarterly reports include the number of total residents admitted or discharged, the reason, and the length of the stay. It includes the programs that are offered and the number of Government of Yukon participants; the number of residents identified as meeting the criteria for a program or a group and attending the program or the group; the number of residents who start in comparison to the number of residents who complete a program or a group; a name and description of the cultural programs and the events that are offered during that period of time; the results of the resident satisfaction surveys; the actual staff complement in comparison to the staffing model that is employed by the recipient for the project — so, that is required; a list of emergency procedure drills that were completed; information about any inspection related to health, safety, building, or fire codes; the number of individual resident plans and discharge plans; the total number of failures to report or curfew violations that might occur; and the total number of misconduct reports, possession of contraband, or damage to property, as a list.

It will include all of those things but not be limited to those things in quarterly reports and ultimately, in the full evaluation,

as I noted, by the contractor themselves and then ultimately by an independent contractor — both a national expert in corrections as well as local independent reviewers who were asked to provide information and feedback.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 8, Department of Justice, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures*

*Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$5,464,000 agreed to*

*On Capital Expenditures*

*Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$130,000 agreed to*

*Total Expenditures in the amount of \$5,594,000 agreed to*

*Department of Justice agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** We will now return to Schedule A of Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*.

Is there any debate on Schedule A?

*On Schedule A*

*Schedule A agreed to*

*On Schedule B*

*Schedule B agreed to*

*On Clause 1*

*Clause 1 agreed to*

*On Clause 2*

*Clause 2 agreed to*

*On Title*

*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, without amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

**Ms. Tredger:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 203, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

### **GOVERNMENT BILLS**

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

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 203, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As I mentioned during the second reading, supplementary estimates like Bill No. 203 are great opportunities to take stock of the fiscal year and see how our commitments are benefiting Yukoners. These supplementary estimates showcase a Yukon government that is supporting Yukoners, all while improving on its forecasting and budgeting earlier on in the year.

With that, I will thank the Members of the Legislative Assembly who contributed and joined in the debate during the individual departments. With that, I will take my seat and go on to the vote.

**Mr. Cathers:** I will keep my comments at this stage brief. It should come as no surprise to the House that we will not be supporting this at third reading, since it is, of course, a confidence measure and we do not support or have confidence in the government.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's get to a vote.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Disagree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

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

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 203 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 203 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I am pleased to rise today and to begin Committee of the Whole debate on the *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

As I spoke in second reading, Bill No. 204 focuses the government's spending to respond to the needs of the present, while also creating those strong conditions necessary for prosperity in the future. Our government is accomplishing this by investing in education, health care, social services, and also housing. We are investing in green energy and resilient infrastructure — all while producing a balanced budget.

Our 2022-23 budget, which includes \$1.97 billion in spending, has a record \$546.5 million in capital expenditures identified. This is a 26-percent increase from last year, nearly doubling the capital budget from just five years ago. Looking at the capital investments, along with our budget surplus of \$39.5 million, Yukoners can see how government is committed to building up the territory, all while showcasing our enduring commitment to responsible fiscal management, even in the face of COVID-19.

Our territory is in a strong position. Our economic support programs have been recognized as the best and most generous in the country. Our economy exceeded expectations throughout the pandemic and we had the strongest GDP growth in the country in 2020. We were one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth at that time. We continue to have the lowest unemployment rate in the country, as we have had for much of the last few years.

This budget will make sure that all Yukoners benefit from the territory's historic economic growth. We are empowering the next generation by making lives more affordable for families and creating a resilient, diverse, and green economy that will contribute to health and to vibrant and sustainable communities across the territory. As I said in my initial budget remarks, the next chapter of the territory is one that ensures a prosperous future for Yukoners.

I will finish my comments here by again thanking all of the public servants throughout the government who worked so hard on Bill No. 204. I want to thank them for their professionalism and their resolve and, most importantly, for their commitment to the territory that everyone here calls home. I want to thank Deputy Minister Scott Thompson for his dedication and leadership in that pursuit as well.

With that, I welcome questions from my colleagues related to Bill No. 204.

**Mr. Dixon:** Given the rapidly declining number of days we have for debate, I look forward to asking questions in individual departments. As such, I won't have any questions in general debate.

**Ms. White:** Understanding that there are times when I have four-and-a-half minutes when we get to my departments, I actually do have questions in general debate today.

I am going to veer a bit. I was just looking at the Yukon Bureau of Statistics trying to find information, but I actually have questions about the makeup of the deputy ministers in comparison to the makeup of the territory. Again, I was just trying to find the statistics right now and didn't.

Let me start by saying this: This is not a criticism of any deputy minister. This is not a criticism, but when I look at it, there are currently nine men holding these positions and two women, right? Out of 11 deputy ministers — and I'm not talking about presidents of corporations, although I could add one more woman and two more men. I am talking about the makeup.

If we look at the makeup of this Chamber, for example, out of 19, seven of us identify as women. When you think about the population and you think that it's probably pretty close to 50:50. And so, I wanted to know — in consideration when the Premier and his ministers are going through and choosing deputy ministers — how can we have such a disparity between men and women?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I would agree that, at the DM level, it is not a good balance and also not indicative of the balance from management to assistant deputy ministers as well.

It was interesting that we were just having this conversation with my chief of staff — who is a woman, for the record. When you look past — and I'll get these numbers for the member opposite. When you take a look at the ADM level, it's 46 percent female. When you take a look at management 2, it's 54 percent. When you look at management 3, it's almost 56 percent. Management 4 is 54 percent, and the list goes on from there. At management 5, it's underrepresented — it's 40.7 percent — but then at management 6, it's 72.7 percent.

So, I do agree that, at the deputy minister level, it is skewed to the side of more male representation, but that's not indicative of the trend of folks who are managing the departments from the ADM level through to the management levels as well. Those are good numbers there, but I completely agree with the member opposite.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, deputy minister. Deputy Chair — so many acronyms.

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

**Ms. White:** It was just said that, if we add the Deputy Chair to the mix, then we would have one more.

I do appreciate that those numbers are so top of mind, and I do appreciate having this conversation.

That's good — those are good numbers. But again, when you look at the deputy minister level, that is the highest level in the public service. Those are people in charge of direction and taking the political direction and disseminating it. I just highlight that there is concern. I appreciate that the Premier echoed that, but I'm again highlighting my concern.

I guess the next question is: How does that get resolved? How does government address that? How does the Premier plan on addressing that? He recognizes that it's not ideal, so what are the next steps?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I think that we look at things like the Pathways program, for example, making sure that we have upper mobility of folks who are willing to move up through that system. I think that we have proven that, like I said, at the managerial level and at the assistant deputy minister level. We always do strive at all of these levels to take into consideration making sure that we have a healthy balance. That's extremely important to us.

We do acknowledge that, right now at the DM level — it is not indicative of the leaders that are hopefully coming up through the system. As the member opposite knows as well, it's a big jump from going to management all the way to ADM. But then, going into that DM role, that's a whole other leap of faith as well because that, of course, is at the pleasure of the ministers and the Premier — at the pleasure of the Premier, as it's set out.

That's a hard leap for some folks to take. We would prefer having folks coming up through the system. I would say that we have a healthy balance of folks who have come up through the system. It has to be hard for folks who come up from down south or somewhere else and then come into a community and try to get caught up on how things are done in the Yukon — how First Nation governments work in the Yukon compared to nowhere else in Canada. There are a lot of really hard things to do to get caught up to those positions. If we could let the other person that's in this chair talk about his experience in that first year, it is like feeding from the fire hose. Luckily, there are some family connections for my partner that's here today with me at the deputy minister level.

But what I would notice as well is that it's important for us to see a good balance of local folks as well who come up through the government system, and there are huge benefits for that. I could talk about my chief of staff who came over from the Executive Council Office. What a huge opportunity for her to be in the seat that she's in right now, because, again, knowing how the Executive Council Office works, knowing the mechanisms of government, and really being a huge promoter of finding people inside of the public service in a balanced way to represent in higher positions — it is extremely important to have that type of leadership in our office as well.

It's a whole combination of things. It's gender balance; it's making sure that we do as much as we possibly can to instill in some folks that the upper mobility into that deputy minister position is something that we're looking for. I will say as well that we have had some folks who have been considered for some of these positions, and they've said back to us that they are not ready and haven't had enough experience in some of the core departments, and they want to then move through and kind of up their chops or their game.

I have to say that we do look internally as much as we possibly can, and I have been very happy with the results of that, for the most part, and happy with the honest dialogue of folks saying, "Maybe I am not ready right yet, but I might be willing to consider it later on." It is a tough job being a deputy minister — it really is — and we appreciate the work that they do. We do appreciate, as well, how willing folks are to move in a collaborative fashion, which may not have necessarily been the status quo in the past, but we have an awful lot of

interactions with just my two departments — of course, ECO, a central agency, but Finance really stepping up and allowing a lot more conversations to happen among government departments. That is extremely important to us as well.

I don't have one solid answer for the member opposite as far as what we are doing — as far as promoting a gender balance on those top positions — but I will say that we do have women in leadership programs. We also have, like I mentioned before, the Pathways program — and to take a look at the gender balance through those programs. I am happy with that, and I do know that we have three of our female deputy ministers who are working on mentoring as well — on the mentoring program.

We are doing what we can and are definitely trying to strive for gender balance — absolutely.

**Ms. White:** You know, I appreciate both the mention of the Pathways program and then the reference to leadership programs. I guess that one of the concerns I have is, knowing that we are where we are right now — is the Premier saying that there are not qualified women in the territory right now for those positions? He just shook his head — no.

I guess the question is that we have had two new positions put into Health and Social Services — two new deputy ministers there. We have seen some doubling up. We don't have a separate Minister of Tourism and Culture anymore. That was held by a woman previously, and now it is one of someone's three portfolios. There may not be an answer for it — and I appreciate it because we have had a good discussion about this — but I am highlighting this as a concern. I appreciate that it was echoed by the Premier. I was trying to decide where, in all those departments, I could have this conversation. I thought I was going to latch on to general debate. I am just happy to have that conversation and look forward to seeing some of those changes in leadership roles as opportunities arise.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes, it is a great place to have this conversation. It is absolutely not because we don't have qualified folks. I did make reference to how, in the past, we have actually asked folks to move up to the deputy minister position. We have received back that they want to get more opportunities to understand all the different departments. Through the women in leadership program that is led by the three deputy ministers and also being cognizant of who is going through the Pathways program, it is our objective to make sure that we have gender balance. We were very blessed to have gender balance in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Assembly for the Yukon Liberals as well. I had three women and three men in the Cabinet positions, other than me.

It was very important to us to have not only gender balance, but balance of the population as far as indigenous representation as well. That is something that we are striving for not only as a government, but as a political party as well, when we go out to talk to people about who is going to be bidding for the honour of representing a community. Those things are extremely important to the Yukon Liberals.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*?

Seeing none, we will now proceed to clause 1. The bill's schedules form part of clause 1. One of the schedules is Schedule A, containing the departmental votes.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

#### **Department of Community Services**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm going to be relatively brief this afternoon. Let's get right into the questions. I want to say right off the bat that the Department of Community Services has done just an exemplary job in so many ways over the last year. I want to thank the civil servants within the department for all of their diligence and service to Yukoners over the last year, which has been eventful. It has been a tough year with all the files we have: flooding, fires, and the pandemic layered on top of that. It has been a very, very busy year and they have risen to the challenges and they have really shown extraordinary service to the people in the territory. I think that needs to be recognized this afternoon.

The department is working with a lens to reconciliation and to help build resilient, sustainable, healthy, and safe communities across the territory. We have \$116 million in the main estimates this year and just over \$107 million in operation and maintenance expenditures this year, which we will get into. The department, of course, builds infrastructure. It is responsible for sport and recreation, so we have all sorts of activity recently with the coming Canada Winter Games bid. We have land development as a central tenet of the department. We're going to be working very, very hard to get more land out to development for my colleague, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, to then start to get to the hands of the developers.

We're going to be working with First Nations and municipal governments across the territory to do that. We're going to have some cutting-edge, never-before-seen programs — or programs that have been seen before, I suppose. They're energy-saving programs, the better building programs, but they will be executed in a new way.

We're going to work with all of our municipalities to make sure they have not only more housing availability, but also more energy efficient properties. We have the Protective Services division, which of course incorporates Wildland Fire Management, the Fire Marshal's Office, Emergency Measures

Organization, and Emergency Medical Services. They have all seen a busy year. They're all seeing their roles shift and expand in certain ways. I really do think it's a testament to their service to Yukoners that we're seeing so much activity on these files.

So, I know there is a lot to talk about this afternoon, and I think we should just get right to it. So, I'm going to take my seat and let the questions rain.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you to the minister for his brief remarks. I want to welcome the deputy minister here to the Legislature today to help us out with some questions. Our time is very short today.

During the course of debate on Community Services, I have a number of questions in a number of different areas. Community Services is a department that deeply affects every Yukoner and every municipality in the territory. As such, programs and activities have a very profound effect on all of our citizens.

So, today, I want to start with psychologists. Can the minister provide an update for us on the development of regulations for psychologists?

We've heard from people in that community that it would be easiest if the Yukon government simply copied what Northwest Territories and Nunavut have done and develop an agreement with a province, like Alberta, to fall under their regulatory framework. Is this something that government would, or has, considered?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question this afternoon. Before I begin — where are my manners? We do have, of course, the illustrious Matt King with us this afternoon, who raced over here to be with us this afternoon, so I really do appreciate his guidance and his presence this afternoon.

I have met with psychologists and I have heard from them directly on a few occasions, but I do know about their plight. I mean, they really do want to get some sort of oversight, so I am very — I understand the situation very well.

I have, of course, explored with the department the exact remedy that was proposed in our meeting several months ago. I thought it was a good one — the partnership program, the model. We have looked into that and we are continuing to explore that. The issue is that the advice we are getting is that it will require act amendments to make that possible, because our act is not like the NWT act. It is unfortunately a little bit more difficult than we had hoped, because if we could get a simple solution — not a simple solution, but if we could get a fast solution like that, it would be tremendous, but it doesn't seem like that is quite as easy in the territory as we had hoped.

So, we are still working on this, of course. I have had numerous briefings with the department since December and January. Work is currently underway to revise the *Health Professions Act* and improve how we regulate health care professionals in the territory. It is going to take — this project has been ongoing with my predecessor as well. We want to make sure that we have the tools in place so that we can regulate these industries well.

**Ms. McLeod:** Given that this, as the minister says, has been underway for quite some time, I wonder if the minister

can give us any indication of a time frame for activities going forward to move this forward.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We are moving this forward and we are doing so as quickly as possible. As I said in my earlier answer, I do understand the issue. I understand and sympathize with not only psychologists who have represented to me, but there are other industries as well. We are looking to try to find a way to better regulate all of these professionals in the territory.

The Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch manages and supports 11 health professions and an additional 11 non-health professions, totalling approximately 5,700 registrants a year. The *Health Professions Act* has not been updated in a very long time. We are trying to do it so that we not only catch up and bring this frontier into the modern world — which is sort of the land that time forgot, which is what the psychologists are concerned about — but we also have to do that in a way that — when it comes to our legislation, because it is so old, there are often no real easy solutions. I am looking at this. I am trying to fast-track it as quickly as possible. I will continue my diligence on this file, because I do know how important it is to these professionals.

**Ms. McLeod:** I wonder if the minister has access to any kind of a work plan that exists within the department to guide this process?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Quickly, between September 2021 and March 2022, we have worked with the Yukon Medical Council and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and two contract regulatory experts to assess the Yukon's current system for regulating health professionals. We've begun to develop viable options for improvement.

So, we have an internationally recognized expert on professional regulations whose recent work for the British Columbia government served as a basis for their ongoing regulatory reforms. We have met with the registrar and chief executive officer of the College of Alberta Psychologists to learn more about the support they provide to the Government of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories in regulating psychologists. We have also met with the vice-president of the psychological association of the Yukon to share information regarding the Yukon government's commitments in this area and to hear her perspective on the need for regulation psychologists.

What we're striving to do, and the mandate I have, is to help improve the *Health Professions Act*. Improving this piece of legislation is not an easy process; it's going to take a couple of years. We are working. There will be Cabinet decisions that need to be done and we are working on that file as we speak.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that. I may come back and revisit that, but I will leave it for today.

I want to have a discussion about flooding. Of course, last year being a pretty heavy flood year, there was a number of financial resources committed to mitigation and managing the floods. I wonder if the minister can give us a breakdown of the money that was spent in 2021 before we move on to the new year.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** To date, approximately \$8 million to \$10 million has been spent on the 2021 Southern Lakes floods.

**Ms. McLeod:** I believe the minister said that \$8 million to \$10 million was spent in 2021. It's difficult to hear the minister. Is there any sort of breakdown on that?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** My deputy is working with the department to get more detail. I can say that further assessments — here we go here.

We spent roughly \$400,000 on imported teams from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Yukon government and Community Services personnel amounted to about \$462,000. We had a contracted workforce of about \$700,000. Equipment rental was about \$1.6 million — that was heavy equipment. We had \$163,000 for equipment replacement. We had almost \$270,000 for transportation. Transportation for the military amounted to about \$128,000 — that was for buses to transport military to flood sites. We had helicopter time of about \$19,000. Fuel for non-vehicles was about \$9,000. Meals and travel were about \$427,000. We had materials which included about \$2.6 million for sand, rock, and poly, et cetera. We had miscellaneous services — that would be rentals, pump-outs, et cetera — of about \$1 million — about \$957,000. The total cost to date is \$7.7 million, and further assessments are underway for flood recovery and mitigation efforts in the amount of — the \$7.7 million is expected to increase.

#### Deputy Chair's statement

**Deputy Chair:** Can I ask the minister, in future comments, to speak up? I am not sure if it is the acoustics or the mic.

**Ms. McLeod:** We have, in recent times, asked the minister a number of very specific questions about different communities and haven't really received any answers. I know that I have written to the minister to ask about future plans for flood prevention and mitigation.

So, I wonder if the minister could please outline what the plans are for each of the communities that I was seeking information on, and they are Carmacks, Teslin, Mayo, Watson Lake, Liard, Marsh Lake, and Lake Laberge.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will say that this is still early months into this season. We know that the snowpack is well above normal across the territory, notably in central Yukon. Snowpack is one of several factors that will affect potential flooding. We are preparing a flood response throughout the territory.

The flood preparedness team has met with Teslin. Municipalities have control of their own emergency measures. We have met with Teslin. We have met with Carmacks. We are meeting with flood-affected communities in the Southern Lakes. There's a meeting tomorrow night as well.

We are working with local area councils and with municipalities to make sure that we have flood material prepositioned in the event that there is flooding, but we don't want to commit too much of it at this time until we know where the flooding is actually going to happen.

We have stockpiles of material in place to deal with this year's floods. We have been in touch with the army. We have

been in touch with the federal agencies. I have been in touch with Bill Blair and will be again. I'm talking to mayors. We are preparing every single day for the potentiality of flooding throughout the territory because there is a lot of snow.

The tale has not yet been told because we don't know how the melt is going to happen. We don't know what sort of rains we're going to have. There are other factors that are going to play into this. We're hoping for the best, as I have said before, and planning for the worst.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

#### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** 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 5:29 p.m.*

#### The following written question was tabled March 30, 2022:

Written Question No. 14

Re: Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee (White)







# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 59

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, March 31, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

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

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#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, March 31, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** Before proceeding to the Order Paper, the Chair would like to remind members of the practice of this House regarding tabling of documents. Standing Order 38(2) allows for the tabling of documents other than those required by law or order, accompanied by sufficient copies for distribution. To save paper, distribution is now done primarily electronically. The Legislative Assembly Office can assist members if they are unsure of how many copies of a document are required.

The rubric of tabling returns and documents in the Daily Routine is not an opportunity for debate or for members to make statements. Members should restrict their description of documents to be tabled to the item's date, title of the document or article, or a brief description if the document does not have a title.

Descriptions should not constitute commentary or comparisons. If members wish to make members' statements, then members should change the Standing Orders accordingly.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask my colleagues to please help me to welcome a number of special guests for our tributes that are going to happen in a few moments. I would like to welcome Grand Chief Peter Johnston, from the Council of Yukon First Nations. We have young Hannah Hawkins, a grade four student and Han and Southern Tutchone language learner — welcome; Melissa Flynn, who is a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizen and the new interim executive director of the First Nation School Board and Han language learner and teacher — welcome. We have Gerald Isaac, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder and fluent Han language speaker — welcome. And we have Roger Ellis, who is a Han speaker as well and a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in elder and knowledge-keeper, and he also works for the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate.

From the Department of Education in the First Nation Initiatives branch we have Paula Banks, Sharon Shadow, and George Bahm. Welcome.

I want to welcome — and I know that we don't generally do this, but because it such a special day, we have a number of students from the Kluane Lake School sitting in. I want to acknowledge them and their principal, Tina Jules; their

intermediate teacher, Dr. Alyce Johnson; Amirah Miller-Hundrup, grade two student; Samantha Asselstine, grade four student; Samara Van Lieshout, grade seven student; and Eathan MacDonald, grade six student.

I would also ask my colleagues to help welcome Icarus Shannon, who is celebrating their 17<sup>th</sup> birthday today. Happy birthday.

We also have Judy Shannon, who is the chief of protocol for the Executive Council Office, and Samantha Allen, who is a friend, and Tharian Botting, president of All Genders Yukon, and Mira Sirois from Queer Yukon. Welcome to all of you.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome Lee Hofmeister, who is here today, I believe, for third reading of Bill No. 11, from the Department of Health and Social Services. Welcome.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of National Indigenous Languages Day**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** *[Member spoke in First Nation language. Text unavailable.]*

Good day, Mr. Speaker. My name is Jeanie McLean. I am Wolf; I am Tahltan, and I am Klogadena.

Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and in recognition of all 14 Yukon First Nations to pay tribute to National Indigenous Languages Day.

Today, across Canada, we acknowledge the importance of language and culture and its contribution to the well-being and resilience of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. We honour our connections to our past, present, and future and the significance of the revitalization of indigenous languages.

It is important to remember why Yukon First Nations are working so hard to reclaim and revitalize their languages: due to colonial policies designed to sever First Nation people's connection to language and culture, which have had devastating results, affecting all Yukon's eight indigenous languages and all Yukon transboundary First Nations. Through these cruel practices, many generations lost the chance to learn their ancestral language in their homes and their communities, including me.

True and lasting reconciliation will need ongoing support for First Nation communities' efforts to reclaim their languages and cultures.

We are pleased to work closely and support the Council of Yukon First Nations Native Language Centre to increase proficiency and fluency in Yukon First Nation languages. The Champagne and Aishihik First Nations immersion program is an intensive Southern Tutchone adult language program that is completing its fourth year of hands-on experiential learning.

Nine students are enrolled and supported by two fluent elders and an instructor.

I commend the Yukon Native Language Centre for starting the “youth today, language leaders tomorrow” program, which supports youth to develop languages, to become proficient, and to empower them to become language champions. Programs such as these provide a reason for hope, and we can feel optimistic for the growth and revitalization of these languages, and we are committed to working with Yukon First Nations to revitalize languages so that they can be heard once again in our homes, in our families, in our schools, and in our communities across the Yukon for generations to come.

I truly believe that when we can once again think in our language, we will be closer to true cultural revitalization.

Mahsi' cho, souga sin la, shaw nithän, gñilischish, tsin'jj choh, mēduh, and thank you.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Drin gwiinzii.

I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to National Aboriginal Language Day. In Yukon, there are eight aboriginal languages spoken: Gwich'in, Han, Kaska, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit, and Upper Tanana. While these languages once thrived throughout the Yukon and throughout northwestern Canada and Alaska, many have been slowly disappearing. In fact, there are very few fluent speakers in any of the languages on our traditional lands.

Decades of residential schools and being forced to speak English, as well as being punished for using their mother tongue, caused much harm to the First Nation languages. This in itself has contributed to near eradication of Yukon's aboriginal languages.

The Klondike stampede for gold brought thousands north. Then the next large influx of people with the building and maintenance of the Alaska Highway caused instant contact with southerners, and the foreign language — English — was adopted even more. But this is changing.

Yukon First Nations have been working incredibly hard to revitalize their languages. All eight languages of Yukon First Nations have been resurfacing throughout the territory. Younger generations are taking a keen interest in learning from those fluent speakers, and it's a beautiful thing to see.

We are starting to see indigenous language translations on signage and buildings being named in the community's respective language. The Yukon Native Language Centre is administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations. One of their key values is that language must live in the home with families throughout the community. The richness and beauty of the First Nation language is being shared by elders and there are courses offered on language proficiency.

My mother's tongue was Gwich'in and although I never learned the language, I loved to hear it and to hear the people laugh. It seems so full of character and fun.

So, I congratulate all the people who take on the challenge of learning and sharing; it is heartwarming and thank you for doing so for the generations to come.

Mahsi'cho, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate National Indigenous Languages Day in front of such distinguished guests: keepers of languages and culture.

Language is memory. It holds intricate knowledge and information that has been kept for thousands of years. Language is identity. It is the essence of who a people are; it is a world view. It's how one speaks, connects with neighbours, raises children, and sees the world. We live in a place with rich culture of first peoples. The diversity of Yukon's eight distinct languages is reflected in the stories, the arts, and the history of our territory.

It has taken a concerted effort to regain and re-establish the use of First Nation languages after the wholesale assault by residential schools as part of the federal government's policy to assimilate and eliminate First Nations.

We're so lucky that through sheer persistence, there have been huge efforts to revitalize and re-establish Yukon's indigenous languages. We celebrate all the language-keepers and the work being done to keep indigenous languages across Turtle Island for future generations. We celebrate the work of the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon Native Language Centre, which last May held their first graduation in fluent speaker recognition ceremony. This beautiful event honoured eight graduates and 13 fluent speakers of Yukon First Nation languages that were nominated by their communities. We celebrate the dedication and accomplishments of graduates Luke Campbell, Paul Caesar-Jules, Eileen Fields, Pricilla Dawson, Alyce Joe, Tahyah Van Bibber, Allison Anderson, and Georgette McCleod — and Hannah, I look forward to being able to celebrate you as a graduate in the future.

So, we celebrate and thank the fluent speakers who have kept their languages safe and passed them along to future generations: Audrey Brown, Norman James, Irene Johnny, Louie Smith, Grace Margaret Johnson, Joceyln Wolfetail, Elizabeth Hall, Percy Henry, Hazel Bunbury, Sam Johnston, Marian Schafer, Patrick Johnny, and Nancy Sterriah and, of course, the two elders in our midst today.

So, these are exciting and challenging and hopeful times for Yukon First Nation language speakers and those aspiring to regain this vital piece of the essence of a culture and of a people. Mr. Speaker, the future is full of stories.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of International Transgender Day of Visibility**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to International Transgender Day of Visibility. This is a day to celebrate trans people and raise awareness of discrimination faced by the transgender community worldwide. In Yukon, we are able to speak out against transphobia today because of the many years of advocacy work by those on the front lines. Yukon's Gender and Sexuality Alliance and the gay-straight alliance in high schools

work to create a safe space for youth of all identities to seek peer support and advocate for equal treatment. All Genders Yukon Society has been a leading advocate for the needs of trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners. Their role in providing access to mental health services for trans, two-spirit, and non-binary Yukoners and their network of loved ones has been vital, particularly in the last few years.

Similarly, Queer Yukon Society has held an important role in the community for many years. Our government is pleased to provide funding to this organization to support the establishment of Yukon's first Pride Centre. The work of other organizations, like Yukon Queer Film Alliance, addresses a gap in our territory's vibrant cultural scene.

The work of these organizations brings Yukoners together, celebrating the diversity of genders and sexual orientations. It has been my honour and pleasure to work closely with many of these organizations during the development of the LGBTQ2S+ action plan. I urge all Yukoners to take the time today to educate yourself on gender identity, gender expression, transphobia, and the many barriers that trans people still face. Utilize their knowledge to not only be an ally in our community, but to celebrate the trans Yukoners in your life and in our lives.

I would like to thank the Premier for the approval to fly the trans flag. This will now be done on an annual basis and is now flying outside of our building today.

Together we can create a future where the next generation of trans Yukoners feel safe to dress, speak, and behave how they want. Let's join hands together with the trans community to celebrate not fitting in when we all yearn to stand out.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 31 as International Transgender Day of Visibility. Today is dedicated to celebrating the accomplishments and contributions of trans, two-spirit, and gender-nonconforming individuals and raising awareness around the discrimination that they continue to face. We have come a long way as a society to accepting people and celebrating the unique gender identities of our fellow community members. Yukoners continue to make great strides toward inclusivity and equality.

Adjusting long-standing attitudes for many is not an easy feat, as we all know. I can tell you that, from my experience and my perspective as a father, every voice of encouragement and every action taken in solidarity with the trans community means so much. It can be as simple as asking a question to learn more and to expand your knowledge base. It can be listening to stories and offering encouraging words of support. It is being kind and being respectful. I believe that we are on a good path and that there is hope for all Yukoners to be able to be as visible as they are and live as their true selves without judgment, discrimination, harassment, or violence.

I would like to recognize and thank our incredible community organizations who continue to advocate and to push our community in the right direction. Most of all, thank you to

the resilient trans and two-spirited people who contribute greatly to our community with resiliency and strength.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the International Transgender Day of Visibility. Today is a day of joy when we celebrate progress and achievement. It is also a day to consider who has access to the benefits of our society and who still does not.

Today, I want to share excerpts from Canadian writer Kai Cheng Thom's 2018 essay that rings just as true today entitled *Trans Visibility Does Not Equal Trans Liberation*. She writes about the rise in trans representation and the joy and the possibility that opens up. I want to pause there because there is so much hope in being able to imagine a future — a future for yourself.

She also writes about how the realities of life for many trans people have remained unchanged. She writes — and I quote: "... we have seen certain gay rights 'victories' such as the right to marry and the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policies, the neoliberal status quo itself remains largely unchallenged. The rich remain rich and the poor remain poor, and a relatively tiny group of queer folks got to join the rich while most of us stayed behind.

"I know that I don't want to live in a world where trans people can access medical transition care only if they have the insurance to pay for it. I want everyone to get the healthcare they need.

"I don't want to live in a world where middle class trans people can use public washrooms, but homeless trans people are barred from public spaces. I want to live in a world where everyone has a home.

"I don't want to live in a world where trans people can join the military or the police and join in the violent oppression of people of color around the world. I want to live in a world without wars or police brutality.

"I don't want to live in a world where trans people are put in prisons that match their gender identity. I want to live in a world without prisons.

"I don't want to live in a world where a handful of trans celebrities make millions of dollars while the rest of us struggle to survive. I want to live in a world where we all have what we need to thrive.

"I don't want to live in a world where some trans people are considered normal and others are considered freaks. I want to live in a world where all of our freakish, ugly, gorgeous magnificence is celebrated for its honesty, glory, and possibility."

So, today, I would like us all to think of the possibilities of the future. I want to thank the trans people who have fought so hard and so long to open doors for all of us. I call us all to imagine and create a future that truly has possibility for everyone. Thank you.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling an article from yahoo!life demonstrating that the conservative Yukon Party leader favours cooperative deals with the NDP, unlike his federal counterpart.

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

### Point of order

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Earlier today, you issued a ruling regarding what can be said during the tabling of documents and what is not appropriate. It seems to me that the Minister of Community Services just blatantly and willfully disregarded your ruling and contravened it with his introduction of that document.

**Speaker:** Minister of Community Services, on the point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** On the point of order, I just received the instructions from your Chair this morning. I had already made arrangements to table the document today. I really wanted to say, following disparaging remarks from the Conservative leader, Candice Bergen, about a federal confidence and supply agreement between Liberals —

**Speaker:** Order.

### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Minister of Community Services, you do not continue on making the statement with the tabling of documents. You're out of order, and the document will be returned to you.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have for tabling two letters, one dated today, to the MLA for Lake Laberge regarding Motion No. 320.

I also have for tabling a letter to the Child and Youth Advocate.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 10 — response

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to respond to Petition No. 10, which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 21. It is clear that the petitioners, our government, and many Yukoners share the same views when it comes to the immediate threat and severity that climate change poses to the Yukon, Canada, and the world.

We agree that bold and urgent action is essential to avert the most significant social and environmental effects, particularly in the north.

We also recognize that, although the Yukon has a small population, every jurisdiction needs to do their part. Furthermore, the Yukon can and should play an important role in setting an example and generating solutions for Canada and

the north. Yukoners want us to lead and we will continue to lead.

We declared a climate emergency and have committed to reducing territorial greenhouse gas emissions 45 percent over 2010 levels by 2030. We also have a 2050 greenhouse gas emissions target of net zero. This aligns with the Government of Canada's announcement to legislate this as a national target.

We were pleased to see the federal government's newly released plan to achieve a 40-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions over the next eight years. Our initial review of the plan indicates that this federal strategy aligns closely with our own actions, which is encouraging.

In 2020, we released *Our Clean Future — A Yukon strategy for climate change, energy and a green economy* to guide our ambitious work in the Yukon. We established a Yukon Climate Leadership Council to develop recommendations for how to reach our ambitious targets. As committed to in *Our Clean Future*, we are incorporating climate change considerations into the decision-making process for major Government of Yukon policies, programs, and projects. This includes: assessing an initiative's impact on greenhouse gas emissions; identifying appropriate greenhouse gas mitigation measures; and addressing how initiatives may be affected by climate change-related impacts.

We thank the petitioners for their suggestion that the climate change lens be applied to all projects of \$500,000 or more. We will consider the suggestion as part of our ongoing review of *Our Clean Future* and will also pass the suggestion on to the Yukon Climate Leadership Council.

To measure our progress, accurate and transparent greenhouse gas tracking and reporting is vital. The Yukon uses the National Inventory Report, which is produced annually by the Government of Canada, and the Yukon's fuel tax databases to calculate our greenhouse gas emissions. The Government of Yukon reports on our greenhouse gas emissions annually through a public document that is available on yukon.ca. We are also working toward publishing greenhouse gas information related to the Government of Yukon buildings on our open data portal.

With respect to mining emissions, the Government of Yukon will put in place a mining intensity target for greenhouse gas emissions by the end of this year. Greenhouse gas emissions from mining in the Yukon can vary considerably from year to year, making it difficult to set an absolute cap. An intensity-based target establishes a desired level of greenhouse gas emissions per mining activity or unit of material produced. That will encourage all mines to look for innovative ways to reduce emissions, regardless of how many or how few mines are in operation in a given year. If mining had been included in our Yukon-wide greenhouse gas reduction target and mining activity decreased, the risk is that we could claim we are reducing emissions without us needing to make other necessary improvements. I know that this happened twice under the previous Yukon Party government.

We are introducing requirements for mines to project their anticipated greenhouse gas emissions, identify ways to reduce emissions, and annually report their emissions. This fall, we

plan to bring forward a clean energy act, which is legislation to reinforce our commitment to shift to a sustainable future. Our goal is to bring the Yukon's climate and renewable energy targets in line with the most progressive jurisdictions in North America.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the concerns of the petitioners. Yukoners care deeply about climate change. We recognize that when we take on such important and high-profile work, Yukoners want to remain informed and engaged. There is much work still to do and this is work we need to do together.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to recognize that:

(1) the \$150 one-time electrical subsidy does not lower costs for people living off-grid who depend on generators for their electrical power; and

(2) suspending the Yukon's fuel tax in response to inflation would lower the cost of living for families living off-grid, businesses, people commuting to work, rural residents, and many others.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education, in response to a letter dated January 3, 2022 from Autism Yukon to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, to:

(1) identify what steps have been taken to improve data collection on the effectiveness of inclusive and special education;

(2) commit to consulting with Autism Yukon on the development of changes to inclusive and special education going forward; and

(3) take the necessary steps to ensure that reinstated IEPs are adequately resourced and supported.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to request that the Yukon Geographical Place Names Board consider the removal or renaming of offensive or derogatory place names.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Canada digital adoption program

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the Canada digital adoption program. We live in a digital age. One thing the pandemic has taught us is that it is critical that businesses have an online presence to remain competitive and

to continue to provide their customers with the services and products they need.

In the federal government's budget for 2021, the Government of Canada announced \$4 billion for the Canada digital adoption program, which aims to help businesses expand their online presence through e-commerce and digitizing operations. This initiative can be particularly helpful for businesses across the Yukon in helping provide greater access to services for rural Yukoners and to help local businesses access new markets in- and out-of-territory.

I'm excited to say that our government has partnered with CanNor and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada to support the implementation of the Canada digital adoption program for the Yukon.

Over the next three years, we aim to have this program help 140 small- and medium-sized businesses in the territory to digitize their operations and expand their businesses online. Each eligible business will receive a microgrant of up to \$5,000 along with advisory support. TechYukon has been selected to deliver the programming and they are currently in the process of ramping up their operational capacity to prepare for this significant undertaking.

Through the Canada digital adoption program, TechYukon will receive \$463,000 to help Yukon businesses expand their online operations. Our government will provide TechYukon up to \$50,000 per year to hire a program coordinator to implement the program in the territory.

TechYukon is made up of local technological companies that focus on growing the technology industry in the Yukon and is well-positioned to help local businesses expand their e-commerce operations and digitize their businesses. In addition, the federal Department of Economic Development and CanNor will also be providing up to \$61,000 per year, for three years, to implement funds available for businesses.

Mr. Speaker, this program will also provide training, work, and opportunities for young Yukoners. TechYukon will hire one student per year to be an advisor to support local businesses and learn about the application of digital technologies. It is expected that TechYukon will be launching the program early this summer, and I'm very glad that our government can support this important initiative.

I want to thank TechYukon, the Government of Canada, and the Department of Economic Development for getting this program up and running, which will support businesses across the territory in growing their operations and creating a broader online presence.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We know we live in the digital age. Everyone, it seems, has a cellphone, access to a tablet, laptop, or desktop computer, and can order or check information on pretty much anything online at any time. That is why it's extremely important for any business, including small- and medium-sized, to have an online presence. With the pandemic, it seems that society has shifted online to order everything from groceries to clothes, household necessities, and trinkets for their favourite hobby or craft.

I know many Yukon businesses have utilized the digital landscape to get their products out to Yukoners and the rest of the country and the world. That is why we are pleased to see the Canada digital adoption program being set up in the territory. One hundred and forty businesses will now get the chance to benefit from this program. It gives those businesses the tools to not only learn about the online world, but to utilize various platforms to increase business, because any business person will tell you that, if you are not keeping up with the latest advantages in business or technology, you will be left behind.

The program that the minister speaks of today promises a simpler way for businesses to adapt to the digital age, from providing information on digital marketing, e-commerce, and improving an operation's efficiency and profitability to making investments in digital technology to increase business and productivity.

We do have a few questions. We wonder if the minister can tell us how the government will be monitoring the program's success. Will there be a reporting mechanism either for the business directly or through TechYukon? Also, have the 140 businesses been selected already or are all small- and medium-sized businesses eligible?

We believe that digital adoption shouldn't be limited to businesses. Can the minister provide an update on any direction he has provided to his departments to reduce red tape by improving the online experience for business owners navigating the Yukon government website?

Finally, we have increasingly heard concerns about cybersecurity and the need for vigilance. Will the minister work with cybersecurity experts and the federal government to assess the vulnerability of our critical infrastructure, including our health care sector and electricity grid, to protect us from potential cyber attacks?

I thank the minister for the update. We hope those businesses that access this program are able to expand their reach and bottom lines so they can thrive in years to come.

**Ms. White:** In the 2021 federal budget, the Government of Canada announced a new \$4-billion Canada digital adoption program, in recognition that the way Canadians do business has changed and that, in order to stay competitive and grow, small- and medium-sized businesses need to adopt new digital tools. In the Yukon, despite the uncertainty and challenges brought on by the pandemic, we have had the pleasure of watching some local businesses pivot and adapt to an online world.

Faced with the challenges of a new way of doing business, many Yukoners prevailed and found new lucrative opportunities, both in- and out-of-territory. With the support of industry experts, many websites were created or modernized, and even the smallest of makers started online shops, allowing them to sell their products across the country and around the world.

Thank you to TechYukon and others who will be supporting these and other initiatives to move toward digital platforms on a go-forward basis. Mr. Speaker, we are glad to know that some Yukoners will benefit from a small portion of this federal money.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, I will start with just answering some questions from the Official Opposition. First of all, in our normal process for accountability when it comes to these types of agreements through our transfer payment agreement, we would have appendices that would identify outcomes, so then we would work with the primary organization that is receiving the funds. That is how we end up making sure that we meet the goals. Secondly, for medium and small businesses, you are correct — there are 140, but they haven't all been selected, is my understanding. I will say that, when you look at the eligibility requirements, the three key items that the federal government laid out were registered or incorporated for-profit businesses, including for-profit social enterprises, businesses with a minimum of one employee other than the business owner, and businesses that can be accessed by customers which provide in-person services to customers.

So, again, I believe that those are sort of pretty broad criteria.

When it comes to red tape — the website, our online presence for the government — I think that we can leave those questions to the departments that oversee that. It is the same — yesterday, it was brought up, I believe, in the House — around cybersecurity. Again, I will leave that to the specialists, and I am sure that during the debate of the mains there will be an opportunity for information from the ICT branch or unit within government to speak to that.

I will just share a little bit of information as well. Again, Yukon — and I think that this is important for Yukoners to hear — does have a rapidly growing technology sector and it is modernizing the way we do things across the territory, and I think that all speakers today touched on that. It is building a foundation, again, for businesses and organizations to succeed.

Some of the key information — according to the Technology and Innovation branch's program review in 2020, the Yukon technology industry is growing and represents about 3.7 percent of Yukon's GDP. That's pretty significant. That's just behind what we've seen from tourism numbers in 2019 — pre-COVID. So, again, in 2021, the Technology and Innovation unit of Economic Development worked with community partners. Some of the things that we're going to continue to do and support in 2021: We had the YuKonstruct 12-week training program, called Startup Bootcamp; we also had TechYukon's launch of the North of AI program — again, investment readiness workshops for entrepreneurs and angel investors; and Yukon University's IncubateNorth, which provides space, tools, and services to help market-ready start-ups grow fast.

Yukon government plans again to continue to support the growth of the territory's technology sector over the coming years and we'll have an opportunity to talk a bit about this in budget 2022, as our government has committed over \$2.1 million to technology and innovation programs again for 2022-23.

Again, we will continue to support programs that are already helping businesses expand and reach new markets.

In 2019, we had made major investments and we'll have an opportunity to talk a bit about that with our Panache



investment, much spoke about in the House. I look forward to giving an update on that and talking about the 16 firms that have been supported by that. I commend the First Nation governments that are our partners and are now raising funds for, I believe, a second round of this fund.

Our innovation commission was formed in 2021 and we look to the outcomes of that. I think it shows that this side of the House does understand the immense importance of modernizing the way we do business, supporting business, and making sure that our non-profits have the right resources to do the work they need to do.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Mining within municipal boundaries

**Mr. Dixon:** One of the very first commitments made by the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was to address mining in municipalities. In a December 2016 CBC news story, the former minister said that he would be meeting with First Nations, the Association of Yukon Communities, and other stakeholders to develop an action plan. That was well over five years ago. We have still never seen an action plan for this issue.

Can the current minister tell us if the commitment made by the former minister has been completed? Can he show us that action plan that was developed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I can say that this work is in our budget for this year. It's work that is contemplated by Energy, Mines and Resources. I know there is a "what we heard" document for the work that went on previously. I will make sure to make it available for the members across. I'm pretty sure it's available online.

We will be working to go forward and continue this work this coming fiscal year. Again, it is in our budget. We are doing a tremendous amount of work around mining and modernizing mining. We are, for example, doing successor legislation for both our quartz and placer mining acts, and this is great work. I just recently met with the steering committee. They are doing really terrific work with all the First Nations. I understand that coming up next week, or shortly, there will be an industry and environmental NGO table working together, so there's a lot of work happening around mining across the territory to modernize it and make it environmentally, socially, and governance responsible. I would like to give a shout-out to the mining industry for all the work that they are doing in this modernization.

**Mr. Dixon:** It was over five years ago that the former minister promised an action plan for mining in municipalities. Unfortunately, it seems that this promise never materialized. It is clear that he couldn't get that commitment done, and now the current minister is scrambling to finish the former minister's work.

Last year, the current minister told us that a draft policy would be released this year. Can the minister tell us when the government will release a draft policy for mining in municipalities?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I actually went to a lot of these meetings as they went through our communities. I sat down and listened to what folks were saying across our communities. When I talked to the department, they told me that it was by far industry that had contributed a lot of feedback. I know that things slowed down a little bit because of COVID-19, but I want to thank the department for all of the work they are doing.

I just stood on my feet not a moment ago and said that this work is ongoing and that I am happy to report back to the member opposite that this is important work. The department is doing that work and I want to thank them for the work that they are doing.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the current minister's defence of his colleague, but my question was when the draft policy was going to be released.

The former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources also promised to establish a McIntyre Creek park in the City of Whitehorse; however, maps that we have obtained of the proposed park show that there are a considerable number of mineral claims in that affected area. This means that the inability of the former minister to live up to his commitments in 2016 is now interfering with his election promises made in 2021.

Can the current minister tell us whether or not the government is considering expropriating mineral claims in the City of Whitehorse in order to create the proposed McIntyre Creek park?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I would like to know is where the Yukon Party stands on mining in municipalities. We have gone out; we have engaged with all those places where we have plan zone areas, including municipalities. We met with the Association of Yukon Communities. We met with industry. We've developed a "what we heard" document. I'm not sure if the members opposite have seen it. I'm happy to share it with them. We're doing that next phase.

This was always contemplated as a two-phase process. The first phase was to talk with communities and industry. We have done that work. Now we will take that out and we will talk with the public as well. I'm looking forward to that work. I am really happy about the work that is happening around McIntyre park. That's great work. I know that other departments have been meeting with the City of Whitehorse. That is really great work. I know we're doing a ton of work around modernizing our legislation. We're working with all First Nations on that legislation as part of the devolution transfer agreement. It is really going well.

I would like to thank the industry for all of the work that they are doing in order to modernize our mining industry. You know, I will thank the members opposite, because I think they said it the other day: Our mining industry is flourishing.

### Question re: Beaver River watershed land use plan

**Mr. Hassard:** So, in March 2018, the former Deputy Premier announced in a ministerial statement that the Beaver River land use plan was — and I quote: "... setting a strong course for the development of Yukon's economy and for the benefit of our communities throughout the territory."

He touted this as a new way of doing business. At the time, the minister said that the plan was going to be ready by March 2020. Unfortunately, this is just another case of where the former minister made big promises but couldn't get 'er done.

Can the current minister provide an update on the status of the Beaver River land use plan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have been in close conversation with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I think my last conversation with them directly was during the last Yukon Forum.

What I can say is that the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Government of Yukon remain committed to the 2018 intergovernmental agreement that supports a proposed tote road and calls for the completion of a land use plan for the Beaver River watershed and a road access management plan before that road construction occurs. We have been advancing the land use planning process for the Beaver River watershed and we have completed three stages of public and stakeholder consultation and are working toward completing the land plan early in 2023.

I will just say that, yes, it has taken longer than we wanted it to, but again, I have been pleased that the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and our own Energy, Mines and Resources branch are working toward this and working with industry as well.

**Mr. Hassard:** In December 2020, the former Deputy Premier tabled a legislative return about this issue. That legislative return said that the draft plan was expected to be concluded by January 2021 and presented to the parties in March 2021. Unfortunately, that is yet another commitment made by the former minister that he was unable to back up with action.

Can the current minister tell us for sure when this Beaver River land use plan will be completed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I can say is that we will work respectfully government to government. There are times when priorities take over with other governments, so it is not for me to stand and say when another government will help us to reach that end goal, but I can say that I have worked with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation and they have recommitted to this process. I thank them for their work on this. I will say that we are working diligently with them, but I think we have to be respectful of the government-to-government relationship. I will continue to do that.

**Mr. Hassard:** It is unfortunate that this government is so good at making promises, but unable to follow through on them.

In November 2020, one of the companies that have claims in that area put out a press release after they were denied permits for a tote road. In that release, they said — and I quote: "... you have to wonder if Yukon is in fact open for business." The minister of the day responded that the proponent — and I quote: "... does have the ability to improve their application and apply for this. This is not a full stop on this. They do have that opportunity."

Can the minister tell us what, if any, work has been done on that since the application was denied?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, do you know what I can say? It is that mining is doing well in the territory. I can say it's doing well because mining is working with our communities and reaching out to our communities. We are doing land use planning. The Dawson plan is working its way through. We have fixed the Peel plan from the Yukon Party. That had to go through the court system.

We are really happy that mining is doing well in the territory at the same time as making sure that it is environmentally responsible, socially responsible, and respecting the Yukon government and First Nation governments. I would like to thank the mining industry for all of the hard work and how well they are doing in the territory.

#### Question re: Land use planning

**Ms. White:** So, I guess that it is all a matter of perspective, because yesterday we learned that the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has petitioned the Supreme Court, arguing that this government is not meeting its treaty obligations. The petition states — and I quote: "The treaty promise of land planning is meaningless if there is no land left to plan when the planning finally begins."

We can't help but agree. After years of open disregard for First Nation governments under the Yukon Party, the Liberals have had years to do better, but they haven't. Not only is the government attempting to have the lawsuit dismissed, they are still no closer to meeting their obligations under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*.

When will this government listen to the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and proceed with land use planning in their territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I was just talking about this — the importance of land use planning — so, let me go there.

The Premier put it in my mandate letter to advance land use planning across the territory. When I am at the Yukon Forum, I have that conversation with other governments about wanting to move forward with land use planning. At the last Yukon Forum, I had a direct conversation with both the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Selkirk First Nation. But, of course, when we are talking about the Northern Tutchone region, there are three governments there. I want to be respectful of all three governments and we are in direct conversation with them. I have said to them that I will do everything I can to help move land use planning forward as quickly as possible and in the direction, through our table, at the Yukon Forum.

I look forward to doing further work and I would just like to acknowledge how well the Dawson plan is doing right now. We expect it out this year and I look forward, as I said to Chief Mervyn, to working with them on the Northern Tutchone plan.

**Ms. White:** Again, I guess that it is a matter of perspective.

Since 2006, there have been over 500 quartz and placer mining projects put forward on the traditional territory of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. Out of all of these, only one was ever declined. The First Nation has been clear that it does not

support any more mineral development until there is a regional land use plan in place and not just the spot land use plans, like the one proposed for the Beaver River watershed area. Enough lawsuits and courts — industry and First Nations alike want certainty and a government that honours its treaty obligations.

Has this government learned nothing from the Peel watershed land use plan? When will this government learn that it can't win these court cases?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, you know, there is a lot of different types of development that happens across the Yukon: agriculture parcels, energy initiatives and projects, roads — all sorts of issues. What we have done under successor legislation is get to all four pieces of it: land use, successor legislation on placer mining, on quartz mining, and on forestry. I think that's great work. We are respectful in working with our First Nations. For example, under the Peel plan, the Yukon Party ended up in court, and we are dealing with all of the extra claims that came in. Under the Dawson plan, what we did was go in — once we were given a recommended plan — and we withdrew all of those areas from staking.

I know that the meeting with the Yukon Prospectors Association and the Yukon Chamber of Mines — they would like there to be more land opened to them, but what we said was, "No, let's respect the land use planning process", and we withdrew those areas. We will continue in that vein. I've said that directly to other First Nations that, when we get into the land use planning process with them, we will keep going with withdrawing as recommended by the planning commission.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I was referencing quartz and placer mining claims in the traditional territory of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. All but one were accepted.

All that Yukoners have heard over the last two decades are poor excuses and bad decisions. How the Peel land use plan was treated by the Yukon Party led to a disaster. The Liberals promised to do things differently, but the spot land use planning exercise in the Beaver River watershed area has been a disaster. Land use plans are there to bring certainty. Instead, what we've seen is that a lack of land use plans has cost millions of dollars in court costs and caused uncertainty in all sectors. There are still five areas requiring land use plans. At the rate that this government is going, they won't be completed until 2084. So, when will the government honour their commitment under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and put in the time and resources needed to complete all outstanding land use plans?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Here is an example: When there was a suggestion about the development within the traditional territory of the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, we sat down with them and said, "How about we do a subregional plan?" They agreed. In my previous response to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin, I said that we would be respectful of a government-to-government relationship, and we will.

And when we talk about land use planning, there are two that are completed: the Dawson plan is due this summer. There are four remaining. When will we start on all of them? Right away. So, this is what I've said at the Yukon Forum — that we will start on all of them right away, but I will take the lead from other governments — from First Nation governments — about

where they want to start and where they don't. It's a complicated answer, but I will be very respectful of those other governments, and I have said to them that, once we get going, we will make sure that the federal government is there in support as well. I would be happy to see land use planning happening everywhere.

I thank our First Nations for their dedication to this process.

#### **Question re: Stevens Quarry development**

**Mr. Cathers:** Development of Stevens Quarry was first proposed in the 1990s. Every time it has been proposed, it sparked concern in the surrounding neighbourhood. Farmers and tourism businesses are worried about negative impact on their animals and operations; homeowners are concerned about noise and dust; recreational trails will be impacted, and it's in close proximity to the research forest.

In 2013, Yukon government issued a YESAB decision document stopping development of the area. In February last year, an official from Energy, Mines and Resources told media the government was moving forward with a plan to develop Stevens Quarry, but during the election, the former Deputy Premier held a public meeting and signed a letter promising area residents that the Stevens Quarry "will not be developed" over the next mandate.

Does the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources plan to honour his predecessor's election promise?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have taken a look at the Stevens Quarry issue. The first thing I want to say is that we are committed to developing lots across the Yukon, including in Whitehorse. We know that there will be a need for gravel, so that's important to note. That's our priority.

I took a look at the decision document from the Stevens Quarry that was made several years ago and I see that there is important work that would need to take place. I have had a conversation with the City of Whitehorse, at their request, about working together to identify where there are opportunities for gravel across the city and what the status is of each of those. They have asked us to inform them about the Stevens Quarry.

I let them know about the requirements that are there under that YESAB decision. I'm happy to answer further questions, but I think it's important to say that we want to make sure that the territory continues in its strong development with all of the capital work that is happening through Highways and Public Works, through Community Services, and also through municipalities that we have identified in our current budget.

**Mr. Cathers:** This Liberal government is infamous for telling people what they want to hear but conveniently forget their promises later.

Last April, the then-Deputy Premier realized that the Liberal plan to develop Stevens Quarry was unpopular with people ranging from cattle farmers to homeowners and kayakers to hikers. They signed an election promise to "... maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry."

Now, the City of Whitehorse manager recently told Whitehorse City Council that discussions between the minister and mayor about Stevens Quarry are happening regularly, and said that "...it's a topic that I would say gets raised at least every other week for the last couple of months." It seems strange that there would be discussions at least every other week about developing this if the minister plans to keep the promise made by his Cabinet colleague.

Can the minister please explain why developing Stevens Quarry is such an active topic of discussion between himself and the mayor if the Liberal government actually plans to honour the promise they made to my constituents less than a year ago?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just stood a moment ago and talked about meeting with the City of Whitehorse. I think what I said was that we were talking about gravel because gravel is really important. Who knew that this would be a major issue? But it is. I will continue to have those conversations. I thank the City of Whitehorse for reaching out. I thank the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for doing its diligence around this issue.

One of the places that we will look at is Stevens Quarry. The Stevens Quarry application and approval happened, I think, under the Member for Lake Laberge. If I go back in time, he was the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources at some point there and I think it was his approval of this.

We are working to be diligent and make sure that we live up to the requirements under the approval. That does require some planning work. I have alerted the City of Whitehorse that there is work that would need to happen. We will at all times be diligent in that work and make sure that we are doing things as approved previously under the Yukon Party government.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, the minister's attempt at a zinger fell flat. In fact, the government denied Stevens Quarry when I was minister in 2013.

As of February last year, Energy, Mines and Resources planned to develop Stevens Quarry later that year, but in April 2021, the former Deputy Premier, then-Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, signed a written promise to maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry. We know that the Liberal caucus isn't very united and the change in portfolios has some of my constituents worried that, instead of developing other gravel supply options, the new minister seems to be holding backroom discussions — quote: "... at least every other week..." about developing Stevens Quarry. The minister is clearly full speed ahead despite concerns of farmers, businesses, and residents.

Why is developing Stevens Quarry such a high priority for this minister and what does he intend to say to people who made the mistake of believing the election promise his predecessor signed less than a year ago to — quote: "... maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry"?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** You know, I have stood — this is my third time — and let me just be very explicit: Gravel is important. It is important because housing is important. It is important because all of the infrastructure that we are building

is important. I am not relying solely on Stevens Quarry; neither is the department; neither is the City of Whitehorse, as a matter of fact.

What happened was the City of Whitehorse asked to talk to us, and our departments are working together to identify this critical resource here in Whitehorse and beyond because it is very important to all of the development work that we need. I will go back and check, but when I read the decision document, I believe that it was approved under the member opposite, but I will check that to be sure. Whoever it was that approved it, it was before we were here as a government and there were certain requirements that were called for under that decision and we will fulfill those appropriately.

In order to do that, we will work diligently with the City of Whitehorse and we will make sure to have conversations with the member's riding. I know that he is concerned about it. I thank him for his concern, but I think that the critical thing we need here is to make sure that we have access to gravel for development.

#### **Question re: Consultation with Filipino community**

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month, the Yukon government signed an MOU with the Philippines Department of Labour and Employment. This was a good first step to recognizing the importance of the Filipino community to the social and economic development of the Yukon. However, I do have some questions about the agreement.

First of all, it does not appear that the MOU is available on the Yukon government website. Is the minister willing to table this document and ensure that it is available on the government's website so that the Filipino community can see it for themselves?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It is fantastic to be able to get up and actually answer a question after all of that.

Yes, we are very excited about the groundbreaking deal. We are actually the first jurisdiction in Canada to use this type of agreement.

Also, on the day that I was there signing the agreement just a couple weeks ago, we had representatives from Thailand and from Indonesia reach out to us because they also felt this was groundbreaking. Other provinces and territories have also shown interest.

After two years of negotiations and discussions, I am pleased that we have been able to reach an agreement. There is no problem with putting the agreement online; it's a public agreement. I will work with my department to make sure that's available. Certainly, the president of the Canadian Filipino association was there when we signed this agreement and we're happy to share it with others.

Again, on March 18, I met with Secretary Bello from the Philippines. Again, it was groundbreaking in the fact that the national secretary was there virtually with us, but has actually been here as well to visit with us. This MOU will make it easier for Filipinos to come to the Yukon. It also gives us an opportunity to reduce the costs for individuals who are coming. We felt there was a cost that should be borne and I look forward to question numbers 2 and 3.

**Ms. Clarke:** In discussing this new MOU with the Filipino community, it has become clear that the community would like more information about the agreement. The community has offered suggestions for how to improve communities and coordination between the two countries. The Filipino community would like to be formally consulted on improving programs and policies that will affect them directly and would like that consultation to be Filipino-led.

Will the minister agree to empower and support the Filipino community to engage with Filipino citizens when it comes to the implementation of the MOU and any future decisions about program changes?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It was like the member opposite was reading my mind. Two weeks ago, when I sat down with the Filipino community in Riverdale at their board meeting, that's exactly — I said, "You know what? I think it has been too long where policies have been defined by other organizations and individuals in this community. It should be by Filipinos for Filipinos." That's exactly what I said.

I also said that if there are any situations where the Filipino community feels they're being mistreated in an employment situation — I have to say that our employers are fantastic in the Yukon. Speaking with the consulate in Vancouver, I was told that we have never had a complaint to the consulate in Vancouver, but I said that if there is ever a case, to please let me know.

I want to be able to work alongside. I need to know, at a grassroots level, how we can make things better. Inevitably, this information that came up to build this agreement was from individuals who have moved here from the Filipino diaspora.

Again, since 2007 through our nominee program, the largest number of individuals have come from the Philippines. I think it's very important that we have the right safety nets in place. As well, this gives us an opportunity to build a Yukon-centric orientation that will be provided to Filipino immigrants before they actually leave Manila.

I'm very proud of this — another opportunity to show that the Yukon, although small, can lead the country and that's what we're doing with this policy.

**Ms. Clarke:** While the MOU is a good step forward for improving the process of getting here, we have also heard that many Filipinos face challenges once they arrive in the Yukon. The transition to a new country, a new job, and a new environment can be challenging. Finding housing, understanding Yukon's labour laws, and knowing what programs and services are available to them once they arrive in Yukon are all challenges they face.

Beyond the MOU, what plans are in place to ensure that Filipinos who have come through the Yukon nominee program are adequately supported once they arrive?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will just go back to the answer from the last question. Again, when we talked about that Yukon-centric orientation, I think that's going to be key because it really gives individuals an opportunity to understand specifically not just what it's like to move to Canada but what the very unique parts of our society are here in Whitehorse.

Again, the MOU — some of the key items: It improves the ability for Filipinos to be identified and recruited through the Yukon nominee process. It supports the safety of Filipino nominees coming to the Yukon through requirements of Yukon employers under the Yukon nominee program. It formalizes the Yukon and Philippines' cooperation on labour mobility through the creation, so making sure that folks have the right credentials and are met with the right employer. Again, it waives fees that were in place for a long time — certainly under the previous government where it didn't seem that this was a priority.

Again, it clarifies the interaction between the Yukon nominee and the Filipinos in a pre-screened and vetted pool of employees.

I wish there was another question about what else happened that day, but I'll share. We also had an opportunity to have an agreement signed off between Air North and PAL — Philippine Airlines. This is not just good for individuals coming from the Philippines; this is great for all Yukoners who want to travel abroad. Now we'll have an interline agreement in place. We look forward to seeing what that will lead to in the fall. Again, giving a streamlined process for our tourism sector and making sure that Filipinos here — more Filipinos can call Yukon home.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT BILLS

#### **Bill No. 11: *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)* — Third Reading**

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 11, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Health and Social Services that Bill No. 11, entitled *Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would just like to take a moment to thank everyone who is here in attendance today for this really important matter. It would be dangerous to start to name people behind masks, but I recognize many of our visitors and I thank them all for being here.

I'm truly honoured to present these amendments which respond directly to our mandate to work in cooperation and partnership with Yukon First Nations to realize the changes stemming from the *Child and Family Services Act* review with the goal of enhancing opportunities and outcomes for all children, youth, and families.

The process used to develop Bill No. 11 has been precedent-setting. Given the disproportionate impact that this act has on indigenous people in the Yukon Territory, this government worked with Yukon First Nations and the Council

of Yukon First Nations government to government on all amendments in Bill No. 11.

We are where we are today because of the shared commitment to change and the invaluable work by everyone at every level, from front-line staff through every level of government, right to the floor of this Legislative Assembly.

It will not always be easy, but we are all committed to moving forward together, to hearing the voices of all involved, to exploring all potential options, and to being open to change.

As of January 2022, there were 81 children in care of the Department of Health and Social Services, and 96 percent of these children are indigenous. While we have seen a significant decrease in the number of children in care, this number must continue to go down. We must continue to address the overrepresentation of indigenous children in care.

Every single required action in the report *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* was thoughtfully and carefully considered by representatives from 12 Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations. The policy direction for this bill was developed by consensus by the *Child and Family Services Act* Steering Committee.

Reconciliation is a journey, not a destination. We are on this path, working with Yukon First Nations to listen and learn to better the lives of all children and families here in the territory. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to thank the representatives from the Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations as we would not be at this monumental moment without all of their hard work, expertise, and dedication.

We are here today because of the work of the Yukon First Nations *Child and Family Services Act* Steering Committee members: Darla Jean Lindstrom, representative for Carcross/Tagish First Nation; Robert Van Lieshout, representative for Champagne and Aishihik First Nations; Soulia Pourabdi, representative for the Teslin Tlingit Council; Terri Cairns, representative for the Kwanlin Dün First Nation; Natasha Frost and Paige Tizya-Tramm, representatives for the Vuntut Gwitchin Government; Crystal Bolton and Dylan Loblaw, representatives for the Ross River Dena Council; Robin Westland, representative for the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation; Kelli Backstrom, representative for the White River First Nation; Paul Sahagian and Tanya Silverfox, representatives for Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation; May Stewart and Melissa Charlie, representatives for the Liard First Nation; Dennis Peter, representative for the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation; and Heather Griffiths, representative for the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I would also like to thank the following for their support and engagement on Bill No. 11: Jason Peters and Lucy McGinty from the Selkirk First Nation. Similarly, I would like to thank Kathleen Johnson and Tralee MacDonald from the Kluane First Nation for their engagement and support on the work for Bill No. 11.

The Council of Yukon First Nations played a significant role in assuming the role of co-chair and supporting the critical work of the *Child and Family Services Act* Steering Committee. Thank you to Shadelle Chambers, executive director of the

Council of Yukon First Nations and co-chair of the steering committee. I truly admire Shadelle's work. I don't know how she does it with the hours in a day. I would also like to thank the Council of Yukon First Nations' child welfare analysts Shauna Strand and Kayla Brinda.

We must recognize the work of the advisory committee, the authors of *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*. They were: Mo Caley-Verdonk, chair; Raymond Sydney, vice-chair; Doris Anderson; Debbie Hoffman; Lori Duncan; and Rosemary Rowlands — many of whom I have had the pleasure to work with in different capacities over the years.

A successful team needs every player. There were many people within this government who have worked alongside the Yukon First Nations on this project and have done so with dedication and humility to envision systemic change in child welfare. Thank you and recognition must go to: Bobby Prematunga from Family and Children's Services as a senior program strategist; Paula Mowat, who is a policy analyst; Leeann Kayseas, former Family and Children's Services manager; our legal drafters, Sheri Hogeboom and Andrea Bailey; Caitlin Knutson, our senior policy advisor; and finally, Geraldine MacDonald, the director of Family and Children's Services and the co-chair of the steering committee.

The foundation and focus of Bill No. 11 are to have children safely supported within their families, extended families, and communities. These amendments will support many of the structural changes that are necessary steps forward toward long-term and significant reform of the child welfare system. These amendments will entrench in law the principles and the provisions to hold children and families up wherever possible in the face of adversity.

Embedded in the preamble of Bill No. 11, this government acknowledges the mistakes of the past and we are on a path with Yukon First Nations to establish a child welfare system based on non-discriminatory values and fundamental child and human rights. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling 41 acknowledges that too many First Nation children were unnecessarily apprehended from their parents and communities and suffered harms that included abuse, the loss of language, culture, and attachment to their families. The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruling 41 states — and I quote: "It is time for a true paradigm shift in Canada so that we do not repeat history."

Over the last five years, the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations have been shifting practices and we will continue our critical work together with the Government of Canada to support long-term reform that will address these structural problems inherent in the child welfare system. It is important to recognize that child welfare reform is well-underway.

Over the last five years, Family and Children's Services has worked in partnership with Yukon First Nations, the Council of Yukon First Nations, and other partners to create the infrastructure to support the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*. This philosophical shift has led to significant work that had already been completed prior to the tabling of this bill which includes changes in practice, implementation of critical initiatives, changes in processes and

procedures, enhanced working relationships with First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations, extensive policy revisions, alignment of current and new resources, and new training.

Through working directly on these amendments, we have continued the journey of building trust and transparency and open communication with Yukon First Nations on child welfare matters. Bill No. 11 will provide the legislative tools to take the necessary steps on our path to reform Yukon's child welfare system. Bill No. 11 will support family preservation and family reunification. Bill No. 11 will improve access to cultural activities and establish cultural plans for all children in the care of the director. Bill No. 11 will expand transitional support services up to the age of 26 and past this in exceptional circumstances. It will expand these critical supports to youth who are leaving extended family care. Bill No. 11 will provide access to preventive support services for expectant people at risk of becoming involved in child protection after the birth of a child. Bill No. 11 will provide the ability for the director to place children with their extended family or a community member which will result in more children remaining closer to their families, communities, and cultures. Bill No. 11 will increase the involvement of Yukon First Nations in decision-making processes with respect to their children. Bill No. 11 will increase the level of service quality and accountability. Perhaps most importantly, Bill No. 11 will work to improve outcomes for all children and families involved in the child welfare system here in the Yukon Territory.

Mr. Speaker, these are groundbreaking, precedent-setting moves to benefit our children. We will continue to tackle the hard pieces and realign resources and supports to where they need to be through the implementation of this newly amended act. We will maintain and build upon the relationships with Yukon First Nations and follow through with concrete actions that demonstrate real changes for children and families. This change will also include working with those First Nations interested in delivering child welfare services for their own members and citizens.

Immediate next steps include a meeting with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations next week to discuss our next steps on this path of reconciliation. An implementation focus committee will be established to provide guidance for draft implementation policies and practices alongside other child reform activities. The details of this committee will be discussed and developed with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations.

As I noted earlier in this debate, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate — who I see is here today with her deputy Child and Youth Advocate — and the Information and Privacy Commissioner will both be invited to participate on this implementation committee.

We want to thank all those who worked so diligently on this bill and the commitment and the dedication of those who will continue to walk on this path of reconciliation and child welfare reform.

I also want to thank all the Members of the Legislative Assembly for their support of Bill No. 11.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill at third reading. I would like to thank the minister for her third reading remarks as well.

As I did at second reading, I took the opportunity to thank a number of people for their contributions to this. I note that the minister has done a very good job at outlining the list of people who were involved with the crafting of this bill and who have put in a significant amount of work to achieve this accomplishment that we see before us today.

I want to begin by noting the importance of the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report in getting us where we are today. At second reading, I listed off the names of the people on the advisory committee, so I won't do that again today. That report was obviously an incredibly important first step to reviewing the act and getting us here today.

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to sit down with Mo Caley-Verdonk in Dawson, the chair of that committee, to talk about their work and of course Bill No. 11. I appreciated her counsel and insight as to the work.

One of the things that I found most striking about that report, and that was further highlighted to me by Mo when we met in Dawson, was the commentary piece around what we traditionally think of as recommendations. In their report — and I'll quote again from it: "We were asked to look at the Act and its implementation together with the way supports and services are delivered under the Act. We were asked to produce recommendations following our review. However, 'recommendations' do not capture the type of change that is needed, and we have therefore outlined the 'Required Actions' that must be taken to show Yukoners they have been heard."

I thought that was a fairly profound aspect of that report, Mr. Speaker, and really emphasizes the need for action and the need for these required actions to be thoughtfully considered in the development of amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, which of course are included in Bill No. 11.

During the course of the last few weeks, we have had the opportunity as legislators to review this bill quite thoroughly. We spent, I believe, two or three days in total going through the bill line by line and debating, considering, and discussing this bill. I appreciate the minister's willingness to do that. When we consider the impact of the *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* report and the 149 required actions that they outlined, we had asked the minister to explain which of those actions had been included in the bill and which had not. The minister did go through those and explained which had been included, which had been contemplated but not included, and which had been somewhat included.

I think that, for those who are interested in reviewing them, the minister's comments in Committee about inclusion or not of those required actions will be a useful resource.

I also wanted to thank others who have submitted interventions or letters for the Legislature to consider in discussing this bill. Chief among those, of course, was the Child and Youth Advocate, who submitted a *Child Rights Impact Assessment* on March 10, which of course was tabled in the

Legislature. The *Child Rights Impact Assessment* includes a number of thoughts about the bill itself, the context within which the bill was drafted, and includes the suggestion of a number of amendments to the bill.

I'll quote from the executive summary, as I did at second reading, because I thought it was a good piece to consider: "The amendments to the CFSA as proposed are strong, and taken as a whole would create a significant positive impact on the rights and well-being of children in need of services under the CFSA. But there are also a few changes that require a second thought and still other areas where no changes were proposed but may represent a missed opportunity to meaningfully impact children's lives. If the enclosed recommendations are considered carefully, this CRIA would represent an opportunity for the government to implement exemplary and transformational legislation, providing the benchmark for jurisdictions across the country."

So, Mr. Speaker, we certainly took that advice very seriously. The *Child Rights Impact Assessment* was the subject of considerable debate and discussion in Committee of the Whole on this legislation. I wanted to note that, last week, the minister wrote a letter to the Child and Youth Advocate, copied to me and the Leader of the Third Party as well, providing a careful issue-by-issue response to the Child and Youth Advocate.

The Child and Youth Advocate, to my knowledge, has not responded to that response yet. But ultimately, based on that response and the willingness of the minister to engage with the Child and Youth Advocate and the commitment she made in Committee, as well, today to include the Child and Youth Advocate in the implementation committee, we thought it was sufficient to us that amendments on the floor of the Legislature were not going to be needed.

So, while we do remain somewhat concerned and have some further questions about how those amendments that are suggested by the Child and Youth Advocate will be considered going forward, we opted to not propose amendments in this legislative Sitting to the bill. Instead, we will vote in favour of the bill to see it pass.

I do want to note, though, that in passing this bill today, I do hope that the work of the Child and Youth Advocate in their *Child Rights Impact Assessment* is thoroughly considered going forward. I do hope, in the course of the coming weeks and months, that the minister has the chance to meet with the Child and Youth Advocate and discuss these issues, and I hope that if there are further amendments that are needed, the government is able to make the time in their legislative agenda to bring those forward as soon as possible, because one of our concerns was, of course, that this was a unique opportunity to open this act up and provide amendments to it, and we didn't want to miss the opportunity to include some of the provisions that had been suggested by the Child and Youth Advocate.

So, I do hope that can be considered by the government going forward.

We are also in receipt of a letter from the Yukon Information and Privacy Commissioner, who had raised some specific concerns related to subsection 180 of the bill and, of

course, the IPC had provided a very specific suggestion for amendment as well. Likewise, with the Child and Youth Advocate, the minister wrote a letter to the IPC last week, copied to the Leader of the Third Party and me, which explained the minister's response to that suggestion. As with the changes proposed by the Child and Youth Advocate, we had considered amendments to the bill in Committee, but opted to not propose those at this time, given the minister's response to the IPC.

I would also encourage the minister to take the opportunity to reach out to the IPC following the passage of this bill, meet with that office and ensure that the response that the minister has provided through her letter does indeed address the concerns raised by the IPC, because the concerns raised by the IPC were serious in nature. They relate to the privacy of children and their right to privacy. That is a very serious matter and so we do hope that the minister is able to address those concerns raised by the IPC.

We were also in receipt of a letter from the Grand Chief of the Council of Yukon First Nations. In that letter, the Grand Chief expressed the will of the CYFN to see this bill enacted as quickly as possible. We took that advice very seriously as well, and that overture from the Grand Chief certainly influenced our approach to debate on this bill. I am sure that, like us, CYFN is pleased to see this bill pass today.

The work done by the Legislature on this bill over the last few weeks has been important, but, Mr. Speaker, the important work is just yet to begin. The implementation of this bill and the new *Child and Family Services Act*, as amended, is incredibly important work. Whether it has been noted by the minister or by the advisory committee in years past, that work needs to be done in strong collaboration with Yukon First Nations. I know from the minister's comments today that this is the intent of the government. We will be watching with great interest to see how the implementation of this new act unfolds. We do hope that the possibility or need for further amendments down the road is something that the government does consider.

Passing legislation is an important part of the work that we do as legislators, but the implementation of that law — the implementation of these provisions — is what really affects people's lives here in the Yukon and in particular affects the lives of the most vulnerable, the children of the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, we will be, as I have indicated, voting in favour of this bill at third reading. We do think it is a marked improvement in the course of how this business is conducted and we appreciate the work that has been done by all those who have been noted today on this. We will be watching closely to ensure that implementation goes as it should and that the advice and recommendations provided by independent officers of the Legislature, as well as others, is thoughtfully considered. If further amendments are needed, we do hope they come forward.

In closing, we are pleased to see this bill come forward. We are pleased to support it today. We will be watching closely to ensure that implementation is done in the right way. With that, I will conclude my remarks and look forward to voting in favour of this bill.



**Ms. White:** I thank my colleagues for their comments today. One thing I would like to acknowledge is that it was the stories of individuals and families that brought forward these changes. It was people who were brave enough to go to a room around a board table or community centre — wherever those meetings were held — and share their stories. Today, I hold those stories. I think about those people. I think about friends who definitely shared and how that got us to this point. It was those honest re-tellings that got us to these changes today.

It is one of the reasons why the folks who brought forward that report, *Embracing the Children of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, were so adamant that something happens. It is because they promised that they would. They made commitments to families that things would change, that it wouldn't just die, that the stories wouldn't be shared and they wouldn't go anywhere.

Today is an incredible thing, and it is because of the bravery of families and individuals who shared those stories that we are rewriting what the future can be. It doesn't escape me that we are also doing it today on National Indigenous Languages Day, when we talk about a bright future and making changes.

When we talk about Bill No. 11 and the amendments to the *Child and Family Services Act*, I echo the thoughts of my colleague, the Leader of the Yukon Party, when he says that this is just one part. Really, without the regulations and without it coming into force, there are so many good things that can't happen. I am hopeful that this doesn't turn into the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* that passes and comes into force six years later, or the *Condominium Act* that passed and still hasn't come into force, and that we are able to move forward.

In conversation with the minister, I asked if the intentions of this bill — if they could help someone now, would the director be able to act? She said that they would try. I say this because I think that one of the really incredible things that is included is the prenatal interventions. I have a person in mind right now for whom this will be life-changing for that family.

When we talk about this act, it's more than just words. There is incredible work from up there — incredible work — but this is just the first step. We all have a responsibility now to breathe life into this. We all have the responsibility to make sure that this has the wings that we designed — that you designed — that we discussed and that if, five years down the line, we look back and something didn't work, then we need to be brave enough to say so and come back and fix it.

Let this not be a piece of legislation that changes once and never changes again. Let this be a piece of legislation that adapts and grows and continues and gets better as we go forward.

I appreciate the assertion from the minister that she will continue to work with the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. I appreciate the intentions of the nations to continue to do the work. But, again, it's our responsibility to make sure that this is more than just words on paper, that we breathe the life that was intended into it, and that we do see the change of the future of children. We

have that responsibility — that responsibility but that honour to be able to be here. I hope the folks in the gallery and those who are listening feel the pride and feel change, because it's a really big day.

It's a beautiful day to be on the floor to be able to vote in favour of this.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will keep my comments fairly brief today. I just really wanted to take the opportunity to talk about this important act that's coming into effect today. I'm really happy that the Commissioner will be coming into the House today to assent to this. It's a historic day. I too am very happy that it's happening on National Indigenous Languages Day.

I worked a very long time at the front line in child welfare and I know very well the struggles of our families. I know that this new law that's coming in today will help a lot of families. It will go to the heart of where we need to go as a government. There are a lot of days in this House that roll right in, one to the other. I'm not saying that in a disrespectful way, but it's the days like this that make this job everything it can be when we can change a law and really, as the Leader of the Third Party said, breathe life into the work that we do.

I want to thank everyone — every single person who has worked on this and all of the folks who work on the front line. I see you; I see you here today, and I know so many others who put their heart and soul into working for our littlest people, for our children, to keep them safe and to keep them connected. This law is so important in reconciliation. We talk about reconciliation every day, probably, but when you see it come into action in the way that we have — and I want to thank the minister for the endless hours of work on this and all of the writers and drafters.

I don't think I listened to one single story in the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry that didn't have something to do with the failing of the child welfare system. I know that this is a major step. It is embraced in the strategy that we developed in the Yukon. It is embraced in our strategy, and this new law is going to help change the story for so many. My hope is to not lose people. We see it every day. It is connected to the emergency that we have in our territory around substance use. It's connected to that.

So, again, these are the days that make everything really worthwhile and all of the hard work and sacrifice you make to come into a position like this. I'm so happy that we've come to this point, and again, thank you to everyone who had anything — even a little bit — to do with this. I appreciate the work that you've done, and I look forward to the implementation of this. It is breathing life into the law.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am going to be relatively brief in my comments. I do just want to begin by thanking everyone who was involved in this current review, as well as those who worked on the drafting of the *Child and Family Services Act* that replaced the child act, back 14 years ago. It was, in fact, 14 years ago tomorrow that, as Minister of Health and Social Services — I had the honour of introducing the bill at the

second reading stage and beginning debate on the legislation. At that time, major changes were made to the legislation following a five-year process involving CYFN and working with First Nations on it. I also recognized at the time — as you will see, if you refer back to Hansard from April 1, 2008 — that, after the changes that were made, it was our expectation at the time that more changes would be needed down the road, after people saw what the new act was — how it was actually working once it was implemented. And we expected that, due to the importance of that legislation and the effect that it has directly on the lives of Yukoners and Yukon children, that there would be a need to review the act and to make further amendments. In fact, we actually anticipated that it would probably be sooner than has happened now.

I just want to thank everyone who was involved in that original process of bringing forward the *Child and Family Services Act* and all of those who have been involved in this most recent work to update this legislation to determine what was working well, what needed to be changed, and to bring forward those changes.

As my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, noted, we did recognize and were concerned by the concerns being expressed from the Child and Youth Advocate and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We did also consider the possibility of proposing amendments to this legislation during the Committee of the Whole stage, but also recognized that concerns had been expressed by CYFN about the possibility of changes being made because of the way that would not directly involve them and others who were part of the review.

Again, I just want to echo the comments of the Leader of the Official Opposition. We hope that the government will take those concerns expressed by those two independent officers of the Legislative Assembly seriously and work with them to determine whether the response provided by government to their formal concerns has in fact adequately addressed those concerns or whether additional legislative changes may be needed and that, if indeed they determine that additional changes are necessary, that they also involve other partners in considering those so that no one is left out in bringing forward future legislative amendments, if indeed those are necessary.

So, as my colleague noted, we do still have some concerns about the legislation, but we will be supporting it. We recognize that there seems to be general agreement that this is an improvement to the legislation and we do hope that the ministers will listen to those independent officers and others and, if additional changes are necessary, will bring those forward in an appropriate, timely manner.

I would also note that there are a lot more people who were involved in and touched by this than the minister listed even in that rather long list. I am sure the people whose stories and concerns and life experiences have contributed to the work that we're seeing the results of here today — I'm sure that not everyone who has been a part of this process has been acknowledged. I do just want to thank and acknowledge everyone who contributed to trying to improve this important area of law.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The world is changing, and it's about time. Back in 2008, when there was a bill similar to this to change the law at that time to benefit children in need of protection, there were protestors outside. Today, we have an audience filled with passion and caring. The drums of Canadian First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities beat today in St. Peter's Square in Rome and were brought to the world stage.

Knowledge of and respect for our First Nation people and the harm that they have suffered is now spreading across Canada. Reparation for that harm is needed. The Yukon is a leader on the path of reconciliation for this country. The First Nations in our territory have shown the way with self-government agreements, priority-setting at the Yukon Forum, and a First Nation School Board, to just name a few.

Earning trust and working in partnership with Yukon First Nations and the Council of Yukon First Nations has been a top priority for our government. Today, we take a giant step forward together to reform our child welfare system by passing Bill No. 11, which was collaboratively developed.

I am hopeful and I know our government is committed to adapting this process that we used here and will use in the future for developing legislation or programs that affect our Yukon First Nation citizens. Acknowledgement and credit must be given today to every one of Yukon's First Nations who rolled up their sleeves and came to the table with every one of their children, youth, and families at the centre of their minds. All parties came together, knowing that we could do better for their children and for all children when we have the responsibility to keep them safe, attached to their cultures, languages, and traditions, and to help them grow up to be happy and healthy. We know that we can do better, and today we take a giant step in that direction together.

Mr. Speaker, in the prayers that you say at the beginning of every day, you often reference the significant responsibilities that we all have to the people whom we serve. Days like today should bring those words to the forefront our minds. The changes brought by Bill No. 11 will change the experiences for Yukon children, mostly for Yukon First Nation children, and that is the work that we are here to do today: real change for the people we serve.

I look forward to all members supporting the passing of Bill No. 11, and it is truly my honour to do this today and present Bill No. 11 to this Legislative Assembly. Thank you to everyone who has been involved in getting us here and will take us on the path forward.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

**Division**

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 11 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 11 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of the Yukon in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

*Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp*

## ASSENT TO BILLS

**Commissioner:** Please be seated.

**Speaker:** Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

**Clerk:** *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22; Act to Amend the Child and Family Services Act (2022).*

**Commissioner:** I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

*Commissioner leaves the Chamber*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order. Please be seated.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

#### Department of Tourism and Culture

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would like to welcome the officials here today. With us are our Deputy Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr. Justin Ferbey, as well as director of Finance, Ms. Kate Olynyk. I'll just share that we want to thank the Department of Tourism and Culture and the hard-working folks there. It has not been an easy couple of years. We feel very proud of this budget that we're presenting to you today. We think that it has the right tools in place for us to work toward recovery.

What we're seeing for the Yukon for this upcoming year is promising. I think we'll be well on our way for recovery. I think what we're seeing across this country, information just over the last 24 hours, about more planes being put on tarmacs and folks starting to tool up to levels that should get us in the right direction.

With that, I'm going to keep it short. We want to get right down to questions. I'll cede the floor to the opposition.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you to the deputy minister and staff for joining us today.

I have a quick question follow-up from the border discussion we had earlier this week. Obviously, the Top of the World Highway is an important economic and tourism artery into the Yukon. The border crossing there, with the pandemic, has been closed. Dawson residents are curious about whether it will be fully opened this year.

Does the minister have any information about the plans for the Poker Creek border crossing at the Top of the World this summer? Will it be fully staffed and open as it usually is?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, I am happy to say that our conversations with Canada Border Services is that the Goldbottom site will be fully staffed and will be back to pre-pandemic levels by Canada Border Services at our regular border crossing. This is good news for Yukoners, good news for Alaskans, and good news for the placer industry.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Moving on to the topic of the arts operating fund, there is a line item. Can the minister please provide how the arts operating fund is structured? How many groups receive funding through this arts operating fund and what is the eligibility criteria for the fund?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The eligibility for the arts operating fund for the operating component is that it's a Yukon non-profit society or an ongoing and year-round — with year-round activities primarily engaged in literary, visual, or performing arts activities — and that activities of the society have a territorial impact or that it is a society that is recognized as an umbrella arts organization and activities of the society have a territorial impact. That is the eligibility. Eligibility for a project-style component is that it would have Yukon non-profit societies, First Nations, school councils, municipal governments, local advisory councils, or industry associations with an arts-focused project that meets the following criteria — there are three items here: the project fosters the creative development of the arts in Yukon and supports Yukon arts policy principles; the project is arts-focused, including literary, visual, or performing arts; and the project is established as an annual activity for at least three years.

The authority for the fund is under the *Arts Act* and the Yukon arts policy. Decision-making for this is overseen through the Yukon Arts Advisory Council, which reviews applications and makes funding recommendations back to the minister.

For intake, there is one application deadline per year and that is on February 15. The budget for this is \$825,000, which has been available each year, and applicants — limits the maximum per project — again, there is no maximum on this one. A very, very important fund for us, and I think we have all seen — maybe from the work in the Assembly — a number of us who have worked on appointing individuals through our boards and committees to this very important work. Again, we tried to have many different points of view.

What we have seen over the last number of years — about 20 recipients for this.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you. That answered my next question, which was: How many applicants? Was that the number of applicants — 20? Or was that the number of successful applicants? Maybe you could give me a total of exactly how many applied for this fund.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There were 19 successful applications and there were 20 submitted. So, there was just one that was not successful in our last round, and of course, we will have to see what comes this year, after we have our funding in place and we have an opportunity to review and have recommendations from the committee.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Can the minister tell me how groups are prioritized for this funding availability?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that basically, based on the criteria that we touched on earlier and the fact that essentially everybody was funded, I think that we could say that, in this case, it really comes down to that eligibility — again, it is the group sitting there. I would probably have more to share if there was a larger number that haven't been funded, but I think that

what we have seen over the years is that, as far as I am aware, we are seeing groups — basically every group get funded, very similar to what we have been seeing at Economic Development with the community development fund.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Of the groups that were not successful — or the one, in this particular case — in receiving funding during the last application round, was it because they did not meet the criteria? Had they applied too many times? Is there a set limit of time that you can apply or is there a turnaround for applications?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What has happened in the past is the applications that had been selected for recommendation, which I had an opportunity to see — we can go back and take a look and find out if they didn't meet eligibility or what that was. I'll also have to take into consideration what the potential privacy concerns are with that process, but I'm more than happy to go back. We'll just make a quick note, and it's something that we could come back to the House with at a later date.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Has the minister given consideration to reviewing the arts operating fund — perhaps reviewing the intake process to ensure that all applicants can secure funding and reviewing dollars allocated to this fund to ensure the amount is adequate for everyone?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There is a funding program scan and review, and it will begin in the spring of 2022. It will include the arts funding programs, all of our programs. It's part of the commitment that we made. It will address action 1.1, and that comes back to our cultural strategies document and work that we have done. It has been highly lauded here in the Yukon, and that's really a focus and commitment to modernize and streamline our existing funding programs, very similar to the work that was taken on and completed through all our programs at the Department of Economic Development.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On to events. I know the department supports these three events: Adäka, the indigenous days celebration, and the upcoming Arctic Arts Summit that's happening this summer. Could you tell me how much funding is provided to each? Who are the organizers or hosts of these events? Are they all the same group or different? With the current situation, I'm assuming all these are going ahead this year — pandemic, economics, and everything that's happening. So, could the minister give me an update on those particular celebrations?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We'll just go through these festivals. First, the Arctic Arts Summit — very exciting opportunity for the Yukon — not only the Yukon but Canada. This is the first time this has been held in Canada. It has been held, to my knowledge, twice before — once, I believe, in Finland and once in Norway, I believe. This is something pretty special for us.

The Government of Yukon and Canada Council for the Arts will be the co-hosts for this. It's the third international Arctic Arts Summit. The summit is scheduled for June 27-29, 2022 and it will coincide with Adäka. Everything is a go. We're moving forward on planning. I'm very excited about that. The summit has a strong indigenous youth focus and a team of indigenous curators are also going to be involved. That includes Katie Johnson as a Yukon representative in that

work. There are over 300 artists and cultural leaders and policy-makers that we will be seeing during that particular festival.

As you see, there is a combination between Canada and others on this one, so that both of those festivals are a go. Our contribution to Adäka is \$30,000 from Tourism. Again, for the Arctic Arts Summit, it is \$300,000. But again, this is a one-time contribution. We get to host it but, of course, it will move to another region. The two locations previously were Norway and Finland. So, those are the two festivals. I think folks are well aware of Adäka and the great contribution that makes to us.

The member opposite mentioned three festivals, so I might have missed one, but those are the two I can speak with. I can gather information on the other one as well if I missed one.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Yes, it was National Indigenous People's Day.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you. National Indigenous People's Day has been, from my knowledge, organized by other groups, like the Council of Yukon First Nations, I believe. There have been times where the Department of Economic Development in the past has contributed funds, but that was when the national broadcast for the actual event took place in Yukon.

That is not something that is happening this year — previously, we have contributed money — but really, this year, the two big focuses will be that and other organizations outside of government that are contributing or that help produce events on June 21. What we have seen in other communities are nations hosting their own events, whether that be Haines Junction, Teslin, or Carcross on June 21.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thank you for that answer. On to visitor information centres — Watson Lake is the first stop in the Yukon for highway travellers coming north from the south. As such, there is much concern that the visitor information centre in Watson Lake should be treated as a priority and not as an afterthought. Are there any current plans to rebuild that visitor centre in the very near future?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just for our listeners, our visitor information centres open on May 1. I know that I am looking forward to being out there and welcoming not only our visitors to our information centres, but our very well-experienced individuals and staff members back to the visitor information centres.

Just speaking about Watson Lake, I did have a great opportunity last year to spend some time with the team in Watson Lake. There were a couple of meetings and I had the opportunity to chat with the Member for Watson Lake. There are a number of ideas that were passed on that I have tasked our team to look into for a location. There have been two things that have been in play. One is that the location that the visitor centre is currently in is not optimal, which is what the staff has shared with me. The Town of Watson Lake has kindly provided us with that space, but there were some other ideas that were passed on with some existing infrastructure.

As well, the work that has been done on a longer term plan has been done in concert with the Liard First Nation. That has really been about trying to do two things. It is a similar model that I would compare to Haines Junction with Da Ku, where

you had the Government of Yukon come to the table as an anchor tenant with the First Nation. My understanding is that those conversations are still underway. I think that we can maybe look at some other interim measures. I can't speak to right away.

Again, when you are in a partnership such as that, you have two different groups and there is a list of priorities. I think that what we will talk about, as well, is that housing is a major priority right now in Watson Lake, and Liard First Nation is working very closely with us on that and we are going to be talking about how we are going to be spending some funds this summer around housing. So, I think that is a good priority, but I agree that the Town of Watson Lake has done an extraordinary job in beautifying their community. The flags and the flowers and the great work that is there are incredible and they should be commended as a gateway city for us, but I do agree that we need longer term infrastructure there and appropriate infrastructure there, as it is the first place that so many tourists see when they come to the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I hope that the discussions with Liard are soon, because really, it is not conducive for our welcoming border town to have an office or a space in a rec centre.

How long does the government intend to use the space to house the VIC? Do you know if there are talks with Liard soon or is there anything in the offing that the minister can share?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I might have misrepresented; those talks are ongoing — the discussions about working in a partnership agreement for infrastructure started under the previous Minister of Tourism and Culture and we have just continued on with those discussions. At this time, again, the space that is there is not optimal, but the team at the Watson Lake visitor information centre has done an incredible job ensuring that the space that is there looks very well done. It presents well, and you know, there are a number of historical photographs and information pieces that are in place. Sometimes there is a bit of a challenge with sound and there is a lot of activity in that community space. So, that, of course, can be a bit of a challenge.

Right now, the Department of Highways and Public Works has extended their lease with the Town of Watson Lake, with the VIC and the recreation centre, until October 31, 2024. I will also just put on the record that the annual cost for the space that we transfer over is \$51,175.

Again, the Yukon government is in preliminary discussions, as I touched on, with Liard First Nation on working together on a potential cultural and community services building. As I said, though, I have requested that our team at Tourism and Culture work with the folks who are on the ground at the visitor information centre, as there are potentially some other options in the community that could be a good fit.

I don't want to misspeak at this time; I want to make sure that the team has time to work with the staff and talk about some of those options, but if those discussions become fruitful, I certainly will be back to the House to discuss potential interim measures in Watson Lake.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I'm not sure — I was kind of a little off with the answer. Has the Government of Yukon signed a

new contract with the town or municipality of Watson Lake for this current rental space and the cost of that rental for the summer months, or is it annual?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, I don't think it was off. We have a lease in place, and it's just over \$51,000, and it's in place until October 31, 2024.

When it goes back to our other work, we have developed a functional program to identify the needs that we have for space and utility for a new centre, so we are moving along with that work with the Liard First Nation, and we have a lease in place, and we will also look at other options in the interim. I think that most folks know; to build a brand new cultural and visitor centre is a significant undertaking. If you look at the time from the idea coming into place to the buildout in Haines Junction, that was significant, and the opposition would know that work was done during one of their multiple mandates.

We want to make sure we maximize visitor experience, but at this particular time, we have a spot, we have it until October 31, and we will continue to look at moving forward with a partnership with the Liard First Nation.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Has the minister considered working with the Town of Watson Lake, as well as the Liard First Nation, to maybe co-fund or to have a building that is conducive to more than just Liard?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Our perspective on this side of the House is that, when we work in concert with First Nation governments, especially in this particular case, that it's going to enrich everybody in the community. It's something that was committed to a long time ago. I can harken back to conversations that happened with the previous government on these concepts. At that time, I think there was some other infrastructure that was available in the community at the time and I will say that when you're undertaking something of this significance, you're always going to be consulting with the community — whether it's a municipality or a First Nation government. But at this time, what I'm aware of is that the work that was underway and coming into this was to focus on a partnership on a cultural centre and tourism centre. Certainly, if the members opposite are aware, I can reach out to mayor and council and see if there is interest, I guess, in contributing to a project. But what I've seen in the past — at least in Haines Junction as an example — has been a great partnership and then of course the community has applauded that. There are always good conversations that happen within a municipality. We're always going to work with members in the community on projects such as this.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It's good he will keep the conversations open with everyone.

Can the minister provide an update on the status of the new Yukon museum and cultural centres policy?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I had a great opportunity to speak to the team at their annual general meeting this year which was held in Dawson City. It was virtual, but we did have a chance to speak with a number of stakeholders on that work. At this time, we're going to be starting our consultation work on this. There are a number of different organizations that we have to support. We have 19 different First Nation cultural centres and museums

and we support them through different financial agreements. I can say what we've heard is that there's a real need to revisit the supports that we have in place for those organizations. I've reached out to the Yukon museum and heritage association. They were the same group of folks that were here this week, and I have sent off a letter to their president and have identified the fact that we're going into a consultation process in 2022 to understand exactly what the needs are of those stakeholders so that we can make sure that we have the best understanding of what a modernized policy would look like and that folks have the right resources to do the work they want.

That's a commitment we've made to those organizations. It's key work that has to continue, and we're looking forward to hearing that feedback over 2022.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There's an increase of \$850,000 to complete the planning stage of a multi-year project for the arts and heritage collection facility. Can the minister give us an update on this multi-year project?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's a very important project and very long overdue. Speaking to folks just in the last week the other night at the Beringia Centre, this is something that — we have world-class collections, and all folks in the House — and I know the member opposite, from the extensive tourism work and work in this area — know that we have this incredible collection, and it needs the right home.

What I would say is, right now, we're looking at site planning, and we're in the design stage. That's the key work. So, we haven't picked a site yet — I think that's important to say. We're looking at a couple of different locations, and we're working with our team on that. As well, we'll be looking to design.

We have done a bit of needs assessment, because when you undertake these types of projects, you look at an A, B, and C of different models, as an example, and each one is more impressive and more expensive and gives you different pieces of infrastructure and tools. That's the work we're going to do. This is something that we've committed to bringing forward. The previous minister was a great champion of this project, and I made that commitment to her that we would keep on this work.

Speaking to people who have retired now but who spent a career in that department, this is so important to them and important to all Yukoners and really important to this country, when you take into consideration that there are so many items there that are second to none, whether it's palaeontological or archeological finds. It's just incredible work, and I think we all know — whether it's placer mining, the goldfields, or the ice patch — that the things that we find are extraordinary and we have to make sure that we preserve them. With climate change now, they're finding even more items as time goes on.

This is something we are committed to. We have a great team, and we want to make sure that we get them the right home for the future.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** That sounds exciting. There was an increase of \$360,000 for exhibit renewal at the Beringia Centre, which you just mentioned. Can the minister provide more information on the spending? Is the renewal complete now?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** For the \$350,000 for the Beringia Interpretive Centre exhibit renewal, it's not done yet. It's the first year of a two-year project to renew the great hall — the large, open primary space at the Beringia Interpretive Centre.

The objective is to create a more hands-on exploratory and immersive visitor experience. The space will also be more flexible so that we can continue to serve as a gathering space, which we did the other night.

We also have some work to do — significant work — next year. It's sort of a two-year project. But I would say that we're looking for support from this from the members opposite in our budget because this is just such an important item. We'll be watching for that as we go into budget vote later on this session.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There is a \$150,000 allotment for the Yukon signage modernization project for this year and a total budget ending in 2023 of \$350,000. Can the minister tell us: What are the key recommendations to improve signage throughout the territory? Could he also give a priority of where this project starts?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, again, we have \$150,000, yes, as stated, for the Yukon signage modernization project to address our key recommendation from the *Yukon Tourism Development Strategy*. It's to improve signage.

This would undertake — this work, in totality, would be looking at signage right from, we'll say, coming south to north — right from Watson Lake right through to Beaver Creek. But there is still key work to be done.

Some of the key items to this is ensuring that we work with those communities where the signage is going. Some of that work has been done. My sense coming into this job was that we needed to do more. I wanted to ensure that there was a sense of ownership in each one of those communities and that signage truly reflected, in many cases, the work or the aspects of indigenous culture that were unique to each one of those communities. Sort of the name, or what we have called them, is this concept of "welcome installations", and it was, again, to welcome tourists in a way that reflects our unique regional identities and community priorities.

At this point, we haven't prioritized which ones would go in first. We want to make sure that we have the right concept and template. Some of the early work that I will say had been done — there was some design work and it was very unique. There was work that was undertaken, and one of the key things that I said to our team was: "Let's make sure that the work for these installations — that we maximize the potential for Yukon companies." Some of the models they have looked at had a lot of steel fabrication, and the key that I had asked for is to make sure that we are looking and speaking with our local manufacturers so that it is a Yukon welcome installation that is built in the Yukon and we have as much economic impact, even on the buildout, as we possibly can. That work is still underway. We have some of the consultation completed, but we still have more work to be done.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Under capital spending, there is \$75,000 allotted to the Conrad historic site. Could the minister provide me with a bit more information on what that would be for?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are very excited. This work is culminating with a celebration — the work around Conrad is culminating with an event this summer. I believe that there is a potential date right now of July 20. It is also important to note that this week, when we honoured Art Johns, that much of his work — not much of his work, that amount of work would be incredible to go through — but he did provide key work, I should say, with the team around this work. It was very nice to hear one of our very well-known specialists in this field, Mr. Greg Hare, reflect on that opportunity he had to sit with Art around Conrad.

This is going to be an ongoing piece. I mean, this is very important work. It was done in concert with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, of course. And just to touch on a bit, for this year, it is a priority again in 2022: implementing the new Conrad historic site management plan, along with our existing plan.

So, the things that will continue — everything from key infrastructure that you need on-site, such as bathrooms, right through to — I have dug through contracts that we have let last year and work and it's even retaining walls and making sure that you have the proper geotechnical work done on-site for some of the different pathways, so that's the type of work.

We could give a breakdown. We could come back with a little bit more information on some of the specific pieces in there, but I think also, from my recollection, we do have some capacity that we support at Conrad. There was that ongoing commitment where we have individuals who are out there doing some key work as well. Those are some of the items. My officials may have a little more information.

Again, that is correct — jointly hiring a Carcross/Tagish First Nation citizen as part of the implementation of the management plan. It's key: making sure that we have folks from there on-site and completing some of the other little pieces of work. We look forward to celebrating it this summer, because it is such a key milestone. We didn't have a chance to do it, of course, over the last number of years.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It was recently announced that CanNor is investing \$300,000 to support marketing initiatives directed toward francophone audiences in Québec. Can the minister confirm if Tourism and Culture has a role in assisting with this or putting any money toward this initiative?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, we were sharing this information this week. We are very excited about this. CanNor is investing \$300,000 in this two-year project, with a further \$37,000 investment from the Government of Yukon. We are involved in this. Again, CanNor funding will support a six-week marketing campaign that leverages materials from Tourism Yukon's new French language marketing campaign for the francophone market in Québec. It will also promote the Yukon as both a winter and summer travel destination. There is help from our partners here at L'AFY in developing relationships with francophone tourism sector media, as well as participation in the tourism summit that is held in Montréal, Québec in the upcoming year. We think that this is a good place to be spending our marketing money.

Again, it is \$37,000 from us and \$300,000 from CanNor for that undertaking. It is exciting. If anyone has seen it on social media, there has been lots of praise and people are quite excited, not just with the French diaspora here, but with many folks across the country.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** In the budget, it states that there's going to be a visitor survey done and the dollar amount is \$175,000. When will this survey begin and where will the surveys be taking place? Will it be at airports and border crossings only?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The survey will take place from October of 2022 until September of 2023. I believe it's going to be at both land crossings and at airports, but I want to make sure that I — if there's any other additional ways that it will be shared, I will make sure. Yes, the survey is at the airport year-round and at highways, but it will only be the summer of 2023 that we'll be delivering those at highways.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** So, it's an annual — it starts this October and it ends next September, but it's only through the summer months; is that what I heard? Or is it this October that we're starting to track visitors coming in?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm sorry. I wasn't clear on that one. It's from the fall of this year, October, until September of 2023. Airports only in the winter — what I was touching on is that the highway surveys will only be provided in the summer of 2023. So, if you take that into consideration, it's basically a one-year program, but it would be next year that we would be doing the highway traffic with surveys.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The dollars allotted for creative and cultural industries strategy implementation is \$155,000. Is this strategy implementation on track and on time? What is the outcome you're looking for?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I just want to make a quick correction with the last question. The airport surveys are provided year-round. The highway surveys are only in the summer. I just wanted to make sure folks know that.

The goal of the cultural strategy is really — I can boil it down to one thing — about increasing the gross domestic product in that sector. What has happened is you take into consideration this country — across the country — and what you'll find out is we're not at the same GDP output when it comes to the cultural strategy. I'll give you a quick example on this one.

In 2018, our culture GDP was just under \$60 million, but it represented two percent of the total territorial economy. But Canada at the same time as a country — our average was much larger. It was \$56 billion, but it represented 2.7 percent. We think that there's some room to grow. Why do we think that? We think that because there are a couple of things at play. We have the highest per capita number of artisans in this sector in the country. We want to make sure that this strategy is a catalyst for those individuals to be able to produce more. We need to be able to export those goods in the different forms that they come. Of course, there is lots of work that we're doing here.

I think the member opposite touched on and said there was about \$150,000. Actually, I think approximately \$500,000 in total has been allocated to new initiatives starting in the fiscal

year 2022-23. This funding will help support the sector's recovery from the pandemic, which in turn contributes to the recovery and well-being of the territory.

There are 22 key actions. I think our comfort level is that we're on pace with this. I did have a document last week that came to me on one of them. We just wanted to make sure that we went back at a grassroots level to folks to make sure we're getting it right. We have three key items that we'll be moving out the door in the short term. We think that those are going to be key.

Of course, this was built by the sector — the strategy. I can remember that first day that we all came together and the previous minister was very committed to this.

We think it's a great way to diversify our economy. We feel we have the right tools in place, but I think that's because it was probably the most comprehensive conversation with this sector that ever happened and then that led into a blueprint that would help them meet the goals that they want to meet.

So, there is a number of things that we'll be monitoring this year to ensure that we continue to increase GDP output in this sector.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Under the heading "Heritage Sites Projects", it looks like it's a new allocation but only a small budget of \$15,000. Can the minister provide a breakdown of this amount and what it would do under "Heritage Sites Projects"?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll just touch on a few different items that we're working on within our historic sites. We work, of course, closely with a number of different groups, whether it's First Nation governments or municipalities and different communities on this. A number of our historic sites are co-managed by the Yukon and First Nations. We talked about Lansing Post this week, because the two individuals who have made that their home for decades were honoured in their contribution and working closely with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation.

The funds, for the most part, in this line item are to implement various management plans and to improve our interpretive signage. That's where we've continued to spend most of our funds out of that \$15,000.

There are some other projects. We are going to continue to be working on the Robinson Roadhouse. We're going to be doing a bit of stabilization work. The train crew house 2 — most of those renovations were complete. We're looking to provide an opportunity in 2022 for public use.

We also have our historic properties program — nine different projects in Dawson, Carcross, Whitehorse — that last year were funded for a total of \$64,000.

There are a number of pieces that we continue to work on. It does get a bit overwhelming for us when you think about — climate change has such a tough impact on some of these places, when you think about the amazing infrastructure that is at places like Herschel Island — but, again, looking at some of the challenges that come with erosion and with differences in our climate.

That \$15,000 that we talked about goes toward heritage sites identified under final agreements and undergoing



management planning. So, last year, the \$15,000 went to Conrad, and this year it is going to Dawshe.

I hope that helps a bit, but, again, so much to do and so important to maintain this history. I would say that I want to commend the folks there, because the work that has been done — Lansing Point — and then, again, I had that opportunity to be at Fort Selkirk last year, so I think that there has been — we continue to move and use our resources well and to stretch them as far as we can and also understanding from a capacity standpoint that, in many cases, it is very technical work when you are trying to repair period infrastructure. It is beyond the fact that you need, in some of these cases, red seal carpenters; you also need red seal carpenters who have a great understanding on how to do this specific type of work.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Yes, I do appreciate the work that I have seen at Fort Selkirk and at various other projects. It is amazing what they can accomplish — and also seeing my hometown, Dawson, transformed since I was a kid to what we have for our visitors today.

So, on that note, I will again thank all of the Department of Tourism and Culture for the work that they do in marketing, and I hope that we have a more than semi-normal tourism season coming up, because we do need those small businesses to prosper again with the influx of tourists.

So, thank you, minister, and thank you, Deputy Chair.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I just want to thank the member opposite. Thank you for the collaboration. I think that we can all be proud that the three of us have been working together on making sure that the border is open. I know that the member opposite has a long, professional history working in the sector, and so I appreciate the questions at all times and the professional approach that we have and share in the Legislative Assembly.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

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

**Ms. White:** I apologize to the Assembly. The bells seem to go faster than I remember them previously.

I would like to start off by asking: Does the Department of Tourism and Culture supply any funding for advertising to Holland America?

**Deputy Chair:** Unanimous consent is required for members to return to general debate on Vote 54.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Deputy Chair:** Unanimous consent has been granted. We will return to general debate.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will come back to the member opposite. This was a question that was asked earlier this week. The practice for our department has been to make sure that we get back. We did a ministerial statement this week and this was one of the questions, so I will make sure that we get back to clarify that. I don't want to misspeak and I am not sure, so I will come back to the House as soon as I can.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that from the minister. The reason why I am asking is that, like many others in this Chamber, I spend a fair amount of time in Carcross in the summertime. One thing that I have heard from lots of folks at the Carcross Commons is their concern about how short the visit is from folks who get off the train. The reason why I was asking about funding with Holland America is that, in previous years, there was actually advertising within the brochures or on the train itself that said to explore Carcross. I wanted to know if there had been conversations about extending that stay, because that had been brought forward to me by folks in Carcross.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, our officials have — we do joint marketing together. We put \$75,000 toward that endeavour. I think it's important to touch on quickly — when you think about passengers coming into Carcross, you have a number of different groups. Of course, you have individuals coming in on the train through White Pass. That joint marketing is focused on land tours. I got to know some of this work quite well over the last couple of months, just because of working on the border working group. So, you have both White Pass and Holland America, but you also have Alaska Coach Tours, which are also bringing people into the Yukon and into Carcross.

Of course, there are some folks in the Carcross area who have a lot of visitors. That's what I alluded to earlier this week when we had that discussion. Millions of dollars are spent in the area. Again, it's always an ongoing conversation to try to maximize the potential spend. I think as folks in the Assembly know, based on the discussions we had this week, for any of the members opposite who had endeavoured to understand that border issue, what is at play is it's down to minutes when they come in.

I agree with the member opposite in the sense that we always want to maximize the potential spend, but also as a private sector entity, they're putting together the opportunity to maximize the opportunity for their clients and for themselves. But there are always — when I'm back in Carcross having discussions — and the member opposite can direct me to certain organizations that may want me to have discussions with them to understand what that looks like.

We did have a meeting to meet with the local area committee not too long ago, which I touched on this week. We'll continue to be working with Carcross/Tagish First Nation, as well as business owners in that area. This week, I had a chance to meet with — to chat with the individuals who own the Caribou Hotel just to get an understanding of what they're going to be offering this year. I had made a commitment

to go down and spend some time there with some of those entrepreneurs to understand ways that we can continue to support and help them.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

I was specifically asking about the train, though. The reason I was specifically asking about the train is that it is a very short turnaround. The reason I was asking about it specifically is it has been highlighted by merchants, for example, from the Carcross Commons and folks who were even directly across from the train that often it is so quick that people are heading toward the washroom block. If they're lucky, they get a photo, and then they're back on that train.

So, if we are paying \$75,000 toward a joint advertising portion — just whether or not that discussion had been around about extending that. Following up on that, it has been highlighted in the past concerns around the burden of — I think probably “burden” is a fair term — maintenance of that washroom block by Carcross. Have there been discussions on how Yukon government will better support the community in all the work that they have to do? It is septic services. It's not attached to something. It is a lot of effort. So, if the minister can expand on that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I want to clarify. So, the \$75,000 that we spend with Holland America is focused on land tours. The train is White Pass — so, different companies. White Pass is actually — I think there is an appropriate conversation to have with White Pass, but White Pass is also almost — I think we're concluding in April; we're concluding an acquisition. So, there will be a new ownership group as well with White Pass, just to speak to that.

So, again, two separate companies. Our \$75,000 is going to land tours, and then the train is White Pass and a company, I think, based out of New York is about to acquire the ownership of White Pass, and that includes infrastructure in Skagway as well as the train — so, again, passing hands.

I'm just going to sit down. If you could clarify — I think there was another question that you were politely maybe asking about other infrastructure too.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. The last information that I could access was 2018, and it was Holland America was working with another company in Alaska for ownership. My point was that, to the best of my understanding and information I could find, is that White Pass & Yukon Route was actually a subsidiary of Holland America. If that's changing, that's great. It's good to know. But it's mostly if we're advertising — and advertising, for example, with White Pass & Yukon Route — what are we getting? We can have signs that say “Visit scenic Carcross”, but if a person only has 15 minutes to make it to the bathroom and take a photo, they're not seeing a lot.

So, that was my second question — about the bathrooms. So, in Carcross, there is a great bathroom block that was built, but one of the concerns that I have heard for multiple years is that the maintenance of that facility is arduous, and I wanted to know what the minister's conversations have been with the community and what support exists for the community in dealing with that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, again, I think that it is fair to say that if you meet with a local advisory council, it is going to be a continuing concern, and that was really about the fact that what was transpiring is that we were getting groups that were coming into the Yukon. They would pass — and things were happening, actually, in another province versus Carcross, but we had concerns and complaints where private sector buses were pulling into a British Columbia area and folks were getting out and using the washroom, and they were not using the washroom infrastructure that was there that BC would have had in place as outhouses.

What we have done is we now have a working group of assistant deputy ministers across government, because you are absolutely correct that there are multiple entities that play a role in this conversation, and it is something that we have heard in our work around our strategy and others, that we have to make sure that infrastructure is upgraded. To be open with you, I was having a discussion with the deputy minister this morning about this.

So, again, it is a key item and the First Nation has been concerned about it. The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes shared with me, as well, that the infrastructure that is there — we have also looked to open that earlier, but it needs better insulation and work, and I will look into that. We don't want the pipes to freeze earlier in the season, but it is important to have that in place. So, again, this is work that is ongoing. We know that it is key. There are lots of concerns.

I think that if anybody would know in this Assembly, the member opposite would — about Montana Mountain — different views in the world on that — where infrastructure can go. It seems like a very simple thing, but it is quite complex, and it is always difficult when you don't have a municipality there, but you are working with multiple departments. It is something that I have asked our team to make progress on. And certainly, as we do, I can come back and share, and I think that the member opposite is very dialled-in to what happens in Carcross and probably will know as quickly as I know or will be monitoring conversations in that community.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. Actually, initially, it was the twice previous Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes Kevin Barr who championed getting that facility open for the time the first buses arrived, because that had not been the habit before that. It was work that Kevin did to make sure that, when folks got to Carcross, they had a place to go. That was important.

In 2014, for the first time, there was a tourism-related project for a resource access road program. That was an upgrade to the Montana Mountain road itself. I am not sure if the Jeep company will be running this year, but there is a Jeep company out of Skagway that does tours on Montana Mountain. Mountain biking is something that obviously happens there and, of course, there is a relationship, like the minister said, where there are lots of different perspectives.

Has there been a conversation with the First Nation about possible road upgrades for Montana Mountain for tourism access?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Not that I am aware of. I can endeavour to speak with our officials. It is not something that has come up to date. I have had other members of the Assembly reach out to me with concerns about the state of potential tourism use roads. I just replied to the Member for Kluane about potentially — hopefully, he is getting the letter soon that has been signed off about an opportunity to look at these different types of programs.

Again, no, I have to say that in my dialogue with the lands folks in Carcross, there has not been a discussion about upgrades to that road.

**Ms. White:** I would urge the minister to possibly have those conversations.

Yukon is in an interesting position, because in the last decade, we have seen a huge uptake in actually active tourism adventures, I would say, when looking at mountain biking. The City of Whitehorse has more than 300 kilometres of single track within its city limits — probably extensively more than that. It used to be 300, but it's probably more than that. Trails are built in partnership with First Nations. They are built in partnership with the City of Whitehorse and others. We have seen beautiful work done by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation on Montana Mountain in Carcross, but then we could also go to another part of the territory, such as toward Dawson City and the work that is being done by Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth.

Has the department looked into doing any kind of advertising for Yukon as a mountain bike destination?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think those comments are well said. We're in the unique situation in that the deputy minister sitting here with me today, of course, was a key individual in that work to see Montana Mountain with Jane Koepke and Derek Crowe and drove that. I remember those early days in his tiny office in the Dana Naye Ventures building and looking at the plans that were there and the young individuals that were being mentored to do that work.

We see the value of course in that. We have been supportive of what has happened with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I have had further discussions with Selkirk First Nation. I agree; I think that building infrastructure, having the infrastructure in place in our communities is a great anchor for a different type of tourism product. The conversations with Selkirk First Nation were very encouraging. There is good opportunity there to do similar projects. I look at things as the — you look at the campground that has been under-utilized on the Pelly River right across from what we would call the "Tatchun Centre." We think that there's a real opportunity to be working. That's why I have been mandated to do this trail development work and we're very focused on it.

We work with our partners to highlight this. I think part of our thoughts are also though that we want to get more infrastructure in place. But I do agree. I think that the Yukon — the demographic that we're looking at is the right type of visitor to meet the strategy that we roll out. We think that those individuals like to spend. We think that they understand that sustainable tourism is important.

My officials also wanted me to share that the TCMF does support mountain bike tour operators like Boréale, so we are

spending information there. We again feature mountain biking on our webpage and social media. Seeing the webpage really doesn't give credit to the level of digital infrastructure that's there — very, very significant investment into our online presence.

We agree with the member opposite. We think there needs to be more. It's just such a great holistic approach to having our youth get out there and undertake these activities and get the pride in building this infrastructure and having it as an anchor for tourism throughout the Yukon.

We're going out and we're having those discussions. The communities that are interested — the ones that are showing us their interest — are who we are going to work with first. I think, as we've seen, more communities continue to get excited after they see the success of what has happened in Carcross and in Dawson City with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth.

**Ms. White:** So, just building on that, I spent time in Keno and have said, "You have all these old mining roads. If you wanted to expand your tourism reach, look at building a mountain bike trail." Of course, it goes for others. I have been really lucky to be able to do coaching courses in almost every community in the territory to go and ride bikes with kids and just to give people that sense of ownership. But, to be honest, mountain bikers are a strange bunch. They will go. You build a trail in Ross River and they will go just for fun because then they can say that they were there.

There is also, I think, a real opportunity to look at expanding winter tourism when it comes to biking. As it stands, the mountain bike community has started to groom single-track trails in the winter. In 2009, I was probably one of 11 or so people with a fat bike and now there are hundreds. There is almost no shoulder season for mountain biking in the territory anymore. I think there is real potential there for investment and promotion and I look forward to that.

I'm going to just really veer. I want to go toward archives. In some of the information that we were given during the budget briefing, it says that the Yukon Archives elevator is not functioning still, and it says from September 2018 to present. Can the minister maybe share with us what the problem is at Yukon Archives with the elevator and why it hasn't been able to be repaired in four years?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Our elevator is now fixed.

**Ms. White:** That's fantastic news. Is there a reason why it took so long to be repaired? Again, in the budget document that we were handed, when the budget was tabled, it said 2018 to present. Is there a reason why it took just about four years to be repaired?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll endeavour to find out. My experience in working in the private sector overseeing buildings has been two or three different issues when it comes to elevators in the Yukon.

One is having the proper technical expertise depending on the type that you've used. Sometimes, they have subcontractors that work within the territory that are readily available to fix. Sometimes, depending on which company you bought your elevator from, you have to fly individuals in. That's one piece.

Secondly, sometimes — even pre-COVID — there are supply chain issues on particular pieces. I know that some of the buildings that we know that are used by private companies here — we had, in my previous work, lots of challenges. That has been the case in the past, but I will endeavour to find out exactly — it's usually technical expertise from time to time or a particular issue or item. I know that time frame is just not appropriate — I agree — but let me get back about whether there is anything I have missed there. There has to be something for that length of time that I can share with you, but I will find out. Maybe we can bring it back when we have the Department of Highways and Public Works back here later on this spring.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate the answer, between September 2018 and, let's say, March 2020, that was before the pandemic shut everything down. We could even say February 2020. That is a long time to have an elevator — again, it is a Yukon government building and it is listed as an item in the Tourism and Culture budget. I can bring it up in Highways and Public Works, but it is listed here.

Something that has been an interesting conversation in the last number of years is — this is one of those things where it is going to be the responsibility of multiple departments, but because we're told that this government doesn't have a silo approach and that everyone works together, I am going to raise it here because I think that it is a Tourism and Culture issue, and that is the lack of outhouse resources. For example, on the Takhini River, everyone knows the route where you put into the Takhini River. You go through the jaws of death or, as some of my friends like to say, the gums of despair. There isn't an outhouse on either the put-in or take-out side, which means that the woods around that area are less than pleasant.

What kind of work does the Department of Tourism and Culture do with Highways and Public Works as far as identifying areas that need outhouses?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I alluded to it earlier, but we have a working group that is departmental on this topic. It is at the ADM level and has multiple departments that have to be brought in. The member opposite is absolutely correct that it is everything from Tourism to Highways and Public Works to Community Services at that table.

There is a number of things. Sometimes we have high visitation areas that we have to focus on. That might be where we already have infrastructure that is owned or managed by the territory where we have to look at these particular items and we have to prioritize.

I can tell you that in the last two years, one of the positive things that did occur during COVID was that we had Yukoners getting out there more than ever in their own backyard, and that led to, as well, private sector entities that do particular types of guiding. They go out and they do canoe trips or they do canoe lessons. They were reaching out to us, saying: "We are putting in here on this particular river and you need to have infrastructure in place here." That is a challenge for us. We worked very quickly across departments, and in some cases, we put in temporary porta potties so that we could deal with the situation. But, as folks know, I don't think that it is unfair to say that it takes a little bit of time and sometimes multiple fiscal

years to be able to identify, permit, budget, execute on some of this type of infrastructure. There are a number of different things that we look at.

I would say to the member opposite that I try to be as prepared as possible. Come today, I may not have specifics on some of these sites, but we will make a note of the Takhini site and I can have that opportunity to find out what's happening there with either enhanced or new infrastructure or if it is on our priority list at this particular time. Again, it is that discussion back and forth with the private sector. It's amazing that you have this beautiful backyard that we all have and they are providing a service and there is commerce being done and sometimes we are not aware of that until they flag a need for us.

**Ms. White:** It is always so mortifying in here when we forget to hit "mute".

Another question that I want to go toward is to the Whitehorse trolley, actually. Can the minister just confirm who owns the roundhouse station and the Whitehorse trolley?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This is an odd one because people would think it is Tourism. Highways and Public Works controls the roundhouse in the sense that they look after the piece infrastructure. I think that it is on a multiple-year lease at this particular time — I think that it is three years — and it is leased to MacBride Museum. That is what I am aware of at this time, but it is probably a good question for Highways and Public Works, and we can flag that so that information is available when they are in for general debate.

**Ms. White:** I do. I would appreciate that flagged. It was under this government in, I believe, 2019 where the funding stopped for that. Of course, there was a recent arson — well, recent, I guess, is relative — on that railcar, which is a real disappointment. I'm just wondering who was responsible for that piece of infrastructure. Then just highlighting that it's a loss. It was a loss when the trolley service shut down, but having that engine itself be set on fire was a loss.

So, with that, I'm sure I could ask a lot more questions about a lot of more varied things, but right now, I guess what I'll do is urge the Minister of Tourism and Culture to work with his counterparts, identify high-usage areas even for locals where outhouses would be an asset in all ways, and look at installing those, please.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, we'll flag some of these items that fall under Highways and Public Works, but I will share with the member opposite that Highways and Public Works is nearing completion of their rest area assessment for outhouses. I think there will be key information on prioritization of that infrastructure coming in the near future.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture?

Seeing none, we'll proceed to line-by-line debate.

**Mr. Dixon:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 54, Department of Tourism and Culture, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$32,510,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$3,660,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$36,170,000 agreed to**

**Department of Tourism and Culture agreed to**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Community Services — continued**

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and thanks to the minister for the opportunity to address the Community Services budget.

I would like to start today on the topic of the Canada Games and the bid for the 2027 games. Can the minister provide, to begin with, a brief overview of where we are in the bid process — what we have at this stage? Based on public information, the territory has submitted a bid document to the committee and it's currently being reviewed.

Can the minister update us on that process, where it's at, and what has been submitted so far?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. I can say that Piers McDonald is the

chair of the 2027 Canada Winter Games Bid Committee. In addition to that position, the bid committee includes representatives from the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government, as well as a number of key leaders who represent the Yukon and who can provide a strong vision, strategic management, and diverse perspectives. We have started the bid process. We have submitted our technical information. That is now in progress and the full bid will be due in October. In November 2022, we will find out who the bid winner is.

So, basically, we have submitted our technical bid. There was a group who came up this week to have a look at our city. From what I have heard, they were really impressed with our facilities and our ability to host. It's looking good, but we have some more hurdles to go through over the coming months as we refine our bid for the final bid submission.

**Mr. Dixon:** The document that has been submitted so far is the technical information package — the plan for the territory to have the infrastructure in place to host the games. That is what the committee will be reviewing. Is the minister able to share the technical package that was submitted to the committee?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have a 270-page report and it has a few key elements. There is a summary of the proposed approach to the games, a list of challenges, a venues map, and a venue standards and descriptions. Those are basically what it is. It is a summary, a list of challenges, a venues map, and a venue standards and descriptions contained in the 270-page document. This is the bid committee's report. It has been submitted to the Canada Games. I am not sure about the ability to release that publicly. I will endeavour to find out whether I can for the member opposite.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's commitment to look into whether or not that can be released. I would assume, given that it is a public document and that it has been submitted by the Yukon government, at least as a partner in this, that it would be ATIPP-able, but I think that it would be a lot easier for all of us if the minister was simply able to share the document so that we could see it.

The reason why, of course, many are interested is because it will include the early plans for what infrastructure is needed in the Yukon to host the games. There is a range of infrastructure that is required for games of this nature. While there is a range, there are a few big-ticket items that stand out as being needed. We know, for instance, from recent interviews that the committee is looking for a new hockey arena in Whitehorse and that it will, I believe, require seating of about 3,500 spectators. That is a not insignificant capital expenditure for the games. So, obviously that is eye-catching. There is obviously the athletes' village as well. Those are the kinds of things that the Yukon government will be needing to think about from a budgetary perspective in the next year or two.

What I would like is if the minister can provide some sense of what the big-ticket items in that package include and how they would be funded.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There are actually a few issues — the member is absolutely correct — and I thank him for his questions this afternoon.

So, we are looking right now — it is actually the City of Whitehorse — well, in order to host the games, we need four ice sheets. In 2007, we had four ice sheets in the City of Whitehorse. Since then, one of our ice sheets has been demolished and so we are now down to three. In order to host the games, we need four. The City of Whitehorse has also identified a fourth ice sheet as an important project for it, in terms of future growth of the city. So, yes, a fourth ice sheet is needed in the City of Whitehorse. The 3,500 seating capacity is what the bid committee has hit on as the need for this facility. That will also allow it to host the opening and closing ceremonies. Otherwise, we will have to find some place to host the opening and closing ceremonies. In the past, I think that has been done in a tent. So, we're looking to perhaps avoid that by having a proper arena with the capacity that would be able to host that facility.

The member opposite is absolutely correct. There is an athletes' village required. We're looking at that. Those are the two biggest ticket items. There is also a host-choice sports. We have an opportunity to choose two host-choice sports from a list in addition to the mandatory sports. We're looking at that. That's another part of this component.

The last piece is the long-track speed skating. We're asking the Canada Games Society to actually consider letting us use Fort St. John. Fort St. John has an absolutely world-class long-track speed skating facility. It's one of very few in North America. Long-track speed skaters have been habitually disappointed in Whitehorse. When we did it, it was so cold and then we had other times when the ice didn't set properly. So, we want to make sure that long-track speed skating, which is of course an integral sport within the games, be allowed to be hosted down in Fort St. John at this amazing facility. We'll see what they have to say about that. That will save us quite a bit of money on the bid as well. We won't have to actually build some sort of long-track speed skating oval somewhere in the city. There's a savings to us and also an efficiency with this absolutely spectacular facility in Fort St. John.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's overview there — very useful.

Earlier this week or last week, the minister was quoted in the *Whitehorse Star* suggesting that the overall budget for the games would be \$100 million or more. Can the minister provide some explanation for where that number comes from and how that estimate has been determined?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I was pressed several times for an estimated cost for the games. I said it may cost as much as \$100 million. That is a figure that has been bandied about, but at this stage, it's so early, we really don't know. If you look at 2007, we had the Canada Games facility. It was \$45 million. We built an athletes' village back then. It was about \$35 million. You're up to \$80 million in 2007. It seemed like, with inflation, \$100 million was in the pocket. But quite frankly, it's a "may". We have no idea really what are the cost of the games. It may be \$50 million; it may be \$150 million; I'm not sure. \$100 million seemed like a reasonable estimate to answer a reporter's question, but as I said, I did put a caveat in there that this is purely an estimate and we will see what

happens when we actually get into the more detailed planning of these games to actually see what the cost of these facilities and the cost of actually running the games are.

As far as raising money, we are currently looking to raise money with corporate sponsors across the country. We have done this before fairly successfully. We'll be turning to our local business community, we'll be turning to the federal government, and we will be looking at other sources of funding as they become available.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, I'll start then with the new ice rink. Does the technical package contemplate a new stand-alone arena? Or is it an addition of a second sheet to Takhini Arena?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** They're looking at several options. I haven't actually seen the full options paper. I think there is more work being done to refine these.

What we have said in this technical package is that we need a fourth ice sheet. The City of Whitehorse, YG officials, and the bid committee are looking at scoping out what exactly that will look like. We don't know yet.

**Mr. Dixon:** With regard to the athletes' village, as far as the minister is concerned, what sort of discussions have been had around what the athletes' village would look like? Would they be hosted in a hotel? Would it be a new free-standing building? Would it be a temporary facility?

Previously, there was the construction of — in terms of residences, there was a construction of units at what was then Yukon College, now Yukon University. What sort of facilities are needed for the athletes' village and dormitory?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Well, similar to 2007, we need a village that will host up to 2,000 people. We need access to a proper kitchen and some recreational facilities so that the children, when they come up, will have an opportunity to actually enjoy some downtime together.

The bid committee has ranked Yukon University as the most favourable site for the athletes' village and is working with the university board on the details and requirements. But there have been other sites that have been identified. We're working through with our primary site. It was used before and may be suitable to use again.

Again, this is in the bid committee's hands. I will take the final recommendations as they come to me. I haven't seen them yet.

**Mr. Dixon:** How will the choice sports be determined — the two additional sports that are chosen that are unique to a games? How will those be chosen and does the minister have any indication about what those sports will be at this point?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The host society has the opportunity to choose two choice sports from a list in addition to the mandatory sports that have been long-established. Based on local interest and sport governing bodies, as well as facilities, the bid committee has chosen freestyle skiing and sport climbing. Discussions are ongoing about how to integrate some Arctic sports and Dene games into the mix.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that answer. With regard to the long-track speed skating and the intent to include that sport hosted in Fort St. John, would athletes then be required to come

to the Yukon for opening and closing ceremonies or would they be hosted remotely?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is very important that our athletes be part of the actual games experience, so we will incorporate them into the games experience here in Whitehorse. We will then take them down to the Fort St. John facility. They will do their competitions there and then come back to be reintegrated into the community that is the Canada Games.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the answer from the minister. Just to close the loop then on the timing, the Canada Games society has received their technical information. They have visited the territory and presumably toured some of the infrastructure. What does the timeline from here until October look like? I will start with that.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Sorry, could I ask the member to please repeat the question? I missed some details as I was getting this note.

**Mr. Dixon:** My question is about the timeline now. We are at the stage where the technical information package has been submitted. The Canada Games society — well, there's a question for the minister: Who came to Whitehorse this week or last week to tour the territory and our infrastructure? What steps need to occur between now and October in the process?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Canada Games Council was up here this week reviewing our town and the facilities that are existing in Whitehorse. The final bid details and all the details on the facilities and the sports are due in September. Then it will be evaluated and reviewed. The final decision to make an award or not will be made by November. That is the current timeline.

**Mr. Dixon:** Just to reiterate, to make sure that I heard that correctly: The final bid is due in September and a decision to award it will be made in November. The minister is indicating that this is correct.

Is the minister aware of any other community or province that is also bidding?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As far as I know, it is ours to lose.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that.

What would happen if, in September, the council determined that our bid was insufficient?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Right now, that is really the process that we are going through right now, so it is to get the technical bid together. They are going to review it and provide us full feedback and see if there are any gaps that need to be filled in and things that need to be addressed. Provided that passes muster, we will have a good sense about what is needed or not; maybe we're already golden with the commitment to build a fourth ice sheet.

That's what we're waiting for. If we didn't meet muster, then the Canada Games would have to try to find another host city willing to take on the games.

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

What is the financial expectation for the City of Whitehorse between now and 2027? Will they be required to invest in the physical infrastructure? Will they be expected to put up the cost of operations for the games? What is the overall

picture in terms of what the City of Whitehorse can anticipate being asked to provide financially?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Canada Games has a cost-sharing model that they worked out over the years. The estimated cost to host the games — that would be like the cost of putting it on, the marketing, and all the rest of it — is about \$35 million — round figure. The City of Whitehorse would be expected to chip in about \$3 million in in-kind donations toward the capital. That would be bleachers, beds, that type of thing — so the material needed to run the games.

Then of course there's the capital cost outside of that and that will be for the fourth ice sheet, et cetera. There would be some expectation that they might contribute to that. We haven't finished the negotiations on that part yet.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, presumably, the City of Whitehorse will be left owning the physical assets that are constructed, for instance, the fourth ice sheet. First of all, is that correct? Is the government anticipating that the City of Whitehorse will end up owning the fourth ice sheet? Will it not belong to the Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, absolutely. The City of Whitehorse has expressed not only an interest in this facility, but they would be responsible for running and paying for the cost of running it, much as they do the Canada Games Centre right now.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

**The following documents were filed March 31, 2022:**

35-1-61

Motion No. 320, letter re (dated March 31, 2022) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (McLean)

35-1-62

Investigations at Jack Hulland Elementary School, letter re (dated March 31, 2022) from Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education, to Annette King, Child and Youth Advocate (McLean)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 60

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, April 4, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Monday, April 4, 2022 — 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 made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 369, notice of which was given last Thursday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is out of order. In addition, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as they are outdated: Motions No. 36, 37, 69, and 70, standing in the name of the Member for Klwane.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome some guests here today for a tribute and a ministerial statement: Katie Swales, Partners for Children program and the Network for Healthy Early Human Development; Clayton Keats, vice-chair of the Yukon Child Care Board; and Sophie Partridge, secretary of the Yukon Child Care Board. Thank you very much for coming today.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This afternoon I would like everyone to welcome my mom, Susan Mostyn, who is up here visiting the territory for the first time since the pandemic hit in 2020. I also would like to welcome Edmund Patton, who is a decades-old friend and retired director of the National Aviation Museum in Ottawa and who provided guidance to me on my very first front-page story in the *Ottawa Citizen* so many decades ago in the late 1980s.

Finally, I would like to welcome my brother Peter Mostyn, who you might know through the old-timers hockey or the Emergency Medical Services, and yes, Mr. Speaker — it pains me to say it, but he is my younger brother.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of National Dental Hygienists Week**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge National Dental Hygienists Week. The month of April is Oral Health Month, and an important part of this celebration is National Dental Hygienists Week, celebrated annually during the first week of April.

While we are focusing on COVID-19 and how to keep our communities healthy, we cannot forget that maintaining good health includes protecting our oral health. This week's theme, "Oral Health for Total Health," reminds all of us that taking care of our mouth, our teeth, and our gums positively impacts our overall physical and mental well-being. Taking care of our teeth requires more than brushing, flossing, or visiting your dentist regularly. We need to understand the risk factors that can affect our oral and overall health. The major risk factors include an unhealthy diet that is high in sugar, tobacco use, the harmful use of alcohol, or poor oral hygiene.

The good news is that most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated in their early stages. Dental hygienists and dental therapists are our health partners, and they play an important role in keeping us healthy at any age.

This week's focus is on the importance of maintaining good oral health practices and helping Yukoners understand the role and the importance of dental hygienists. Dental hygienists and dental therapists are registered health professionals who work in a variety of settings with people of all ages to prevent oral disease and oral health issues that they bring.

Dental hygienists and dental therapists are essentially primary health care providers who are part of health care teams that are needed by every Yukoner. They examine our mouth, our head, and our neck at every appointment and offer preventive treatments, such as scaling and root planing and dental sealants and fluoride.

In particular, I would like to acknowledge today the work of the Yukon children's dental program and the team of dental hygienists and dental therapists and the services that they provide in schools throughout the Yukon Territory.

If your dental hygienist has made a real difference in your life, either before or since the pandemic began, consider nominating them as a dental hygienist superhero at [dentalhygienecanada.ca](http://dentalhygienecanada.ca).

I invite all Yukoners to join my colleagues and me this week in showing our appreciation to all dental hygienists and dental therapists in the territory, even if we don't like to go and visit them.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the work done by dental hygienists here in the Yukon during National Dental Hygienists Week. Dental hygienists play an important role in preventive maintenance for your teeth. It's important that Yukoners understand the importance of maintaining good oral health practices and also be aware that there is only so much they can do themselves. There are some things that are best handled by dental hygienists.

Dental hygienists do more than just clean your teeth. They work with you to determine appropriate actions to meet your oral health needs and to keep your teeth clean throughout the year. They may also offer support for healthy lifestyle choices, such as nutrition counselling, oral cancer screening, and smoking cessation.

Thank you to all of our dental hygienists for the role you play in the dental health, and overall health, of Yukoners.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Dental Hygienists Week during Oral Health Month.

Teeth are part of our body. Oral health care is part of health care. These statements seem obvious, but they're worth saying, because until we treat our teeth as essential, Yukoners will not have access to the health care they need. The Yukon NDP believe so strongly in the importance of access to oral health that we included it as a commitment in our 2021 election platform and then included it as a condition of our support for this government.

Today, we're thanking a group of people who have made their careers about supporting good oral health: dental hygienists. They are registered health professionals who work in a variety of settings with people of all ages. Their work ranges from cleanings to preventive treatments to education. My personal favourite experience with a dental hygienist was the time when one told me to think of her as my "personal trainer for teeth brushing".

Dental hygienists create the foundation of good oral health. Their hard work has prevented many cases of gum disease, cavities, and all the health consequences that those entail, including lung disease, diabetes, and heart disease.

Thank you to all of you and all that you do to keep us healthy.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Elizabeth Kyikavichik, early childhood educator**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, today I have the pleasure of paying tribute on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to one of Yukon's most beloved early childhood educators, Elizabeth Kyikavichik. Elizabeth is a Vuntut Gwitchin elder who operates a family home for toddlers and preschool-aged children in Old Crow. Elizabeth is 81 years old.

Trinin Tsul Zheh, which means "home of little children" in Gwich'in, is the only licensed early learning and childcare program in the community, making it the most northern licensed program in the Yukon. "Grandma", as the kids call her, opened her day home over 30 years ago and some of those children from 30 years ago are now parents of little ones in the program today. Elizabeth understands how children thrive developmentally in engaging learning environments before entering school, learning to communicate their feelings and describe the world around them. At the "home of little children", Elizabeth embraces both traditional and contemporary approaches, incorporating traditional stories, Gwich'in language lessons, access to traditional foods, and encouragement of on-the-land experiences.

Recently, one very excited little girl showed off her homemade stick-and-skipping-rope fishing pole to her mom because she was so excited to be fishing like "Grandma". Elizabeth also knows the importance of connecting with

caregivers, providing comfort and assurance for new parents, and sharing feedback on their child's progress while they are learning parenting skills themselves.

Elizabeth is making remarkable contributions to the families of Old Crow and to language revitalization, sharing the Gwich'in language and culture with the community's youngest, most influential learners.

I spoke to Elizabeth this morning, and she had the children speak to me in Gwich'in. She also spoke to me about self-care and traditional practices on the land and how important it is to take care of our well-being.

Mr. Speaker, with this tribute today, I raise my hands up in gratitude and appreciation for Elizabeth Kyikavichik, an inspirational early learning childhood educator.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** The Yukon NDP and the Yukon Party are delighted to add our voices in celebration of Elizabeth Kyikavichik, or Elizabeth Kaye, as she is fondly known. You only have to Google her name to be able to see how many other folks celebrate her many accomplishments as a language teacher, storyteller, artist, and an amazing beader. I am fortunate enough to own a beautiful pair of her beaded gloves.

About a year ago, I was sitting at Elizabeth's kitchen table, drinking tea and listening to stories, along with her son Edward and the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. We were laughing and celebrating her and Edward's recent days of ice fishing. I knew I was sitting with someone special, but you wouldn't hear it from her directly. Elizabeth makes you feel at home. It's her soft voice and her laughter. It's so easy to understand how kids are drawn to her. For many, many years, she has been in charge of the daycare, and it is through her that so many young learners started their journey of learning Gwich'in.

Elizabeth is a champion of the Gwich'in language and young minds. She knows that language is memory, that it holds intricate knowledge and information that has been kept safe for thousands of years. She knows that language is identity. It is the essence of who her people are and how it shapes their world view. She believes that by using the language, a person's connection to the land grows stronger and that speaking the language makes you spiritually, mentally, and emotionally healthier. She says that Gwich'in is more accurate and it helps translate exactly what needs to be said in a precise way, far more so than English does.

A big thank you to Elizabeth. I do look forward to sitting down and having tea again at her kitchen table in Old Crow soon.

*Applause*

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

### **TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a Yukon Party press release, dated March 30, 2021, entitled "The Yukon Party will bring in a made-in-Yukon carbon pricing system."

**Mr. Cathers:** I have a few documents for tabling today. The first is a letter addressed to the residents of the Lake Laberge riding, dated April 7, 2021, signed by the then-Deputy Premier, the Member for Porter Creek South.

I also have for tabling the conclusion of the assessment by YESAB of the Stevens Quarry development project, 2012-0124, recommending that the project be allowed to proceed.

Finally, I have for tabling the decision document issued by the Yukon government regarding the Stevens Quarry development, YESAB file 2012-0124, rejecting the recommendation that the project be allowed to proceed. The date on that document is February 8, 2013.

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling a letter from Autism Yukon to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to honour the election promise his predecessor made to residents of the Lake Laberge riding in a letter dated April 7, 2021, including the clear promise to “maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry”.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of the Department of Highways and Public Works 2022-23 capital budget to improve maintenance of the Kusawa Lake road and the Aishihik Lake road.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to dedicate a portion of the Department of Highways and Public Works 2022-23 capital budget to upgrade the gravel stretches on the Champagne access road with BST.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to use its 2022-23 budget to build turning lanes at the entrances of the Takhini and Mendenhall subdivisions.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement universal dental coverage by including dental care services under the Yukon *Health Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with youth, parents, educators, and community experts to develop clear policies regarding the safety and well-being of children in schools, including a process to report incidents of violence and sexualized violence.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Universal childcare

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Today, I rise to acknowledge the first anniversary of universal childcare in the Yukon. I would like to recognize the incredible work, dedication, and achievement of the Department of Education’s Early Learning and Child Care unit, who have led the implementation of our universal childcare model and many initiatives to help improve access, quality, inclusivity, and affordability. With our government’s initial investment of \$25 million for the 2021-22 year, licensed program operators enthusiastically participated in the new Yukon early learning and childcare funding program, immediately providing affordable early learning and childcare to Yukon families.

The federal government also committed to bolstering our universal childcare system through two funding agreements, contributing an additional \$53.4 million over five years. Costing less than \$10 a day on average, in the first year, families automatically saved up to \$8,400 for each child registered full time in a licensed program.

In addition, we created 200 new spaces for children this year, including new programs in Whitehorse, Dawson City, and Ross River.

A few short weeks ago, I rose in the Assembly to provide an update on how we are making investments in early childhood educators, or ECEs, to help improve the quality of care and education that Yukon children receive. This year, we provided over 60 post-secondary bursaries for ECEs and developed the accelerated early learning professional development pathway program at Yukon University and invested in enhancing Yukon University course offerings in rural communities.

ECEs in the Yukon are now the highest paid in the country, have access to a comprehensive benefits plan, and can upgrade their level of education while working in the territory.

In addition, we launched a fund for developing enhanced, culturally rich early learning programs and environments that incorporate Yukon First Nation ways of knowing and doing, play-spaced outdoor and experiential learning, francophone language and culture, and more. Forty-three licensed programs and 225 individual early learning educators have participated in the first five months of this program.

We know that COVID-19 has had an impact on the childcare system, and access to early learning and childcare proved to be vital throughout the pandemic. To support childcare providers during the pandemic, we provided additional funds to enhance on-site cleaning, covered family

fees and impacted operator costs during the July wave, and provided rapid antigen tests for staff and families.

The first year of the Yukon's universal childcare program has been very successful and it could not have been possible without the collaboration and engagement with the Government of Canada, Yukon First Nation governments, early learning and childcare operators, educators, and partners.

The future of early learning in the Yukon is bright and that means the future of our territory is too. I look forward to seeing Yukon's youngest learners continue to thrive and contribute to a better future for our territory as a whole.

**Mr. Dixon:** The Yukon Party Official Opposition agrees that childcare is important to many Yukon families and that the program implemented last year has indeed helped many Yukon families. Childcare was a very important issue in the last territorial election and all three political parties brought forward unique policy approaches to childcare and early learning in our respective platforms; however, I would like to express my concern about why this is the subject of a ministerial statement today. Ministerial statements are normally reserved for new policies or emerging issues that the ministers would like to address, and of course, this is not a new policy. We are all very familiar with this policy. It has been in place since last year. The ministerial statement even contained a reference to a ministerial statement from a few weeks ago, which explains how repetitive some of these ministerial statements have become.

As we said last year, while the Liberals' childcare plan does have some merits, it is not truly universal as it does not cover children who are not in daycare, who are on a wait-list, or whose parents utilize other types of care. If it's not available to all Yukon children, then it's not truly universal.

Over the last few weeks and months, Mr. Speaker, we have heard a number of organizations raise serious concerns about the availability of supports for Yukon students. Those groups include: the Child and Youth Advocate, Autism Yukon, the Speech Language pathologists association, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, and the Association of Education Professionals as well as the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees, as well as several others. So, we had hoped that the minister may have used the opportunity to address some of these pressing concerns that are facing the department today instead of celebrating a policy that is one year old.

When she has a chance to respond, I hope that the minister will provide us an update on the serious concerns with regard to the supports for Yukon children that have been raised by these numerous lists of organizations that have expressed very serious concerns and we hope that the minister will use that opportunity to provide us an update on those issues.

**Ms. White:** Universal childcare has been a topic of importance for the Yukon NDP long before my time and remained a focus of ours until it finally became a reality. I thank the minister for her statement. I was incredibly pleased to finally see universal childcare come to the Yukon. It is a huge

step in supporting Yukon families and education and goes a long way to recognizing early childhood education for what it is: education.

The first time I heard someone ask directly about moving early childhood education from Health to Education was the French language debate during the 2016 territorial election. The concept blew my mind because, of course, this was the route to make early learning accessible to all children because access to education is a right under the *Education Act*. We appreciate and acknowledge that the move from the Department of Health and Social Services to the Department of Education was monumental and was exactly what many early years professionals and other advocates had been asking for, for a great number of years.

We echo our thanks for all of those on the ground and on the front lines of early childhood education. Unfortunately, that seems to be where the good news ends. The government loves to talk about their commitment to high-quality education, yet early years professionals have been asking for mandatory professional development of their choice for years and their requests have gone unheard and unanswered. Why is it that the government feels that professional development is necessary for some educators, but not for all educators?

There is also the topic of spaces. Over the last years, we have seen daycares and preschools opening in all manner of buildings, scattered throughout Whitehorse and the territory, but what we haven't seen are many purpose-built preschools. Those who have chosen to go this route because it is better for children to have a purpose-built space, both inside and outside, have been stuck paying the building costs out of pocket. How many operators of early learning facilities does the minister think are both able and willing to mortgage their own homes to build new centres?

The government is currently in the process of building one new school and planning the replacement of another. Will this involve purpose-built early years facilities attached to both new elementary schools? Is the government working with programs that don't fully meet their criteria of full time, but are valuable to families, such as Purple Stew or Chickadees? When will these families and early learners benefit from universal access?

Families are unique and, as such, have unique needs. If early childhood education is indeed to be universal, what supports is the government offering to shift workers and other Yukoners who don't have nine-to-five jobs? What is the government doing to incentivize longer and more flexible hours to support these families?

Finally, will the minister commit to sitting down with early years educators and listen to what additional supports they need?

Mr. Speaker, we want to watch Yukon's youngest learners thrive but believe that the mark has been missed in some areas. We agree that this has been a big first year, but there is much more that needs to be done to make this program truly universal.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I thank my colleagues from across the way for their comments today. I am really pleased to be able

to bring an update to Yukoners. I think that is what ministerial statements are there to do.

This is a historic moment in our Yukon history in terms of the amount of investment that has been made to early learning and childcare in the Yukon and is certainly a commitment that our government has made. I know that I hear my colleagues across the way saying that this is important to them too. As Yukoners, I think that we are united on that front.

So, I thought that on the one-year anniversary of the implementation of universal childcare and moving toward quality, accessible, and inclusive early learning and childcare, it would be a good opportunity to celebrate this with Yukoners.

The Yukon is leading the country and providing high-quality childcare at an affordable price for families. In fact, according to the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, Yukon is Canada's new leader in early learning and childcare. Our universal childcare program definitely ticked all the boxes to address affordability, quality, and accessibility.

Is there more work to be done? Absolutely. That is why we are continuing to be committed to building this program to meet the needs of Yukoners.

I note what the Leader of the Official Opposition has just stated around their platform for early learning and childcare. A simple tax credit to families, as opposed to other jurisdictions and other parties, would not have addressed these areas. I know that, as I have stated, we still have a lot of work to do on our early learning and childcare and enhancing it and continuing to lead the country and to help other jurisdictions that are really just starting to embrace this concept. I'm looking forward to having those conversations with my colleagues across the country.

Our government is working hard to make investments that will make life more affordable for Yukon families and ensure that every Yukoner has an opportunity to succeed. I think that affordability aspect has definitely been met.

As of January 1 of this year, 100 percent of licensed early learning and childcare programs in the Yukon have transitioned to our universal childcare program. That is something to celebrate. I'm very pleased that these centres have chosen to embrace this aspect of our program and other aspects of the program as well.

In 2021, the Yukon was one of the first jurisdictions in Canada to reach an agreement with the federal government to ensure that we were able to take advantage of the opportunity that was being offered throughout the country. We were the first territory for sure. So, there is a lot to celebrate here and I am happy to continue doing this work on behalf of Yukoners.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Child and Youth Advocate recommendations to Department of Education

**Mr. Dixon:** Last week, the Child and Youth Advocate issued a press release raising serious concerns about the Department of Education's conduct regarding an investigation

at Jack Hulland Elementary. While there were several troubling aspects of the release, the one that stood out was the accusation of political interference relating to the Minister of Education.

The release cites a trend of administrative staff who have spoken out about the situation being reassigned shortly after. In response to this, the minister wrote a letter to the advocate, that she tabled in the Legislature. However, that letter completely ignores the very serious accusation of political interference.

Why did the minister completely ignore the Child and Youth Advocate's serious concern about political interference in her letter of response tabled last week?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to questions that are on the floor regarding the Child and Youth Advocate, but, first and foremost, I want to focus my attention on the safety and well-being of students as a priority for our government. It will always remain at the centre when we are talking about any issues that arise in our schools. It is vital that our education system meets the needs of individual students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs for our schools. We are working really hard with all of our partners to ensure that our education system supports all Yukon students.

In terms of interactions with the Child and Youth Advocate, first, I will also say that we agree that children have the right to learn in a safe environment and that their perspectives need to be included in investigations. That was one of the issues that the Child and Youth Advocate raised. The Child and Youth Advocate reached out to me about some concerns and I quickly met with her on the same day that she reached out to me.

In terms of political interference, there has been no political interference from this side of the House.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister ignored that as she did completely in her letter tabled last week.

In responding to the Child and Youth Advocate in the media, the minister did not hold back. CBC reported that the Education minister — quote: "... says she's disappointed by the advocate's accusations." Similarly, CKRW reported — quote: "Yukon's Education minister wasn't happy with the news release from the Child and Youth Advocate earlier this week."

It seems like the minister is going out of her way to pick a very public fight with the Child and Youth Advocate. Why is the Minister of Education choosing to take her fight with this independent officer of the Legislature to the media instead of simply working with the advocate's office to address her concerns and act in the best interest of Yukon's children?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that I have been clear all the way along, as I've been in this position for almost a year now, that I absolutely respect the work of the Child and Youth Advocate and respect her position.

When she raised issues with me, I quickly met with her on March 18. Then I proceeded to set up a meeting with a number of deputy ministers, including Education, Justice, Health and Social Services, and the Executive Council Office. That happened on the Monday after the meeting that I had with her on March 18. We scheduled an inter-agency meeting, which happened on April 1. Certainly, I respect the work of the Child

and Youth Advocate and have kept her in the conversation as the issues arose at Jack Hulland school in November and continue to provide updates to her.

I may note as well that I did reach out after the meeting with the deputy ministers of Education, Justice, Health and Social Services, and the Executive Council Office to ask how she thought things had gone, and she said she felt very positive about the conversations. So, I was surprised to see the news release in the way that it was presented, but I'm still committed.

**Mr. Dixon:** It's not lost on Yukoners that, less than a year ago, this very same minister tried to pick another fight with the Child and Youth Advocate when the advocate announced that they would be investigating the Liberals' massively inadequate handling of the incidents at Hidden Valley. The minister said that the Child and Youth Advocate did not have the authority to investigate the Liberals. The minister told the *Whitehorse Star* — quote: "... it is the view of the Government of Yukon that the Child and Youth Advocate does not have the legal authority to conduct the kind of review that has been proposed..."

So, why does this Minister of Education keep picking public fights with the Child and Youth Advocate, who is an independent officer of the Legislature?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I take issue, of course, with the preamble to this question from the Leader of the Official Opposition. I respect the work of the Child and Youth Advocate. We have continued to work with her office on various issues in our education system and I will continue to do that. I definitely respect her work and will continue to work with her and with others.

I may note as well that the Child and Youth Advocate is, in fact, conducting a review of the matter that the Leader of the Official Opposition has spoken about today, and we are anxiously awaiting that report. When we receive it, we certainly will work with the Child and Youth Advocate to review it and look at the recommendations that she may put forward.

I am happy to continue answering questions today or as we go forward in this Sitting.

#### **Question re: Child and Youth Advocate recommendations to Department of Education**

**Mr. Dixon:** Well, if the minister respects the office so much, she should consider stopping with the public barbs at the office.

In direct response to the Child and Youth Advocate's comments, the Minister of Education wrote a very public rebuke and criticized the advocate. In fact, the minister tabled the letter in the Legislature just a few hours after she signed it, making it clear to everyone that she intended her criticism of the advocate to be public.

Why is the minister publicly criticizing the Child and Youth Advocate for raising concerns about the safety of children?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I guess I will go back to the main point here in terms of continuing to work with our school community and also continuing to keep at the heart of the issues the safety and well-being of our students as the key priority. I

have said today that I share those concerns with the Child and Youth Advocate. It is vital that our education system meet the needs of individual students in a way that reflects the diversity of learning needs in our schools. We are certainly working with all of our partners to ensure our education system supports all Yukon students.

Again, the Child and Youth Advocate reached out to me with concerns on February 18. I quickly set up a meeting. I met with her and then set up other meetings, as I have talked about already today here on the floor of the Legislature.

The words that the opposition is choosing to use about some sort of level of disrespect for this office is just simply not true. I can certainly speak for myself that I respect the work of the Child and Youth Advocate.

**Mr. Dixon:** The only words from the minister that I have used are direct quotes from the minister.

In her public letter criticizing the Child and Youth Advocate, the minister mentioned a March 18 meeting. According to the letter, the advocate shared concerns with the ongoing internal investigation into Jack Hulland that is being conducted by the department, and the minister just relayed that she shared those concerns.

Can the minister tell us what those concerns were? Has the minister made any adjustments to address those concerns?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will again continue to keep at the heart of this conversation that the safety — that we're talking about children in our schools here. The investigations into the use of holds and physical interventions at Jack Hulland Elementary School — there is still an active investigation happening by the RCMP and Family and Children's Services. That is ongoing. We continue to fully cooperate with this investigation.

The Department of Education is reviewing all workplace risk assessments and other relevant reports and conducting staff interviews at Jack Hulland. This important work continues.

I will take note that I have met with the Jack Hulland school council, with parents, and with teachers to hear their concerns. I understand the stress that parents and school staff are under. We remain committed to working together with the Jack Hulland school community.

I know that the non-violent crisis intervention training has taken place. It was a priority request from families to conduct this training, which has happened. Again, I'll continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, the Child and Youth Advocate has taken to putting out a press release and raising concerns with this investigation the minister has cited. The minister, a few answers ago, said that she shared many of the concerns that were raised with her by the Child and Youth Advocate.

My question was simple: What were those concerns? What has the government done in response to those concerns? Have they made any adjustments to the investigation that falls under the gamut of the Minister of Education?

As well, can the minister confirm if any members of Cabinet, or current or former Cabinet staff, have given any direction or input into the investigation at Jack Hulland?



**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will again say that the investigation into the use of holds and physical interventions at Jack Hulland Elementary School is ongoing by the RCMP and Family and Children's Services. We continue to cooperate with that investigation, and I have also stated that the Department of Education is reviewing all workplace risk assessments and other relevant reports and conducting staff interviews at the school. This is important work that continues.

We certainly remain committed to working with the Jack Hulland school community. As I was stating earlier, we have completed non-violent crisis intervention training. This was a priority request from parents at the school and the school council to ensure that all staff are familiar and up to date on proven strategies for preventing and safely diffusing anxious or hostile behaviour at the earliest possible stage.

Students continue to receive quality education at Jack Hulland Elementary School and good work is happening at this school, and I want to just emphasize that right now.

**Question re: Electricity rates**

**Ms. Tredger:** Almost a month ago, we asked the minister to investigate the over-earnings made by ATCO, while Yukoners struggled to pay their power bills. The minister said that he would look into it, but instead of taking action on affordability, the minister slapped on a band-aid and gave Yukoners back \$150 of their own money. The minister is using public dollars to shore up the profits of a private company, instead of doing the right thing.

Will the minister commit to making electricity bills more fair for Yukoners by ordering a rate review for ATCO Electric Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Indeed, what I said when I was first asked about this — and I don't think that it was over a month ago, because I'm not sure we were in this House over a month ago, but it was in March. I stated then that I had already had a meeting with the Chamber of Commerce to discuss this. I had met with the Minister of Justice to talk through the issue, and I had already approached ATCO to speak to them.

Subsequent to the questions here in the Legislative Assembly, I have had several more meetings with ATCO to discuss the issue and am working toward solutions with them to review what is happening with our electricity bills. Of course, I need to be respectful that there is a Utilities Board that has the responsibility around this issue.

So, yes, we did. I thank the member opposite for noting that we stepped forward right away to address rising costs and to bring in place an inflationary rebate for all Yukoners on their power bills. That was a move that we did right away. The Premier announced it at the chamber luncheon.

So, yes, I have continued to work with ATCO and also Yukon Energy Corporation. That work is ongoing as we speak.

**Ms. Tredger:** Well, the Yukon NDP also met with ATCO, who said that they welcome the opportunity to work with the Yukon government to review the rates. ATCO has been transparent that their costs have remained the same while revenues continue to rise due to population growth and increased usage. The minister told this House — and I quote:

"... there is an estimate of what is expected in terms of a rate of return. If the return goes higher, you bring a new rate application and you adjust it."

So, is it yes or no? Does the minister think a rate review for ATCO is the right thing to do for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I absolutely have been in this conversation with ATCO and Yukon Energy. The Department of Justice has been doing some work on this front as well to see what avenues we have open to us. I have had several conversations with the chamber of commerce. I do think that it is important that rates are appropriate and reflect the cost of our utilities. I can say that the utilities think that as well.

I can also say that, as soon as I talked to ATCO, the vice-president and I agreed that it would be good if there was a conversation between ATCO and the Yukon NDP, so I am very pleased to hear that this conversation got underway. It was unfortunate that it didn't happen first, but that's fine; I am glad that it has happened now.

**Ms. Tredger:** I still actually haven't heard an answer to the question.

When the government grants a monopoly on an essential service to a private company, it is the responsibility of that government to ensure that the company provides quality services at a fair price. This is why we have the Yukon Utilities Board. The board is mandated to establish electricity rates that are, according to the *Public Utilities Act*, just and reasonable. Nowadays, many Yukoners do not feel that their electrical bills are just or reasonable, but the Yukon Utilities Board can't solve this on their own; they need this government to order a rate review.

Will the minister commit to ensuring Yukoners pay utility rates that are just and reasonable?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Actually, Mr. Speaker, there are several possible solutions here. I'm in exploration on all of them. For example, we could have a negotiated rate settlement where we work with the public around that and then present that to the Utilities Board afterward. Or we could ask the Utilities Board to direct for that rate review.

What I will say is that I have been working closely with ATCO, and I want to thank them for their work. They have acknowledged to me the situation. After the chamber raised it to my attention, I reached out to ATCO before I heard about it here and I want to thank ATCO for their diligence around this.

What I will say is that I share the member opposite's concerns that we want to get a rate that is fair for Yukoners around electricity.

Listen, what we're working to do is to transform our energy economy away from fossil fuels. If you look at our budget, we have \$80 million in this budget alone to work on that transition away from fossil fuels. Our electrical utilities are incredibly important in that direction.

So, absolutely, I am working with them to make sure that the rates are fair for Yukoners.

**Question re: Hemodialysis services in Yukon**

**Ms. White:** Just over two years ago, I stood in this House as a friend of mine chose to die in the Yukon, surrounded

by friends and family, instead of being able to live in Vancouver away from his loved ones for the rest of his life.

Mr. Speaker, he didn't need to die. What he needed was in-centre hemodialysis. Despite years of advocacy by many Yukoners who need this essential medical treatment to stay alive, the Yukon still doesn't have in-centre hemodialysis. Our friends and neighbours still have to leave everything behind to receive the health care that they need to stay alive. No one should have to make this choice.

When will Yukoners be able to access in-centre hemodialysis in the territory?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm pleased to have this question. It is an important one for Yukoners and an important one for the service of Health and Social Services and the options that are available here in the territory. The department is working with the British Columbia renal agency — BC Renal is the name of that organization — to improve services available in the territory for Yukoners with kidney disease and to develop guidelines that follow best practices.

The current focus is on early intervention and support to delay the process of kidney disease and providing home-based dialysis therapies.

Our guidelines are rooted in evidence and experience and research developed by BC Renal to ensure that Yukoners have equitable and logical access to high-quality kidney care.

**Ms. White:** I'm glad to hear that the minister is pleased to talk about this, but I can tell you that I am not pleased to ask the question again. My friend had hoped that his death would shame the government into action, but, sadly, it hasn't. Still today, if a Yukoner needs in-centre hemodialysis, a permanent move down south is the only option and that is if they want to live. The government has told Yukoners over and over that we don't have the numbers to support in-centre hemodialysis, but in the meantime, our neighbours in the Northwest Territories are providing not just one but two in-centre hemodialysis sites, in two separate communities. It is this government's responsibility to make sure that Yukoners have access to lifesaving health care here at home.

When will Yukoners have access to in-centre hemodialysis in the Yukon instead of being forced out?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As I have noted, our guidelines are rooted in evidence and experience and the research that is developed by BC Renal to ensure that Yukoners have equitable and logical access to high-quality kidney care. BC Renal supports Yukoners who need dialysis or a kidney transplant and their guidelines do not recommend developing a hemodialysis centre here in the territory.

As noted perhaps in the question, based on the territory's population and the number of Yukoners who would need the service, I completely appreciate that this is not the answer if an individual needs care. But, like other rural and northern settings across Canada, the Yukon does not have the advanced health infrastructure needed to support all dialysis clients. Even if we had in-centre hemodialysis services here, some Yukoners with more advanced kidney disease would still need to leave the territory for medical care, even if that were here in the territory.

We are acting on many initiatives that have a direct impact on Yukoners with chronic kidney disease and BC Renal has recommended improved travel support for those with kidney disease, which we have made some strides in to address the changes to medical travel and the subsidy.

I look forward to the third question.

**Ms. White:** Governments have the ability to make decisions that put people first. Again, we just have to look at our neighbours in the Northwest Territories to understand how inadequate our services are for those requiring in-centre hemodialysis. This government is willing to cover hundreds of thousands of dollars per patient per year for them to stay in Vancouver, but is not willing to invest in long-term, life-sustaining infrastructure that would allow Yukoners to get treatment in the Yukon and stay in, and closer, to their communities.

Can the minister tell us how much the government spends each year to send people down south for in-centre hemodialysis instead of investing in the long-term health care of Yukoners here at home?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Proactive and preventive care are key elements and important to delaying the progress of kidney disease. We are working with Yukoners who have this medical condition. We are funding glucose monitors for Yukoners with type 1 diabetes — just one part of the piece of that puzzle there. Currently, information that I have would be from earlier this year — approximately 50 people in the Yukon with chronic kidney disease do not require dialysis, seven of whom receive at-home peritoneal dialysis.

BC Renal regularly monitors and updates the department on kidney and dialysis services that are provided to Yukoners. Chronic kidney disease is often managed by primary care physicians or a nephrologist.

Only a small number of patients with chronic disease have to travel or go to other jurisdictions to receive a transplant, for instance. The number of Yukoners with chronic kidney disease and patients requiring dialysis has decreased over the past two years. Identifying the disease earlier and receiving proactive care and delaying disease progression are really key and important factors.

**Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Question re: Education system

**Mr. Cathers:** Earlier this year, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, Autism Yukon, LDAY, and the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees wrote a joint letter to the Minister of Education.

They wrote to express concern about the lack of action taken by the Liberal government following the 2019 Auditor General's report on Education. Here's a quote: "We are disappointed that in the two years since the Department of Education received the report, we see no substantive changes for our students."

Why hasn't the government made any substantive changes since receiving the Auditor General's report in 2019?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think it is very rich that the — I'll get to the answer to the question — Yukon Party is framing

their questions in this way — that there has been no action since the 2019 Auditor General’s report. That is simply not true. I think that is true when we look back to 2009 and look at their inaction with the Auditor General’s report on Education at that time.

I think that’s certainly a very big contrast in terms of what we’ve done, as a government, to address the Auditor General’s report of 2019. It’s good that the Yukon Party is now interested in education, because it certainly didn’t look that way back in 2009.

In terms of where we’re at with the 2019 Auditor General’s report, we have taken a very different approach. We have been working very closely with all of our partners. I acknowledge the letters that have been written by our partners; it tells us that we have more work to do. I’ll continue building on my answer as we go forward.

**Mr. Cathers:** The partners the minister likes to refer to are saying they’re not happy with their lack of action. It’s the Liberals’ second term in office and it’s time to stop trying to blame someone else for lack of action.

Here’s another quote from this group of education stakeholders’ letter to the minister: “No substantive action has been taken in the last 2 years and, in fact, it appears the current approach seems to be at the expense of addressing the current well documented needs of many students in the system.”

Can the minister explain why so many important education stakeholders feel this way about the government’s lack of action?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, deep contrasts in terms of what our government has done in receipt of the Auditor General’s report of 2019 and the one in 2009. It is relevant and Yukoners do need to hear this, because we are doing the hard work that they did not do when they were in government and had the opportunity to make these changes and just didn’t do it.

In terms of where we’re at with the work that we’ve done — we’ve done a complete review of inclusive and special education. This is not something that was done. It was asked to be done in 2009 and it didn’t get done.

We have launched the universal childcare model. We have enhanced early learning kindergarten in rural communities and established a Yukon First Nation School Board. We advanced the review of inclusive and special education, as I’ve mentioned. We created a data-sharing MOU with First Nations and recently announced that work to develop a student outcomes strategy, and that is underway. Again, this was called upon in 2009 and didn’t happen.

This outcome strategy will develop clear targets to evaluate progress and close the gaps.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the four groups that came together to jointly write this letter are deeply involved in the education system and obviously felt concerned enough about the lack of action from this Liberal government to write this joint letter. They felt that, under the Liberals, the Department of Education was — and I quote: “... seeking superficial approval for directions already determined internally.”

So, does the minister intend to meaningfully and fairly collaborate with Education partners, including these four groups, and if so, how will the minister address these serious concerns raised by these four groups in their joint letter?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will talk directly about how we are working in terms of the implementation of the review of inclusive and special education, which is a key piece of work that our government has undertaken. We now have a very detailed work plan that was developed with the Yukon First Nations Education Commission and education partners through the advisory committee on Yukon education and the Government of Yukon. We are working together in meaningful partnership.

I think that the member opposite should note the date on that letter that he is referring to and look at all the work that has been done over this last year.

In terms of direct response to a number of partners, we responded to a number of partners jointly regarding the issues that they have raised with us. We continue to work closely with all of our partners. There are a number of community inquiries that are underway that include the partners he is speaking of today.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

## **Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of

Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Community Services — *continued***

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will just take a very few moments to introduce once again my colleagues from Community Services to the Chamber this afternoon. We have Matt King, who is the deputy minister, and of course we have Phil MacDonald, who is our finance specialist. It's great to have them here. The department has been doing just a tremendous job supporting me here, and I will just let them continue to do that good work and pass the floor over to my good colleague in the opposition benches.

**Ms. McLeod:** Of course, welcome back to the discussion in Community Services. I welcome the officials, of course.

A few days ago, we were speaking about flood preparation. I had asked the minister about the government's plans for each of the communities that will be potentially affected by flooding this year. The minister confirmed that the flood preparedness team had met with Carmacks and Teslin. Considering that the team has not yet met with other communities, can the minister confirm what work has been agreed to be done in advance of the flood season in Carmacks and in Teslin?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite this afternoon.

It is very important to recognize that, right now, it's still early days in our flood preparedness and that municipalities really have control over emergency preparedness inside their communities. As the member opposite has noted, we met with Teslin. They provided a proposal. They've had concrete proposals to us about upgrading rip-rap in the community. We've agreed toward financial assistance for some engineering work in the Teslin area.

In Carmacks, at the official level, we're talking about — just trying to get a sense of the needs within the community — that the community itself, being a municipality in and of its own right, has to assess its needs, but we have made the overture to say if any community — any incorporated community in the territory — needs support, they can come to us and identify what those needs are and we will work with them. Of course, we're currently projecting what the flood modeling — we're doing our flood modeling to find out exactly where and what resources are going to be needed throughout the territory, but it's still very early to determine what those needs are until we know more.

Last year, for example, we had a problem — there was flooding around the sewage treatment centre in Carmacks. We actually worked very, very closely — successfully — and it was in doubt, but we actually successfully saved that sewage treatment facility.

We have learned some lessons from that from last year, and I'm sure we'll put those lessons to good use this year as we go forward, as will the municipalities that we are working with. In that flood relief in Carmacks last year that was tremendously successful, we had the City of Whitehorse actually assisting

Carmacks in their efforts, so we had some real synergy and some really good cooperation happening among our municipalities across the territory that successfully staved off some potential real disaster. It didn't happen because we worked together and worked so well together.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister tell us how much money has been budgeted in this budget that we are debating today for this upcoming flood season?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There is \$1.7 million budgeted for this year.

**Ms. McLeod:** Of this \$1.7 million, does that form part of any additional funding that communities may require once the fullness of the flood is upon them, should it happen — understanding that, yes, \$1.7 million is set aside for flooding throughout the territory — but should there be an extreme circumstance for any of these communities, how quickly and from where is the government going to come up with money?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have \$354,000 for personnel and \$1.3 million for other expenses at this point.

As the member opposite will recall, last year, we had very little in our flood budget. We hadn't actually anticipated one last year. Floods are not something that normally happen in the territory. We did manage to come up with, I believe, about \$7.7 million. If we have to, we will find the money to make sure that our residents are looked after in this coming flood year. My hope is that we don't have to do that, but we will, as always, prepare for the worst and hope for the best.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am going to move on to talk a bit about rural EMS coverage.

Obviously, we all heard about the problems with EMS personnel being impacted by the vaccine mandate of this government. So, how many people were affected, and of those people, how were their services covered off?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We did some — the member is correct — during the latest wave of COVID — the measures we took — as did many other jurisdictions across Canada — to protect Yukoners, to make sure that they were looked after as best as possible, and to curb the spread of COVID throughout our rural Yukon communities — we did experience some shortages of EMS people. Those staff were covered off from neighbouring communities and from Whitehorse.

We have taken action to bolster our training programs aimed to attract new talent and develop the talent that we have. This includes clinical educators with a community focus, and it includes improvements aimed to reduce administrative hurdles to get involved in the Emergency Medical Services team.

**Ms. McLeod:** We will get to that discussion in a little bit here, but my question was: How many personnel were directly affected in terms of, you know, being laid off or put on leave because of the vaccine mandate? My question is: How many people were affected by that and how was coverage maintained in their absence?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will endeavour to get the member opposite the exact numbers. We don't have the numbers of staff who were absent. I will say that every single community was covered with EMS staff. We recruited some new EMS staff. As I said in my earlier answer, we covered off those staff who were

missing, when necessary, from surrounding communities or from Whitehorse.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister give us some indication as to how many volunteers were not allowed to work due to the vaccine mandate?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said just moments ago, I will endeavour to get that answer for the member opposite.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the minister for that. I look forward to getting that.

When will the mandate be lifted for EMS? There has been some discussion, I've heard, about different levels of employees who may or may not be reinstated — if the minister can just tell us how emergency personnel will be covered, both staffers and volunteer.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As a matter of fact, it's today that we're welcoming back most of our staff — those who have been on leave without pay and elected not to get vaccinated. The regulation that we have drafted is based on location, so in high-risk settings, people are going to have to have vaccinations still. We are hopeful and would like to encourage all of our volunteers to get their vaccinations and make sure that they are all up to date, but if you are a volunteer and you have to access a high-risk facility and you are not vaccinated, you won't be able to do that. We will have to look at ways to employ them in a way that does not make them interact with a high-risk setting, such as a health centre.

In some cases, our ambulances are parked in health centres, which further complicates it. There are nuances to this whole situation as it is unfolding, but we will continue to work with our staff and our volunteers to make sure that they can contribute in meaningful ways where possible. If our staff can no longer go to a high-risk setting, like a health centre, as defined by the regulations we put in place, we will have to find accommodations for them.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am sure that the minister will forgive me if I am a little bit mystified by that response. Today, the mandates are being lifted for EMS personnel, but it doesn't sound like anyone who is not vaccinated will be going back to work, so I'm in a little bit of a state of wonder that an ambulance attendant who is not vaccinated would have any ability to be of service if they have to go to a hospital, for instance — where most ambulances end up after being on a call.

So, I am certainly looking for a little bit more clarity on that, because it does sound like, on the one hand, the minister is saying that vaccines are gone and, on the other, that nothing has changed — so, if the minister could just clarify that.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** First of all, I would like to correct the record or at least bring home the point that I actually didn't say what the member opposite has just said that I said.

The fact is, the mandate has been lifted, and as of today, we are welcoming back our staff who are unvaccinated who have been on leave without pay — the first one. Today is the day that they come back in.

The second thing I said is that, in order to go into a location that is a high-risk setting, they have to be vaccinated. We have health care workers, health care-involved vaccinations across the board in the health care field. Vaccinations are safe — that

is why we are administering them to people. It is the best way to prevent COVID-19. It is important that our people who are forced to enter high-risk facilities are most protected from this virus that besets communities — it still besets our communities across the territory and frankly around North America and the world.

So, the people who work for us in certain jobs no longer have to be vaccinated. If you are entering a high-risk facility, you must be vaccinated. We are looking to accommodate people as much as possible. If you're a medical professional who elects, for whatever reason, not to be vaccinated, then we will do as much as we can to employ your skills in a way that does not bring you in contact with people living in, or forced to seek care in, a high-risk facility.

We're trying to protect those people. If you're unvaccinated, you pose a risk to those people, and you will not be able to enter those facilities — that's fairly clear.

There are other tasks that somebody could do, I suppose. You can clean the ambulance bays. You can do all sorts of things in there that might provide an ancillary service to the health care provision. If we're at a site, you might be able to secure the site or do other tasks, but if you're a health care professional providing assistance to somebody who is injured and you have to go in a health care facility — a high-risk health care facility — you must be vaccinated.

It would be great if it were black and white, but the world we live in is no longer — maybe it never was black and white. There are all sorts of permutations to policies in the situations we find ourselves in every day.

As I said many times, the only consistency with COVID is inconsistency. There are all sorts of things — the only certainty, rather, with COVID is uncertainty.

**Ms. McLeod:** I couldn't really hear some of what the minister said. For instance, I did not hear what it was he was correcting the record on. I guess my statement remains the same, then: that nothing has really changed for these volunteers and these EMS highly trained people with regard to vaccination status.

I'm wondering about, for instance, a driver of an ambulance. Obviously, they are a very important part of an ambulance call — probably a very important part in helping get that patient in and out of the ambulance, even to the door of the hospital, let's say, if that's as far as they can go. I'm wondering how this will affect them.

I wonder how many of the highly trained EMS personnel are now going to be cleaning the ambulance bays, if you can tell me that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In order to correct the record, I basically said that I did not say what the member opposite had summarized me as saying.

What I did want to say is that things aren't back to normal. They simply are not. These are extraordinary times we are living through. I totally empathize with people who are going about their daily business for years and years and then find themselves in the midst of a global pandemic that puts people's lives at risk. It has ripped through and killed millions of people around the planet, and because of that, governments across

North America, including ours, have taken extraordinary measures to safeguard those most at risk in our society. We are continuing that business, which is why we put the mandate in place and why we are continuing to protect those in high-risk emergency situations.

Those highly trained professionals who elected not to take advantage of the wondrous medicines that we have now before us to protect ourselves against this virulent virus that we have in our midst and who want to get back to work can come back to work. But unfortunately, given the risk that is posed to people in high-risk medical facilities, they will not be able to enter said medical facilities without a vaccination.

But because we do value the work they've done, we're looking to try to find a way to employ them in other ways in places where they do not put others at risk, and so that's what we're doing on a daily basis now since they've come back — as they come back to work today.

I don't want to sugar-coat this for them. This is a difficult situation for everybody. It's a very, very small number who have elected not to get vaccinated. It's not a large number, and so we are working very, very hard to find meaningful work for those volunteers and for those staff who have come back into the fold — who have been welcomed back — to actually provide some care to Yukoners, and we will find a way that they can best do that job with the situation where they're lacking a vaccination that is essential to have if you're moving into a high-risk facility.

**Ms. McLeod:** I wonder if the minister today has information on the current number of EMS staff and volunteers for each of our communities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have a total of 93 volunteers active as of January 28, 2022. That's throughout our communities. We had — the number who took leave — after March, it was 22 total.

**Ms. McLeod:** Thank you for that, although I had a little trouble hearing the numbers there, but I'll check with the Blues and come back to that.

I wanted to have a bit of a discussion yet again about the FTEs for Watson Lake. So, the minister will recall that last year — last fall — we had a discussion where the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes said that there were 3.2 FTEs in the supplementary budget for last year for EMS in Watson Lake, and the minister — a day or two later — referenced two. It prompted me to write a letter to the minister, and he did respond, for which I thank him.

Now, in a briefing again this year for the mains, I was advised that there were 3.2 FTEs in this budget for EMS in Watson Lake. So, obviously I am a little bit confused about that, because in the minister's letter, the minister referenced that two full-time staff were hired to provide EMS services in Watson Lake in 2008 — I don't know if I mentioned that.

In 2020, two additional full-time positions were created because of the call volume. So, that would mean four people working in Watson Lake in EMS as full-time employees, and that would agree with my understanding of what is going on in Watson Lake.

So, I don't know why these 3.2 FTEs have come up now in two different budgets if these positions were fully funded prior to last fall — for instance, in 2008 moving forward, in 2020 moving forward — but suddenly, last year, I don't know if we were retroactively funding these positions. Maybe today we can get clarification on that. Let's start there.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I hope to be able to clear up the confusion in the member opposite's mind. I know that we have gone through this a couple of times now, both in the House and at the briefing with officials for the budget.

Let me explain it this way: The budget for Community Services is tens of millions of dollars. It's approaching — it's a lot of money. There was an emerging need in Watson Lake identified that showed that we needed more EMS coverage.

The reason we needed that was because we found that emergency responders in Watson Lake were responding to more than 450 calls per year. This is in a very large area. It's unlike many other places in the territory. The coverage in that area is challenging. So, we saw an emerging need; we needed more people in Watson Lake. So, from within the department, we moved resources from other projects and other needs to provide more EMS — exactly 3.2 more positions in Watson Lake.

What has happened now is that is now permanent. It is now funded. We have gone to Management Board and said that we need these resources. Management Board has accepted that we have been funding it out of — that it hasn't been properly funded and not funded permanently, and we have now done that. That takes care of that first bit. We are actually now funding those positions, and we have the full support of the Yukon Cabinet to do that.

The 3.2 positions are additional employee-based coverage, so that covers — that's full-time positions of additional employee-based coverage and funding to cover standby costs when volunteers are unavailable. This money — this 3.2 positions — is going to fund a variety of positions, not only standby, but also full-time and part-time positions, but it will be employee-based coverage, so we are actually saying that there will be 3.2 employee positions attributed to the Yukon government for the base down in Watson Lake.

Those positions can be broken out into full-time, part-time, or auxiliary-on-call positions and will provide the important piece for the member opposite, which is our commitment to provide more than 10 hours per day, seven-days-a-week coverage in Watson Lake. That is what we want to do. We want to have people on staff who can provide more than 10 hours per day coverage seven days a week in that community. That is what this funding does. It is 3.2 positions to cover the cost of providing service for more than 10 hours a day, seven days a week in Watson Lake.

**Ms. McLeod:** Here is the confusing part: In this letter last December for last year's budget — not the budget we are debating today — the minister said that 3.2 FTEs were now going to be locked in for the reasons that the minister stated. Why again this year? If these PYs are locked into the system, some as far back as 2008 and adding more as we go along in 2020, and if we said last year that we are locking in the money

to make these employees permanent, why are we adding — as was advised in the briefing — another 3.2 FTEs in this 2022-23 budget, if they were locked in for 2022? I am curious.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I've just consulted with my officials. Perhaps confusion in the member opposite stems from the fact that they were added in last year's supplementary budget and now, for the first time, they're in the mains. So, that's really what happened. They were in a supplementary budget last year, and now they're flowing into the mains for the first time. So, that may be the source — they were identified as a need for the supplementary budget last year.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that. I suspect I may have to revisit it down the road.

Now, the minister advised in the last budget — in the supplementary budget from last fall — and maybe we can have some clarification whether that was just the government talking about it last fall, and this year it is being implemented — maybe the minister can clear that up, but \$348,000 in the supplementary budget was to hire a new clinical educator and to fund enhanced peer-support wellness programs. So, I would like a little bit of clarification on the peer-support wellness programs. What does that involve? How is that being rolled out to all of our EMS responders throughout the territory?

Perhaps the minister can give us an update on the clinical educator to let us know how that person is spreading their knowledge throughout the territory, and maybe the minister can tell us how many communities this person has visited to date and what has been achieved.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We certainly recognize that training and education are essential in supporting the delivery of emergency medical services throughout the territory. Yukon Emergency Medical Services delivers programs to aid a number of training methods that include a training centre, mobile training centre, high-fidelity training mannequins, online learning platforms, local training nights, certificate courses, and the two dedicated clinical educators who provide in-person and virtual training in Whitehorse and the communities.

The Yukon Emergency Medical Services team works around the clock really tirelessly to make Yukon a better and safer place for both residents and visitors; that goes without saying.

So, the continuing medical education program that we have been talking about ensures that all responders are equipped with the knowledge required to provide the best possible care to Yukoners. I haven't got details on their schedule to go out to the communities. Of course, over the last few months, that has been complicated by COVID, but I am sure that now that we are in a new COVID era, we will get out to rural Yukon communities with these training coordinators. Their goal is to actually provide in-house training to Yukon Emergency Medical Services staff in Whitehorse and across the Yukon in all Yukon communities.

**Ms. McLeod:** At this time, the minister does not have information as to what kind of training has already been provided through this new clinical educator. The minister may recall that I am a big supporter of training outside of Whitehorse

in the communities where these responders are. I think that it is a pretty key component in attracting volunteers.

What I have heard recently is that the current certification program takes up to a year to complete, which to date has involved some of our community members spending up to two weeks in Whitehorse. So, obviously, this is a detriment to attracting new volunteers.

So, I'm happy that some of this work will be done. I'm wondering if one year to reach the certification is going to continue. Is that going to continue to be the time frame that volunteers are going to be looking at?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** First of all, I would like to thank the member opposite for her support of training. I think it is very important; that's why we're doing it, and I'm glad to hear that she recognizes the importance of that training as well.

I'm not a trainer. I have a brother — we met him this afternoon — who does EMS. I know the extensive training that he was forced to go through to become an Emergency Medical Services staffer. I know the continual updates they all do. I really think it's extraordinary — it's not only extraordinary work done by extraordinary people, but I think they take their training very seriously and I applaud them for that.

I will also say that I tend to disagree with the member opposite saying that the training that we're providing is a disincentive for people to get involved in the field. I think the training is actually a lure to people, because you can actually better yourself and get the training that we're providing. We're actually investing in that training in the territory — \$90,000 in the budget per year now for travel and training in the territory. I don't think that's a disincentive for volunteers; I think that's an incentive for volunteers to get involved in the program and to actually get the training they need to be comfortable doing this very, very grueling and very, very important job on behalf of citizens of the territory.

As far as it taking a year, I am not a trainer. I don't make curriculum for Emergency Medical Services staff. My deputy doesn't set up the curriculum for Emergency Medical Services staff; that is done by professionals in the field who want to create and mold some of the best EMS staff in the country. I applaud them for that effort because, quite frankly, emergency medical services staff are at a premium right now across the country. There are not many of them, they are in high demand, and they are difficult to recruit, so the more we can do here in the territory really behooves our service to the territory and to the citizens of the territory.

I don't know if it can be sped up. I am sure that they will look for efficiencies and do it as fast as they possibly can. I bet if we talk to them right now, they would say that it's a year, and I am fully confident that if that is how long it takes, that is how long it takes. I can't dictate that it will go faster. I am sure that they are very good at their jobs and that they are delivering that service as quickly as they possibly can.

**Ms. McLeod:** Training obviously is a very important part of the job if you are a first responder. Nobody will argue with that. We want these people to be highly trained. We want them to take the time to get the training they need to do those jobs, because they are jobs. It is their vocation; it is their

occupation. Of course, they are trained and of course we want them to be trained. What I am talking about are volunteers who volunteer their time to help their community — to help those people who are in dire need of that bit of assistance that they provide — because we rely on our professionals.

I can go by what people tell me, which is that leaving your life in a community to go to Whitehorse for training for two weeks is a bit of a hardship for them. They still have a life that needs looking after. Perhaps they have a job already that they need to take time off from so that they can go to Whitehorse to take this training. There are some who are less able to do that. People aren't necessarily looking at being an emergency responder as a vocation. As I say, they do it as a volunteer service.

Now, the minister may feel that a year is no time at all, but it's a big chunk of a person's life, especially when burnout for volunteers is quite an issue. Now, I wasn't actually suggesting that their training be cut down, but I am suggesting — which is why I have always been an advocate of getting that training out to the communities. I am maybe suggesting that the department may wish to review the training that is required and how it's being delivered. Why, if training is such a lure, is it hard to find volunteers?

In the minister's letter of last December, he said that they would be increasing the honoraria for responders — we presume that means volunteers — who are attending improved education and training. My question is: How much was that increased, or has it been done yet? Is there a built-in cost-of-living increase for the volunteers? Because I assume they were not covered by this statement. How often is their honorarium reviewed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Okay, so we agree that training is important, and we agree that we both value our EMS volunteers in rural Yukon, and I am suggesting that the training the Yukon government provides greatly improves their effectiveness and their confidence in delivering this important job for Yukoners.

There is a mobile training unit. We have an online learning platform; we have local training nights; we have the two clinical educator positions, which we have spoken about this afternoon, who are to provide in-person and virtual training in Whitehorse and communities. Yukon Emergency Medical Services recently increased monetary compensation to four hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage community responder attendance and support for bi-weekly training nights. We provide equipment, we fund the volunteer ambulance society, and we work with community ambulance stations to maintain an ongoing biweekly training night for which, as I have just said, they get paid four hours of non-operational pay to attend. We have invested \$108,000 for in-classroom learning sessions.

Through transfer payments, Yukon Emergency Medical Services will provide \$60,000 for training to the Volunteer Ambulance Services Society. We are investing in training. One of the reasons why we started to fund these new clinical educator positions is to greatly enhance the ability of our service to provide that training to Yukoners who live in rural Yukon communities. We are continuing to support our rural

ambulance services because we greatly value the service that they provide to our rural Yukon communities.

**Ms. McLeod:** Perhaps the minister can answer the part of my question in which I requested the information on the honoraria for the responders taking training. Last fall, they were getting an increase, and I would like to know if that was implemented and how much.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The government has increased honoraria from \$15.90 per hour to \$19.08 an hour; plus we've added that four hours of training.

**Ms. McLeod:** Plus — I didn't catch the last part of the minister's statement. "Plus", he added —

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Four hours, the four hours I spoke about in my previous answer.

**Ms. McLeod:** Okay, thank you. Now, the other part of that question had been whether or not volunteers in the normal course of their duties — how often their remuneration is reviewed and improved upon.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The review is not tied to any regular incremental increase. This was something that we — as Yukon Liberals — committed to in the platform and we made good on that promise. I will endeavour to find out when the last time was that this was done, but I am more than happy to take a look at this on an ongoing basis and I will consider that request from the member opposite, but it was a promise that we made in our platform and we made good on that promise.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, was that in the 2016 platform or the 2021 platform? If it was 2016, great. If it was in 2021, my question would be: What has changed in the last year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the endorsement. The change came this year, as was the four hours, so we made good on that promise to increase the rates under which our volunteers are paid; we made good on that.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, when the minister referenced the increase from \$15.90 per hour to \$19.80 per hour — I believe it was — we were talking about the training component that the minister referenced in his letter from December, because — the minister's words: "We will also increase honoraria for Responders attending improved education and training." — which is great.

So, my question is: For those people who didn't undergo training this year, did they get an increase? When might they?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The commitment was made in our 2021 platform, just for clarity. We made good on that within our first year. We made good on that promise, and as I said in the letter, it is for their training for this, but we're confirming what other benefits they get.

**Ms. McLeod:** I did not hear what it is that the minister is confirming.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am confirming that the promise was made in our 2021 platform.

**Ms. McLeod:** Okay, great. So, I suspect then that the promise was to increase the honoraria for responders attending improved education and training, which, yes, I think we can rely on the minister's words that it has been done.

Back to my question about volunteers who are not undertaking training and improved education that would



qualify them for this funding. I believe they are probably already being compensated in the neighbourhood of \$19.80 per hour. Can they see a raise in the future?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** At some point in the future, they could see a raise.

**Ms. McLeod:** I am sure they will take great comfort in that. Thank you.

I am going to move on now to community pools. Which community pools are getting maintenance this year, and are there any plans for any of our pools to be replaced?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Community Services has worked to upgrade facilities to meet safety standards. They are a lot more exacting today than they were in the past. They have undertaken assessments and repairs over the past two seasons in Ross River, Beaver Creek, and Carcross.

We are replacing the pool in Pelly Crossing, and work is underway to build the new community pool in partnership with the Selkirk First Nation. Our Sport and Recreation branch coordinates with municipal and First Nation partners on the recruitment of staff to operate recreation programs and pools, to bring in specialists as needed for maintenance, repairs, and upgrades, and to train seasonal staff and specialized pool managers.

**Ms. McLeod:** That didn't really answer my question, but I suspect that the minister might know that.

What is the status of the pool in Haines Junction at this time?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The municipal-owned pool in Haines Junction has reached the end of its life and has been closed permanently. I have been in Haines Junction. I know that the municipality is considering options for recreation, including whether and how to replace its pool.

**Ms. McLeod:** What is the status of the pool in Beaver Creek? Will that pool be open this year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Beaver Creek pool requires additional assessment and repair and is not expected to open in 2022.

**Ms. McLeod:** When can the citizens of Beaver Creek expect an update on this, as a way forward?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Our sports and rec folk are in touch with the sports and rec people up in Beaver Creek on a regular basis, as well as our community advisor in the community. They are keeping folks up on the north highway abreast of the situation. If the pool repairs exceed the facility's — if they are more than — if they cost too much, the pool simply will not reopen. We are doing the assessments right now. We are in touch with officials up in Beaver Creek on a regular basis.

**Ms. McLeod:** Can the minister give us an update on the pool in Ross River?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is expected that the pool in Ross River will open this summer, with the successful recruitment of a pool manager.

**Ms. McLeod:** If a community decides that they want or need to have a pool replaced, what is the normal funding mechanism for that?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Normally, the community will come forward with a list of requests under the Investing in Canada

infrastructure fund — we have, I believe, close to \$1 billion in requests for the fund, which has now been totally tapped out. This is in addition to the first stretch of money. We're working with our federal partners, but I know my predecessor in this role and I am asking the communities to prioritize their request to this government and we will then look at the requests as they come in and fund them as we can.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, it's my understanding that the ICIP fund requires a 25-percent investment by the Government of Yukon. For instance, in the case of the pool for Haines Junction, is the Yukon government going to look to download that 25 percent to the municipality of Haines Junction?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my earlier answer, the Village of Haines Junction is looking at what they need within the community and how to proceed with their pool facility. I know they have gas tax and other funds; they could perhaps pool them. I don't know how the Village of Haines Junction and the Government of Yukon will work together to fund a new pool if they decide to proceed with that program. We're still working on that with the Village of Haines Junction.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm going to take it then from the minister's answer that the Yukon government is most likely to require the municipality to use gas tax funding to fund this 25 percent of the Yukon's share.

Since we're talking about municipalities, of course, we know that AYC has their AGM coming up in May. So, some of the issues that we are aware that are likely to come forward — maybe we can get the minister's take on them today. One of those issues is the need for additional funding to support the increased costs that municipalities are facing or have faced through COVID and are continuing to face.

Can the minister provide us with what he believes is the amount of money that municipalities are seeking? Is the minister contemplating providing any additional money to municipalities? Is it covered in this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** First of all, I would really like to correct the record. The member opposite has not captured the conversation I had about Haines Junction correctly. I didn't say that we were forcing Haines Junction to pay for any pool facility with the gas tax. What I said was that we are working with the community to ensure that we know what their priorities are and we will find ways to fund it.

In the past, it was YG that paid the 25 percent of ICIP funding for most recreation projects in rural Yukon. If Haines Junction or any community wanted to fast-track a recreation facility or some sort of facility and wanted to push ahead, they could cover the cost of the 25 percent themselves, perhaps using ICIP, perhaps using the gas tax, perhaps using their own funds.

So, I don't know what Haines Junction is going to do with their pool. I know that they're looking at this. I know that we're working with them on it, and we will find a way forward, if that is indeed the priority they want to proceed with.

As far as the AYC and COVID support dollars, we did provide about \$4.4 million in the last year to help kickstart the communities in the territory that were struggling with COVID. I understand that there is a need to — they have come forward

with a request for more money. We are considering that, but there is no dollar figure associated with that request. We're looking at it as we speak.

**Ms. McLeod:** Something else that is likely to come up at the AYC meeting is moving from a three- to a four-year elected term for elected officials for municipalities. So, if AYC approves that motion, will the minister be tabling legislation to bring that into force?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the hypothetical question from the member opposite. I'll take a look at the motion when it comes forward.

**Ms. McLeod:** Fair enough, but in the normal proceed, as things proceed, I presume that is what would be required. If AYC passes a motion, does it then fall to the minister to table an amendment to the bill — the *Municipal Act* — to allow that to happen? Is that what happens here?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** If I received a hypothetical motion asking for terms to change, I would hypothetically have to amend the *Municipal Act*, yes, to change that term.

**Ms. McLeod:** Okay, if such a thing should come to pass, what would the normal length of time be for the minister to effect that — although — no, I take that back. I mean, I presume that we are going to set this for the next election cycle, so I am not even going to ask the question.

I would like to move on to the Community Development part of the mains. We have \$2.5 million — I am looking at page 6-11 and I don't know if you have the same paperwork that I do here, but — where it talks about, under "Capital", gas tax funded projects — \$2.5 million. Can you tell me which communities that is from, please?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The community projects that we are looking at are projects in Carcross, Judas Creek, Keno, and then three projects that are really identified throughout the territory; they would be electric fence upgrades, solid-waste facility upgrades, and solid-waste facility weigh scales. It just depends on which communities come forward with their concrete plans first.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, when we were at the briefing, I told the officials that I would be looking for a breakdown of the ICIP funding of \$52 million and suggested that perhaps they could get that to me ahead of time, which I have not received. So, today, I would like to have a breakdown of that \$52 million, please.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will endeavour to get the member opposite that list.

**Ms. McLeod:** Well, that's a bit of a problem, because this is our time for debate on this budget. If I don't know what those budget figures are, it's difficult to have a conversation about it. So, I hope the minister can do better, because there was a heads-up given on this.

So, in addition to the \$52 million that is being expended in this budget, there is a line item under "Recoveries" for \$36 million. So, I would like the minister to confirm that, of that \$52 million, \$36 million is being recovered from Canada.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can confirm the number that the member opposite just used is correct. I will also say about the list for the \$52 million — it is complicated, because that's an

envelope. Projects will come in and out, depending on when indeed — where they are in the construction cycle, where they are on the planning cycle, where they are with the municipalities coming forward with their projects. So, the list does change. It is a total envelope of cash through which we fund projects that are ready to go when municipalities are ready to put them forward.

**Ms. McLeod:** Where to even go with that — there's \$52 million in a budget that we're supposed to vote on. The minister cannot tell us today where the money is going. That's a bit of a problem. So, if the minister only has an idea of those projects that have been approved and the rest of it is some kind of rainy-day fund, then perhaps we can have that list of what has been approved.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I've had a long history with rainy-day funds. I really haven't heard that term in a very long time. I know that a former Premier used it — 30 years ago.

This isn't a rainy-day fund; this is a \$52-million envelope for programs that are coming through the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund put forward by municipalities and then approved by Management Board, adhering to the *Financial Administration Act*.

So, there are a whole bunch of funds — a whole bunch of projects available for that fund. They come forward from the municipalities on a daily basis, because it is our municipalities that actually are responsible for managing these projects, and they will then go through the process of — their democratically elected councils will come forward with the money, put those things, and finally they will say, "Hey, why, Yukon government, we actually have the money and the approval now to go forward with said improvements to X building or said project for pipes in the ground", and we will then say, "Fantastic, we have actually approved that through Management Board, and here is the money."

So, it is an approved fund of \$52 million for this year through which projects, as they get approved by municipalities, will then come through that fund and be funded. It does change; it will change. It's not like it is some sort of opaque thing. It is approved projects through the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund, which actually goes through federal Cabinet, which goes through Management Board, and which then goes through democratically elected councils.

It is a bit insulting to municipalities, I am sure, to call it some sort of rainy-day fund.

**Ms. McLeod:** Well, I am not sure what else we would call a fund with no items in it. It is \$52 million — \$52 million of Yukoners' dollars. The minister wants us to say, "Sure, spend it on whatever you like." Yes, I get that there are communities with projects lined up — good — but why can't we know what those projects are? Why can't we know where the money is being spent, instead of saying, "Trust us"? That doesn't work in my own household.

I am disappointed that \$52 million of Yukoners' money, to my mind, remains unaccounted for. That is what this process is for. This budget debate is about identifying where the money is going. It's not like this is a surprise to anyone. This is not the minister's first day at the rodeo, so to say, "I suspect we will

never know where the money went, because there's no after-reporting period; we are just going to know next year what the next ask is, but we won't know where the money went" — this is not accountability. Again, I am pretty disappointed that the minister can't answer these questions on his own department.

Let's move on to "Lot Development". Let's see if we have some success here. Can the minister tell us how many lots in rural Yukon — and in which communities — are set to hit the market this year, in 2022-23?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** While my officials secure the information transparently on the number of lots we're expecting to build in rural Yukon this year, I will say that I'm a little bit surprised by the reaction from the member opposite. We have been having such a lovely conversation this afternoon and I'm really sorry to hear her consternation.

I have said that the work that we're doing here is fully transparent and open. I actually said to the member opposite that I would endeavour to get the member opposite the answer that she was requiring. I said I would endeavour to get her the response, and I will. I absolutely will.

We do have a five-year capital plan that lays out the projects. I can go through it. It's sitting right here.

We have Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation public works facility upgrades; that's \$200,000 to \$500,000. We have Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation water treatment plant upgrades; that's \$1 million to \$2 million. This is all stuff in this line item that the member opposite is talking about. We have an arena replacement of \$1 million to \$2 million in Carmacks. We have a lagoon estimated at \$200,000 to \$500,000. We have a public works building.

It's all here. All these projects are here in the five-year capital plan that we tabled with a budget. They're all highlighted in the 2022-23 line item, and it goes out from there. Once they're built, we see that. We have the Auditor General of Canada monitoring this. We have the good officials in the Department of Finance and the Department of Community Services who are working very hard to make sure that everything is done appropriately and working with municipalities to get the projects out the door in a reasonable time to put Yukoners to work and to give them the infrastructure they want in the most reasonable and efficient method possible and in the most cost-effective way as possible for the people, the territory, and the Government of Canada, as required.

I'm very sorry to hear there is no trust in her household. I think that's a problem, but I really do think that, inside the Government of Yukon, we're making sure that we fund projects that benefit Yukoners in the most cost-effective way possible.

I'm not sure if my officials have come up with a lot number yet for me; they have. Thank you very much. I really do appreciate that.

So, this year, in 2021-22, in Dawson and Mayo — we have two lots in Dawson and three in Mayo, for a total lot release in 2021-22 of five. In 2022-23, rural lots — 20 to 45 rural lots in fiscal year 2022-23 — that would be this fiscal year.

**Ms. McLeod:** I have to respond to the minister's comments about the budget. I find it difficult to fathom that the

minister would put before us a funding pot of \$52 million and say, "Trust us." Now, this is the time that we have to debate this budget, so it is all well and good for the minister to say: "I will get you that information some time down the road." But that doesn't help us during debate on Community Services. It is not like we can call Community Services back at the end of the Sitting when we have the information.

So, yes, I appreciate that the minister and I frequently have very good discussions here in the House when we are talking about Community Services, and I don't mean for this to be unpleasant today, but I do have certain expectations when I am debating money and I don't think that it is too complicated for me.

I am going to move on. Five lots in Dawson and Mayo, 20 to 45 lots somewhere else — and that "somewhere else" is what I would like some information on. Which communities? How many lots?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There's so much work going on throughout the territory on housing development. It's quite remarkable. A lot of these things are happening in municipalities, and in many cases, it's a municipality taking these projects forward. In some cases, the lot development is supported by CS but is really in the municipality's hands. For example, in Carmacks, the target is three- to five-lot country and six-lot urban residential lot development to tender this spring/summer.

In Dawson City, we have the north end development. We have the Dome Road serviced residential development project, which is looking for target approvals very soon. The phase 1 tender could happen as early as 2022; it's up to the municipality. We have industrial mixed-use infill projects. We have vacant lots. We have a completed assessment for multiple vacant city lots in Dawson City, including two Yukon government lots that had been released in 2021, which we were just talking about, and there are two more targeted for 2022.

We have the Dredge Pond 2 country residential, where feasibility work is primarily completed. Master planning is underway to complete it in the spring of 2022, and the phase 1 target tender is the fall of 2022. There is an awful lot that is in Dawson and Destruction Bay. We have Glacier Acres phase 2.

In Faro, we have a possible three-lot servicing and release in 2022. In Grizzly Valley, we have a possible development of 15 to 20 more lots in 2022-23. In Haines Junction, we have seven to 10 potential residential lots as part of water, sewer, and road extension work being done there.

In Keno, there is feasibility work for two to four lots complete and pending next steps, given contamination and regulatory requirements. In Mayo, we have released three country infill, which we just spoke about. Country residential, there is some work being done with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation. In Ross River, a zoning amendment was recently approved for two new industrial lots. Environmental cleanup work led by the Department of Environment is underway.

In Teslin, we're partnering with First Nations. In Watson Lake, we've completed feasibility planning and design work for various country and urban residential and industrial

development projects, all of which are Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board-ready.

The Frances urban development is near tender-ready. The Watson Lake land development, of course, is being done in consideration with the Liard First Nation at the negotiating table, and then of course, there is a whole bunch of other work going.

So, our target is between 20 and 45 lots. You can hear that there is work going on in every community across the territory to get more housing lots into the market.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

### *Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. McLeod:** When we left off, we were discussing lot development and the minister quickly ran through some of the lot development that is going on throughout the territory. My question was: How many are going to hit the market this year? I don't have any clear answer on that, but the minister quickly referenced negotiations going on with the Liard First Nation, with regard to land development, I presume.

I would like the minister to expand on that and talk a little bit more about the subdivision development that has been ongoing in Watson Lake for a great amount of time and was supposed to go to tender at least last year and didn't. I am hoping that the minister can update us on where that tender is at, in addition to the negotiations that are going on with the Liard First Nation.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Just to begin, there was an official community plan that came before my desk. I reviewed it and I have approved it, which means the municipality can now determine how land is used within its borders because they have a new official community plan that I have approved. So, that is in the municipality's hands in Watson Lake.

As far as the negotiations go, I am not negotiating or revealing the state of negotiations on the floor of the Legislature. I wouldn't expect them to do it; I'm certainly not going to do it this afternoon.

We are conducting negotiations with the Liard First Nation through Aboriginal Relations and the Executive Council Office, including overlapping land development items. A part of that of course is that it's a complicated environment, but we're working respectfully with our First Nation partners. That has been an approach this government has taken since we first came into office. We're not abandoning it; we're going to work with our First Nation partners and our municipalities to make sure that we provide the services that Yukoners need going

forward. I'm certainly not going to go into chapter and verse of the negotiations here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

**Ms. McLeod:** Well, I raised it because the minister raised it here first. Obviously, the people of Watson Lake are feeling pretty hamstrung, I guess, by the government's — I don't want to say "inability" because of course the government entirely has the ability to release land, but they aren't.

So, Watson Lake is the same as any other Yukon community; we need lot development. The government has promised lot development and has not delivered. So, simple question: When is that going to be done? When are those lots going to be released? They've been under development for quite some time. So, I would like the minister to tell us when Watson Lake residents are going to be able to buy land to build on to help alleviate their housing shortages. Let's just start there.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I hear the member opposite's frustration. She lives in the community. She knows all of the relationships and negotiations that have to happen to make sure that lot development happens in her community. We have completed feasibility planning and design work for various country and urban residential and industrial development projects, all of which are Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board-ready.

I believe what the member opposite is talking about is the Frances urban development. It's near tender-ready and I have signed off on the official community plan. This is a Watson Lake project. The Watson Lake council was elected by the people of Watson Lake to do lot development on behalf of the people of Watson Lake. We're ready to go. We're waiting to hear from the town council of Watson Lake.

Once we get the go ahead, we're the project manager and we will activate. We have \$2.6 million — \$2.6 million — for lot development in the budget this year. We're optimistic it can go forward, but we'll see. It's a municipal government project and we're waiting to hear from the municipalities for when we can go ahead.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm pretty sure that, having just met with the mayor and council, that will come as quite a surprise to them, but good to hear.

Just to remind the minister, the Frances Avenue development, I believe, was approved in the previous OCP. It's not a change to the OCP; it was simply a carry-forward. So, really, there is no reason I can think of as to why that development has not proceeded, but, of course, I will have that conversation with mayor and council.

The minister did talk to some degree about the number of developments taking place throughout the Yukon, and I had asked if the minister would commit to getting me a list of lots that are going to hit the market this year and in which communities. I would appreciate it if he could commit to that.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question, which I believe was a list of potential lot developments throughout the Yukon. I think that I answered that question with a lot of detail just before our break, so I am sure that the member opposite can comb through that and see all the work — and there is a lot of it — that is happening throughout the territory. I am sure that if

she needs more after reviewing the Blues, she can come forward and I will be happy to try to do that, but providing an actual list is — there is certainly the foundation of a list there. A lot of projects were listed in that answer I gave earlier.

As far as Watson Lake goes, as I said in my previous answer — and I just want to make sure that there is clarity around this issue for the residents of Watson Lake and the member opposite who represents the community — and I would be happy to hear her insights on potential hurdles to development, because I am sure that if it was in the prior OCP, she must have pretty detailed knowledge of some of the hurdles that prevented lot development in Watson Lake over that time from the previous OCP development. I am a relative newcomer to this portfolio, so any insights that she can provide that might help me get those lots out would be greatly appreciated.

As far as Watson Lake town council and the development of lots with the Liard First Nation, as I said earlier in my answer, we are working very closely with the Liard First Nation and the municipality of Watson Lake to get lots out the door so that we can start to provide housing. I have had conversations with the Liard First Nation. We have had conversations with the town council. I was just on the phone with the Mayor of Watson Lake last week, I believe. I had a great conversation with him about some infrastructure projects going ahead and I will continue that conversation, because ultimately, we want lots to be developed in our communities and I am working with that.

The Town of Watson Lake has responsibility for lot development, but it is a very convoluted, difficult, and challenging environment to work in because of the overlapping interests of the Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake. So, we are sorting those issues out. We know that there is a strong desire to get lots out in the Town of Watson Lake, and once our negotiations and our work with the Liard First Nation and the Town of Watson Lake reach some sort of consensus, I am sure that we will be able to get lots out. We are so optimistic, in fact, that we have \$2.6 million in the budget this year to try to make that happen. We are prepared to go once a deal is reached between those two parties. We have a project manager on the job and we are working very hard with our Aboriginal Relations folks to reach a conclusion so that we can get lots out in Watson Lake. When that is going to happen — I'm hoping quickly, but we just don't know. We will have to see how the negotiations continue and resolve.

**Ms. McLeod:** With all due respect to the minister, this money for lot development was in last year's budget as well. So, I just remind the minister of that. The fact that there's money in this year's budget for lot development is not especially comforting.

Now, in the budget there is \$13,562,000 for rural residential. Of course, I will review the Blues to review what the minister referenced, as far as lot development throughout the Yukon, but as I recall, there were limited numbers in that statement that the minister made — but of course, I will review it.

In the meantime, can the minister give us a breakdown of the \$13.5 million designated for rural residential? I don't need

that broken down by lot in this instance; I would appreciate a dollar amount by community.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Haines Junction and area, \$550,000; the Alaska Highway north, \$180,000; Dawson and area, \$4.2 million; Carmacks, Pelly, and area, \$800,000; Watson Lake and area, \$2.6 million — we've been talking about that; Mayo and Keno and area, \$404,000; Teslin and area, \$800,000; Faro, Ross River, and area, \$250,000; Marshall Creek, \$1.85 million; Dawson north end, \$1.92 million; total, \$13.5 million.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister referenced some negotiations that he believes should be taking place in Watson Lake. I'm looking for, I guess, a commitment from the minister — or an agreement, maybe — that the minister is in fact responsible for the *Municipal Act* and will in fact stand behind the *Municipal Act* and allow municipal governments to govern — if I can get that commitment, that would be great.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Under the *Municipal Act*, I have a responsibility — a duty, as a matter of fact — as the minister responsible to ensure First Nations are adequately consulted before approving an official community plan. I also have a duty to uphold and respect the timelines of approving an official community plan.

In Watson Lake, I did both things and signed off on the official community plan for the Town of Watson Lake.

I do support our municipalities; I do support the process, but I do also know that in Watson Lake particularly, where we have an unsettled First Nation, there are overlapping interests that we must also keep in mind and try to work through together so that there is harmony in the community. We are doing that currently with the Liard First Nation and the municipality of Watson Lake.

It is, as I said before, a challenging environment in which to work. I know that the member opposite has intimate knowledge about that. The member opposite knows how difficult and how challenging the relationship can be, but we are committed to working with our municipalities and our First Nations.

Yes, I do support the *Municipal Act* and I do backstop municipalities across the territory.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister said that he was satisfied that the consultation process with the Liard First Nation was met. He was satisfied that the OCP was in order and, because of those things, he approved the OCP. I am at a bit of a loss to understand why we cannot proceed with those approved things that are contained within the OCP.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I've said before, I'm not going to negotiate on the floor of the House. We have Aboriginal Relations and the Executive Council Office, and the folks there are handling the negotiations with the Liard First Nation. There are tables set up for land development. Those talks are ongoing. I have every confidence that those negotiations are going to proceed and come to conclusion when they're ready to come to conclusion.

I do support the official community plan. I do support the municipalities in their desire to develop lots, but I'm also going to respect the negotiating process that is currently in place. I'm

going to await the outcome of that negotiating process at the land development table before we proceed. Work is proceeding on these projects. We have a project manager. We have cleared all the YESAA hurdles, et cetera, and we're just waiting to see what happens with the negotiation process, which is underway. I'm not going to put those negotiations in jeopardy here on the floor of the House.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, the minister is going to wait until negotiations take their natural path. If that takes five years, what's the government's plan for land development in Watson Lake? I ask that because we're telling our professionals, who are currently in the Yukon Housing Corporation, that they have to move. Where are they moving to? There's no land available for them to buy and therefore there are no houses for them to buy — so, rental properties.

So, I'm wondering what this government wants those people to do? What does he want those families to do, who are eager to find suitable housing or to build suitable housing, if this process takes a number of years?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There are processes by which professionals can get housing. I encourage any individual who can't find any to work with their folks to find that housing. We will do our best to do it. I understand these challenges. We are working very hard to get housing built throughout the territory, including in Watson Lake.

We also know that we have a different approach. Our approach, I guess — I have to take it from the member opposite's remarks this afternoon — is at odds with the Yukon Party's on the opposite benches, but we know that working with First Nations is the right thing to do. It is the appropriate thing to do and it is paying huge benefits. That relationship that we are building is paying huge benefits in the territory and we are not going to abandon it today. They have a different approach. We have all seen the outcomes of those approaches, and they weren't entirely successful or good for the territory. We are going to continue on the path that we are on and do our very best to get negotiated agreements so that we can actually get houses into people's hands across the territory.

**Ms. McLeod:** So, the minister's response to my question about what this government is going to do to get land in the hands of the people of southeast Yukon is to bring out his claws. Well, fair enough, if that works for him, but it doesn't work for the people.

So, again, I am going to ask: What is this government's plan should these negotiations go on for a number of years? What is the plan?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The answer is going to be quick and to the point. Our approach and our plan are to work with the First Nation and the municipalities to get land development in Watson Lake, and we're working right now, have been working, and will continue to work. As far as the length of time it takes, it's a hypothetical. The member opposite is throwing a number out and that's her opinion. I think it will happen quicker. So, we're going to continue to work to get land development there.

I do know that in rural Yukon, we are spending more — \$13.5 million roughly — on lot development in rural Yukon

this year. We're spending \$13.5 million in Whitehorse, so more than \$26 million on lot development inside the territory this year. That's what we're investing.

In four years of Yukon Party government, they spent \$24 million. That's the difference. We're spending more in one year than they spent in over four years on lot development. It's a priority for us; we're going to continue to spend that money and get lots out the door.

**Ms. McLeod:** I'm actually going to wrap up my comments for today because there are others who have some questions for this minister.

You know what? The minister can tell me and tell us that there's \$13 million for lot development. We know that's just a number. That doesn't mean there are lots that are going to be developed. We know that there was money for lot development in Watson Lake last year; it didn't get spent. There's money in the budget this year; it doesn't sound like it's going to get spent. So, the number doesn't mean a lot.

So, I'll grant that having this number — I certainly appreciate having this number and I certainly appreciate the breakdown of the figures by community because it's an indicator. Sure, it's an indicator. What gets out the door, I guess, remains to be seen, but I want to thank the officials for their time today. I thank the minister. Perhaps we'll be back to discussion.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for Watson Lake for the last number of days and the questions that have been asked. I do appreciate them.

I am pleased to see the minister and his officials here today. I want to flip up my reading glasses anyway and then I can see your faces. You are all very blurry.

So, one of my favourite things about the Department of Community Services is the sheer number of things that are affected by Community Services, because it is not like the Housing Corporation or Energy, Mines and Resources, and it literally goes all across kind of all aspects. So, I have questions that are really going to go all over the place, and I look forward to the conversation this afternoon.

So, on March 18, the Yukon government put out a press release saying that there would be a review done of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health Act*. So, if the minister can give me an idea of what kind of timeline we can expect and when that review will be underway.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I look forward to the conversation this afternoon with my colleague across the House.

So, the CEMA act review has begun. It is underway; it is in my mandate letter; it is important to us. It is going to be complicated; there's no two ways about it. This isn't going to happen in six months; this is going to be a couple of years to get this act fully reviewed. It's going to involve assessing the flood response; it's going to assess our pandemic response. There are jurisdictional scans that have happened. There are, I believe, 300 or 400 pages of documents that we're undertaking with my predecessor's review process that was begun. All of this is going to be worked into our approach to revising this act, which has its roots in the *War Measures Act* of 1966 — a very old piece of legislation.

We're going to make sure it works with our municipalities, with our First Nation partners, and that it takes into account the lessons we've learned through the pandemic and the floods and fires we have seen in the past. We're also going to make sure that it meshes with our health protection act. It's a complicated process; we expect it to take a couple of years. We have staff resources on it, and that process has begun.

**Ms. White:** So, around that review, I tabled a motion to call a public inquiry around the use of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*. The reason was that I imagine every MLA in this Chamber was contacted by the general public with questions or concerns around how CEMA was used in the last two years.

Is there going to be a public feedback aspect or would there be public engagement for the review of these two important acts?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Whenever we do any large piece of legislation like this — or in this case, a couple of pieces of legislation — we have made it our point to do a public engagement; so, yes, we fully support a public engagement on this important initiative.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. Does he have a timeline or an expectation of when folks will be notified, or has there been any intention of doing a press release to let people know that a public engagement aspect is coming for the reviews of these two acts?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The work, as I said, is proceeding. I haven't seen a Cabinet submission yet or even a Cabinet Committee on Legislation package on this yet, but that is generally where the decisions are initially made, after the initial plan is developed for the rollout of a piece of legislation.

Of course, we have, in the past, let Yukoners know when we are doing an engagement. We have had some very successful engagements — from cannabis to the time zone change to the *Motor Vehicles Act*, which almost overtook cannabis as one of the most successful engagements in Yukon history. It didn't quite get there, unfortunately, but we do have a process and systems by which we communicate with the public when engagements are coming and how they might be involved.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate that answer from the minister, if anything, in the last two years, I would hope that we have all learned the importance of clear and honest communication with the general public. That has been a criticism that we have all heard in the last two years when it has come to communicating around COVID.

So, I guess that is not so much a question but an urging that the minister have that conversation with his colleagues. We often get told that this is a one-government approach and that it is not siloed. So, making sure that communication happens outward — because I know personally that I am getting e-mails from folks who would like to participate in that process, or have feedback, and they would like to share their own experiences for the last two years, and I do hope that the minister is able to do that.

Again, just because he referenced his mandate letter, the mandate letter is listed for July 5, 2021, and so, at this point in

time, it has been a fair number of months. You know, the commitment was made here again in March of this year, but again, that is a fairly lengthy time. So, anyway, I hope that I can encourage the government to reach out to the public and let them know that it is coming or let them know that things are coming in the future.

Another thing that is included in the mandate letter is — it actually mentions very specifically releasing 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers for housing. So, can the minister let me know if 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers has been handed over to Yukon Housing Corporation or if it has now been released for private sector housing development?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers is going out to a competitive request-for-proposals process. That procurement is well underway. We expect to have it done before the end of the session or going out — sorry, not completed, but going out before the public — before the end of the session. That's the estimated timeline right now — or close to the end of the session. It's in process right now to go out for a competitive bid process — a request for proposals. So, that's 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers, and we hope to have some really great proposals there.

As far as my mandate letter goes, the mandate letter was issued in June. We are going to try to complete the review of CEMA during the mandate — is the goal. So, we'll see how that goes — more to come on that, but the mandate letter to come out in June — absolutely. It has been a year of another wave of pandemic knocking the stuffing out of the territory. We're working through this to make sure we get this CEMA review underway and take the lessons learned so we actually have a great piece of legislation for Yukoners before the end of the mandate.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that answer.

Another part in that same bullet point of the mandate letter is supporting the establishment of community land trusts in the Yukon. Can the minister update us on where his department is in the creation of community land trusts in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I really do appreciate the question from the member opposite this afternoon. I'm going to refer back very quickly to her opening remarks because of the number of things that this kitchen sink department that is Community Services touches.

We really do support a lot of departments in the work that we do, specifically, for example, the land trust. I'm told that there will be more information on the land trust coming out this week, as a matter of fact. That's fairly exciting. But really, where CS is involved in the land trust, it is in writing off the land that we actually make available to the trust. It's other departments that we're working with that have a much deeper involvement in the project itself. We are, in this case, support. We have a support role in the land trust, but that work is happening, apparently. I've been assured by my colleague that we should have more information on this coming up, perhaps in a few days.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. Just to follow up on something that he said that I do appreciate, which is that it is in conjunction with the Yukon Housing Corporation. He did acknowledge that his department was responsible for the

land. Can he share with us what parcel of land has been identified for the land trust?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** No, actually, I can't. As I said, I write off the land that is identified by my colleagues, so I'm waiting for that information to come before us and then we will actually do the accounting on that land. I don't have that information before me and I understand it is an exciting project. I can understand my colleague wanting to get a preview, but I don't have that information. Apparently, an announcement is coming in the next few days.

**Ms. White:** I guess having announcements made in press releases before we have the chance to have a conversation here is something that maybe I'll have the opportunity to come back to once that press release comes out.

Another thing that's included in the mandate letter is that it talks about support for the independent review of rural fire services to ensure our system is effective, balanced and considers the challenges that rural communities face when it comes to delivering fire services.

Like my colleagues here on the opposition side, I got a briefing from the minister's department around the report that came out. Can the minister fill me in on where we are as far as the fire-in-a-box concept or community fire departments, for example, in Destruction Bay? Where are we in that process? — making sure. Again, we saw two really sad fires happen in Keno that destroyed, I would say, buildings with historic value and people's personal property. We saw a home destroyed in Destruction Bay. Those are just two communities as examples that don't have fire stations. Where are we in implementing the recommendations of that review?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have continued to meet regularly with the 24 or so residents of Keno. We met in January. We met again. I know the new acting fire marshal met with Keno residents recently — sometime near the end of the month. We're in the process of recruiting two fire champions in that community. Then we have to design a structure for the responsibility for the equipment we're going to dispatch to Keno and then develop how we're going to actually do fire protection in the community, utilizing our new fire protection champions in the community.

We are dedicated to implementing the recommendations of the rural fire services review. It is a high priority for not only my deputy and me, but also for the new fire marshal, who is very excited to start to provide better service to our remote and rural communities.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. It is great to have the intention of increasing our service or our ability to support rural Yukon, but what is really, I think, of particular urgency is the timeline. So, what is the timeline? The minister has just said that there are ongoing meetings and they're looking to recruit two fire champions in Keno before moving equipment into those plants, but what is the timeline? How long do we expect that to take? Let's say, best-case scenario, what is the shortest amount of time in which it could happen?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, as I said, just in the last week or so, we actually had our acting fire marshal get to Keno, talk to the two folks who are now our fire champions in that town. We

are working with them. I don't have a specific timeline at this point, but I will work with the Fire Marshal's Office and endeavour to get that for the member opposite so we actually have some concrete — but this is moving quickly. There are still things to work out, not only getting the training on the fire in the box — who's going to do it. All that type of thing has to be worked out with the two people we have just recruited to do the job, and it is live. I will find out more information from my officials and endeavour to get back to the member opposite.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I think, from the perspective of Keno, they would say that getting rid of the equipment that they had went lightning fast, and so I would hope that we are moving just as quickly to make sure that there is the support in that community.

What conversations have happened with the community of Destruction Bay? There was a fire there recently that destroyed a home. They have concerns about that and the ability to support their community. What conversations are happening in Destruction Bay about support for fire?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In our unincorporated communities, we do need volunteers to run fire services in those communities. Without the volunteer firefighters, it is very difficult to provide firefighter protection services in rural Yukon, which is why we had this review and why we are coming up with solutions, but these solutions are not the ideal solutions. They are basically solutions where we cannot recruit anybody to do fire protection services or recruit a full volunteer fire service, which would be the ideal solution in every community.

I am not sure when the acting fire marshal has scheduled himself to get up to Burwash. I will find that out and again endeavour to get back to the member opposite with that information.

**Ms. White:** So, the minister has just referenced that unincorporated communities — it's all about finding volunteers to volunteer in those positions. How does the department — how does the government actually engage with unincorporated communities around issues that affect them?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Unincorporated communities have a number of avenues with which to make their voice heard. The first, of course, is through their local MLA. Pick up the phone and call your local MLA. You can certainly bring your issues to the forefront that way. That is probably a very effective way of doing it, and the MLA can then get that information to the minister responsible. I know that me and my colleague — my predecessor in the role of Community Services minister — has undertaken a community tour that is extensive throughout the territory. We go to these communities at least once a year. We go as often as we can and meet with local representatives about the issues that matter to them, gather the information and bring it back, and then hand it off to the appropriate minister. If it is us, we take it to the department and start to work.

We also have community advisors who work with, and are known to, these unincorporated communities. You can reach out to the community advisors and get the information that way. We have the Association of Yukon Communities, which is another avenue, and you can get your voice heard that way.



Democracy is important in the territory. If you're an unincorporated community and want a louder voice in the territory, you can always try to make yourself a local area council and start to move yourself toward a more democratic vehicle to make your voice heard, give yourself more structure and give your community more structure. And that's another avenue you can go through, and that's laid out in legislation.

So, there are a number of ways that residents of unincorporated communities can make their voices heard to the government through this Chamber.

**Ms. White:** So, it's interesting that was the minister's take in his feedback, because there is a CBC article dated March 25, 2022, entitled "Yukon ombudsman calls waste transfer stations consultations 'an unfairness'". Just to quote from that, it says: "In a March 4 reply to a complaint about the closure of the waste transfer stations, an investigator from the Office of the Yukon Ombudsman wrote that the four communities — Keno City, Destruction Bay, Silver City and Johnson's Crossings — did not have 'an avenue available to present their views' to a government committee that was looking at waste management, and that it was an 'unfairness.'"

So, it's interesting that the minister said that MLAs could bring it up if people were concerned. Interestingly enough, I don't represent any of those ridings, but I have talked about concerns about closing waste transfer facilities. I can say that the two MLAs representing Pelly-Nisutlin and Kluane have both highlighted concerns for their constituents about closing waste transfer facilities.

So, if MLAs speaking on behalf of residents and highlighting concerns isn't adequate enough to put a stop on something or to encourage more conversation before a decision is met, what does the minister suggest residents in unincorporated communities do to raise concern over issues that have been highlighted by their elected representatives in the Legislative Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this issue this afternoon.

So, to begin, the Ombudsman wrote a letter in response to residents' concerns they brought and found that the Ombudsman didn't have jurisdiction over the decision — and then weighed in on consultation and municipal — or residents' — say in responsible government and cited administered law or something.

Anyway, the reality is that the Ombudsman didn't talk to my colleague — didn't talk to me — about any of the work that was done within our worlds about what happened in these municipal — and how much consultation or what we heard or what we didn't consider or not when we got to the decision table at Cabinet — didn't talk to us. So, there's that.

The other piece is that we have — in Johnsons Crossing, we heard the concerns of — we heard the Johnsons Crossing, for example; it's one example. There are others in Burwash and Keno, all of which we have met — our community advisors have met. We have a very, very good read on what the issues are; we really do. And we have — I have publicly, my officials

have publicly, and my colleague has publicly said that we will work through the issues and we are committed to doing that.

But just because there are issues to work through does not mean to say we're going to reverse a decision that is important to the territory's environment and important in improving waste management throughout the territory.

So, yes, we have made a decision to shut down some transfer stations along the highway — the smallest ones — to make sure that our environment is better protected, so that people are not dumping noxious chemicals, waste, batteries, computers, and old tires in places that are unsupervised, outside the prying eyes — and free — to sully the environment. So, no, we are not willing to do that, and residents don't like that.

There are things that Community Services has committed to, that I have committed to, to address some of the concerns they have about bears and about how they can streamline the way of collection and disposal of their garbage that we are creating in tonnes. Everybody is creating tonnes of garbage, so we have to start to bring a cost — and actually, as I said, municipalities came to us and basically asked my predecessor to deal with this issue, and he, through his ministerial working group, did come up with a solution.

So, we are implementing that proposal, and some people are not happy with it. I understand that. That doesn't mean to say that they haven't been heard. It doesn't mean to say that we are not considering their concerns, that we are not going to work through some of the issues that we have heard. And I have heard them, and so has my predecessor, and so have the community advisors, and so has the media. There has been a very, very wide-ranging and long-lasting discussion about this issue inside the territory in many, many forums.

That is where it comes down to. We have transfer stations that need to be — not transfer stations — our waste management facilities have to be brought into the modern era. We are all generating way too much garbage. We have to pay for that disposal. We have to make sure that we do it in a way that protects the environment so that we don't have sites across the territory — "holes in the bucket", so to speak — where people can dispose of things without any oversight and without any controls. That is what we were asked to do so we actually limit the liability the territory and its municipalities have going forward. It is very, very important that we have that.

As recommended in the Ombudsman's letter, we will continue to provide information to impacted communities as the work progresses and to work with residents to help mitigate the effects of the closure. That has been my public commitment. That's what my predecessor has committed to; that's what the officials have committed to, both in public meetings and to the Ombudsman.

It's not that we haven't heard the concerns; we have heard the concerns and we will work to address them. That doesn't mean to say, though, that we are going to change our minds and create a liability by having unsupervised, uncontrolled sites in the middle of smaller communities where people can dump their waste without any repercussions.

**Ms. White:** I heard the minister's response; I did; I heard it. It's interesting, because we will have citizens be in charge of

building safety around fire issues. We have volunteer EMS crews. We have a lot of responsibility that we share with residents in unincorporated communities. It seems to me that it's odd that we never once looked at running these facilities on a volunteer basis and having, for example, designated drop-off days.

So, I'm going to leave that on the floor with the hopes of being able to come back. When we come back to debate on Community Services, I would like to talk about whether there's an opportunity to have those four rural transfer stations be peopled by volunteers, similar to what we have right now for EMS and fire.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*

### **Written notice was given of the following motion April 4, 2022:**

Motion No. 378

Re: fertility treatment tax credit (Clarke, Y.)



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 61

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, April 5, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Tuesday, April 5, 2022 — 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 made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 376, notice of which was given yesterday by the Leader of the Third Party, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is out of order.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help welcome a number of folks who are here from Autism Yukon and some others. We have with us today Karen Macklon, who is the president of Autism Yukon; we have Courtney Macleod, the acting director; we have Kristine Carruthers, who is a board member of Autism Yukon; we have May Blysak, who is here as a grandma; and Heather Hierlihy. Thank you so much for all being here.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of Autism Awareness Month**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to recognize Autism Awareness Month, which is observed around the world every April. World Autism Awareness Day was officially designated by the United Nations 15 years ago in 2007. This day encourages us all to raise awareness of autism in all levels of society. What began as a single day has grown into an entire month of awareness committed to creating a more inclusive world for autistic people.

Autism Canada and other organizations have started to refer to April as "autism acceptance month". We need to move past the idea of just being aware of autism, which affects one out of every 66 people. The time has come for our society to fully accept autism by truly embracing our autistic community members and moving toward a society that is equal, open, and inclusive. We need to strengthen our efforts to make autistic people feel welcome in the world, in our schools, in our work places, and wherever barriers currently exist.

This change reminds us that language is critically important. Words matter. There is a shift toward saying "autistic people" and not "people with autism" or "people living with autism". This shift is known as "identity first" language. It acknowledges that autism is not a burden to be

lived with; it is an integral part of a person's identity, their personality, and their true selves. This shift in language identifies distinct communities of people who want simply to be accepted for who they are.

Today is a wonderful opportunity to recognize Autism Yukon as they mark their 15<sup>th</sup> year. Since 2007, Autism Yukon has been working to improve the lives of autistic people and to provide supports and resources to them and their families.

On April 4 and 5, the Canadian Autism Spectrum Disorder Alliance is hosting the Canadian Autism Leadership Summit.

This event is a yearly gathering for autistic self-advocates, service providers, and policy-makers. This year's summit will have satellite sites in eight cities across Canada. These locally run, in-person events are being held in Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, Québec, and here in the Yukon.

Members of our autistic community will no doubt be excited to have this opportunity to connect with people across the country and to share and to have their voices heard. Congratulations and thanks to the staff and members of Autism Yukon and to all of the other professionals, volunteers, and caregivers who dedicate themselves to enhancing the quality of life for autistic people and their families.

It is important to recognize Autism Awareness Month, but we must remember that every day is a day to be accepting, inclusive, and kind.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April as national Autism Awareness Month and this past Saturday, April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day.

We rise today in recognition of the millions of people living with an autism spectrum disorder diagnosis to raise awareness and hopefully help to address key knowledge gaps in our understanding of the disorder across Canada. Autism spectrum disorder, or ASD, is mainly diagnosed in children at an early age. It is often found in the absence of a range of developmental markers, such as eye contact, speech, and communication, and a range of unexpected sensory reactions.

According to a 2018 report on the national autism spectrum disorder surveillance system, approximately one in 66 children and youth are diagnosed with ASD in Canada. Each case of ASD is unique and it affects every individual differently. As such, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to either a diagnosis or therapy.

Parents and family members will agree that ASD also has a range of effects on families and caregivers. It is stressful, challenging, and emotional, and it is okay to ask for support from family, friends, and the community.

To all Yukoners, being understanding, accommodating, and compassionate goes a long way for people with ASD and their families. There is also great power in neurodiversity and some incredible attributes and skills that come with having distinct ways of thinking and doing things.

Attention to detail, deep focus, increased observational skills, deep concentration, knowledge retention, creativity, determination, and resilience — these are just some of the

incredible features of the neurodiverse mind that result from different ways of thinking and doing.

We would like to thank Autism Yukon and the staff and professionals at the Child Development Centre for the work they do with children and families. Having resources such as these in our community is critical, and their dedication to Yukoners means so much.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Autism Acceptance Month. I choose those words deliberately. Autism Acceptance Month was created by and for autistic people to change the conversation about autism. Rather than seeing autism as a threat, they wanted to talk about support, inclusion, and celebration of autistic people with their voices at the centre.

So, today, I would like to do that by quoting from a statement by the Autistic Self Advocacy Network about Autism Acceptance Month: “Autism acceptance means respecting the rights and humanity of all autistic people. It means centering the perspectives and needs of autistic people with intellectual disabilities, nonspeaking autistic people, and autistic people with the highest support needs — not by speaking over them, but by listening and looking to them as leaders. It means fighting to ensure that the universal human rights of all autistic people are respected, including and especially the rights of those autistic people with the most significant disabilities. And autism acceptance means recognizing the ways ableism and racism interact in our society, following the leadership of autistic people of color, and making anti-racism a core part of our work.”

This month is a time to celebrate the autistic people in our society and for us all to commit to building a more accepting world.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Celebration of Swans festival

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Happy spring, Mr. Speaker. Joyeux printemps.

As I have said before, spring is one of the top of the four seasons here in the Yukon. As such, it is definitely worth celebrating. For Yukoners, there is one iconic species that helps us to mark spring. I rise today to pay tribute to the return of our largest migratory species making their way to Alaska — the majestic honking RVs; just kidding, Mr. Speaker. It’s swans. Yesterday marked the launch of our beloved Celebration of Swans festival. Each April, beavies of swans, rafts of ducks, and gaggles of geese rest and feed on M’Clintock Bay as a stopover on their long migration to northern nesting grounds. Many will fly several thousand kilometres in wedges. For some, Swan Haven is only halfway on their journey north.

Yukoners and visitors can enjoy this spring wonder at Swan Haven on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün and Carcross/Tagish First Nations. The Swan Haven Interpretive Centre opened nearly 30 years ago, and every year

it helps to educate, animate, and inspire us with the beauty of our natural world springing forward.

The centre hosts approximately 4,000 visitors every year, and those are human visitors. There are way more swans every year. The Swan Haven Interpretive Centre is open daily from April 1 through May 1, and it offers indoor and outdoor exhibits, learning activities for all ages, an on-site guide to answer questions, daily swan counts, and an amazing shoreline trail with spectacular views of the birds and the Yukon spring.

In celebration of spring and getting outdoors in the fresh air and the awesome, incredible amazingness of nature, here is a snippet of one of my favourite songs from the band Mes Aïeux:

Elles arrivent au printemps  
Sur les ailes du vent,  
Par les routes de l’air

Drôle de géométrie  
C’est un fil qui les lie,  
Dans leur vol angulaire...

Quelle belle leçon  
Que ces oiseaux nous font  
Obstinés et fidèles.

Faudra qu’on se console  
Et qu’ensemble on s’envole...  
Dans les draps bleus du ciel

This translates very roughly to: They come in the spring, on the wings of the wind, by routes in the air, their strange geometry is a thread that binds them in their flight angular. What a great lesson — what these birds show us, stubborn and loyal, we console ourselves that together we fly away in the sky of blue royal.

Happy spring, Mr. Speaker. Joyeux printemps.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Swan Haven and the Celebration of Swans. Yukoners look forward to April of each year. With April comes the promise of swans, and with the swans comes the promise of beautiful days to come.

Most are familiar with Swan Haven, located on M’Clintock Bay. Swan Haven offers access to the shoreline for those who wish to venture close to the swans or have guided and informative tours by local swan experts. For those less inclined to view the swans up close, there is an incredible lookout, complete with binoculars.

If anyone is interested in the running tally of the birds, of all the species to visit M’Clintock Bay, there is a link to the Celebration of Swans page on the Yukon government website. It’s pretty spectacular, with tallies populated by all the observers. As of yesterday’s update, there were 338 trumpeter swans observed in the bay. That number will steadily climb, already more than doubling in a day.

I encourage Yukoners to check out the activities and events planned this year for the Celebration of Swans. It is guaranteed that there will be an activity for every age and activity level.

I would also like to mention that McClintock Bay Adventures, right next door to Swan Haven, offers additional amenities to visitors, such as parking, shoreline access, and the convenience store for snacks. They will be open through the summer for camping, cabins, canoe and kayak rentals, and more. A lot of work has been put into this wonderful business, and it's definitely worth a visit this spring and summer.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention my Kluane constituents. On May 15, there will be a swan walk in Kluane country. This walk is free for all. Meet at noon at the Kluane Museum of History in Burwash to learn about the swans and join on a guided walk by a Kluane First Nation elder. Be sure to bring your lunch and some rubber boots and go check this out.

Thank you to the Environment staff — especially Swan Haven staff — and the experts for the work that they do to give the swans a warm welcome every year.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to welcome the swans back to the Yukon. A sure sign of spring in the Yukon is the arrival of the swans at the conjunction of the M'Clintock River and Marsh Lake. The open water and access to food at the bottom is an invitation to thousands of trumpeter and tundra swans, along with many other types of waterfowl, to rest on their long journey north. Yukoners enjoy this opportunity to go and welcome spring and swans in this yearly ritual. Regardless of the snow still heaped in our yards and our gardens still buried under many feet of snow, the swans loudly proclaim the arrival of spring. Even throughout the night, you hear them at Swan Haven, gathering together, exchanging greetings, and catching up on their winter away from each other. It is truly a magical experience.

A big thanks to all of the staff and volunteers who make Swan Haven a welcoming place, not just for the swans and waterfowl, but for the Yukoners of all ages who flock there to welcome spring back to the Yukon.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a media briefing, dated April 5, entitled "Conservative Yukon Party Leader unconditionally supports Carbon Pricing system through his 2021 platform commitment to build a Made-In-Yukon-Party-Headquarters pricing system."

**Ms. Tredger:** I have for tabling a letter from All Genders Yukon Society, dated March 31, 2022, confirming their endorsement of Bill No. 304.

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

## Point of order

**Speaker:** Mr. Streicker, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, I just heard one of the members opposite refer to my colleague tabling documents as "a joke". I think that it is not appropriate for this House.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister did not cite a point of order and he seems to be making up points of order to call here. It would seem to me that the minister is off-track yet again.

## Speaker's ruling

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

Are there any reports of committees?  
Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 11 — response

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I rise today to respond to a petition presented to this House on March 23, 2022, which urges the Government of Yukon to have a public forum regarding the rationale behind the pandemic policies of the past two years.

In responding to this petition, it is important to highlight the proactive, open, and transparent approach that our government has taken since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Throughout the pandemic, the Government of Yukon has worked closely with the office of the chief medical officer of health to keep Yukoners informed and has provided essential public health information as the territory's situation evolved.

More specifically, since the beginning of the pandemic, our government has taken a number of steps to directly reach Yukoners, including: 122 COVID-19 livestreams with the office of the chief medical officer of health to provide updates on the status of COVID-19 in the territory and government support programs — and this will soon be 123 as I will be joining the acting chief medical officer of health for another update tomorrow; over 540 COVID-19-related news releases issued to keep Yukoners informed; staff working seven days a week to answer e-mails and phone calls coming in through the COVID-19 information line, with over 49,228 COVID-19-related phone calls being answered to date; over 370 letters responded to by the Cabinet Office on behalf of 13 different departments to address Yukoners' concerns and questions about the pandemic; hundreds of yukon.ca webpages updated regularly to ensure that Yukoners have access to the most up-to-date information online; the launching of the COVID-19 dashboard in February 2022 to share data on vaccination rates, case counts, testing, hospitalizations, with the addition of interactive graphs, maps, and detailed summaries of data over time; and nearly 90,000 first, second, and booster COVID-19 vaccinations given out to the territory.

The government continues to meet with Yukon First Nation leadership as well as community and municipal leaders to discuss and coordinate the territory's ongoing response to the pandemic and its impacts on Yukoners. Furthermore, our government has launched, and continues to support, several

initiatives and programs to support Yukon businesses. This approach by our government to protect the health and well-being of Yukoners, all while supporting our businesses and industries, is in contrast to the approach that the Yukon Party, which tabled this petition, would have taken if they were in government.

Since the onset of the pandemic, the Yukon Party has openly attacked the chief medical officer of health and undermined and ignored the professional public health advice provided by the office. They have urged the Yukon to keep our borders open with British Columbia and Alberta for non-essential travel early on, which would have allowed the virus to enter the territory more frequently, and they have undermined the confidence in public health measures, mask use, and other measures that have effectively mitigated the spread of COVID-19 in our territory.

This past fall, the Yukon Party also presented another petition urging our government to immediately rescind all vaccine requirements. These measures were taken to promote the health and the safety of Yukoners, and they have been effective in preventing the most severe impacts of COVID-19.

Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, this Yukon Liberal government followed the science and prioritized the health of Yukoners, all while protecting the livelihoods of those across the territory. We have taken significant steps to keep Yukoners informed throughout the pandemic, and we are also in the process of reviewing the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and the *Public Health and Safety Act*, which will modernize and strengthen the Yukon's approach to emergency management so as to ensure that the Yukon can be better prepared to address future emergencies as they come.

We will continue to work in collaboration with our partners so that Yukoners across the territory have the health information that they need to make the best decisions possible for themselves, for their families, and for their communities.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create a refundable tax credit to subsidize the cost of certain fertility treatments provided by medical practitioners or in fertility treatment clinics and for surrogacy-related medical expenses.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to announce their plans for implementing the advice of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization to prepare for the rapid deployment of a second COVID-19 vaccine booster dose program for adults 70 years and older living in the

community and residents of long-term care and congregate living facilities for seniors.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make available second COVID-19 booster shots for adults aged 70 and older in accordance with the recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Immunization.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to congratulate the Staten Island warehouse workers who organized, voted, and formed the first Amazon workers' union in the United States on Friday, April 1, 2022.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Housing initiatives fund

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall, I announced the launch of the fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund. Today I can share with you how this year's successful applicants are increasing the availability of affordable homes across the territory.

The housing initiatives fund provides capital grants to First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and individuals to create affordable housing throughout the Yukon. The fifth intake generated 29 applications, including project concepts and shovel-ready projects, and 13 of those projects have been approved.

Eleven shovel-ready projects will create hundreds of new affordable homes in Carmacks, Dawson City, Haines Junction, Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. These projects include: \$640,000 for eight new homes in Mayo in partnership with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun; \$1 million for 10 new homes in Haines Junction in partnership with Champagne and Aishihik First Nations; \$1 million for 15 new homes in Watson Lake in partnership with Liard First Nation; \$1 million to further support the conversion of the High Country Inn to create 55 new affordable homes in Whitehorse; again, \$1 million for 50 new homes in Whitehorse in partnership with HTTVB Real Property; \$1 million for 32 homes in Whitehorse in partnership with the Northern Community Land Trust; \$1 million for 13 new homes in Whitehorse in partnership with Kwanlin Dün First Nation; and a combination of \$560,000 for four new homes in Whitehorse, two new homes in the Mendenhall area, and one new home in Dawson City, put together, again, with individual Yukoners.

This year, our government increased the available funds from \$60,000 per home in Whitehorse and \$90,000 for rural Yukon to a maximum of \$100,000 per home, or \$1 million per project across the territory.

Since 2018, the housing initiatives fund has allocated over \$20 million while leveraging millions more in private sector partnership funds toward the creation of affordable housing projects across the Yukon. The five program intakes are



successfully supporting over 50 projects, of which 14 are now completed and 19 are under construction. The agreements for the remaining projects are still being finalized. These projects together are contributing to the anticipated construction of over 590 new homes across the territory, with about 480 meeting the definition, again, of “affordable home”.

The next intake for the housing initiatives fund will be in November 2022. Again, I look forward to seeing more affordable homes being built through the innovative program, and I want to thank all of our community partners in helping to ensure that every Yukoner has a safe and affordable place that they can call home.

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

As has been stated in this Assembly many times, housing is a huge issue for Yukoners. All three parties can agree that more needs to be done to get affordable and attainable housing on the market. That is why we support initiatives to create housing, and an increase of \$2.1 million in this year’s budget for the housing initiatives fund is certainly nothing to sneeze at. We are pleased to hear the minister’s announcement today that 13 new projects have been approved under this fund. We are happy to see projects not only in Whitehorse, but also in the communities. I know that residents in Mendenhall, Mayo, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, and Dawson City will be pleased about the projects for their community.

We were already aware of projects under this fund, including Boreal Commons, the High Country Inn Safe at Home project, and the Cornerstone building. When the minister is on his feet, I am wondering if he can provide an update on the Safe at Home project.

The minister says today that an additional \$1 million will be going toward this project. Does this mean that the project is already overbudget?

I’m also wondering if this project will indeed be ready by the fall, as stated in the January press release. Also, we are wondering if operating models for those three previous projects have been worked out.

We know that the need is there for affordable and high-density housing situations. We hope that current and future projects are not bogged down in red tape and become a reality so that new and long-time Yukoners can find the proper home to suit their needs and enjoy all that the Yukon has to offer.

**Ms. Tredger:** This is a welcome announcement, and the Yukon NDP would like to congratulate all the successful applicants and to thank them for the work they are doing to tackle the housing crisis. We’re particularly happy to see the emphasis for this fund this year on seniors, low-income tenants, people who are homeless, and youth. This is an important shift toward making sure that new housing doesn’t just benefit Yukoners who can afford the ever-rising rents or who are able to save up for the huge sums required for a down payment.

I do worry about handing over big envelopes of cash to private sector developers instead of using low- or no-interest loans. I don’t think it’s the government’s role to dole out money to an industry that’s already very profitable and facing high

demand for their products. I’m glad that, in this year, the majority of this fund is going to municipalities, First Nations and their development corporations, and community housing providers like the Safe at Home Society.

I’m particularly excited to see the Northern Community Land Trust receive funding in this fund. This is a crucial piece of ensuring that the housing stock we build is not affordable just today, but in the long term too. The Yukon NDP proposed a very similar idea in our platform, and we’re very happy to see it becoming a reality.

Projects like this are critical because we have an enormous housing affordability problem in the Yukon. When the government makes decisions about which projects get funded, it needs to consider the question: Who will be able to afford these homes? It appears that the housing initiatives fund is taking steps in this direction, and I hope to see that trend continue.

I do wonder about the 16 applications that did not get funded. I’m hoping the minister can tell us if these projects were denied on the basis of their applications, or was there simply not enough money budgeted for all the potential projects? It would certainly be a shame to have turned down partnerships that could have helped to ease the housing crisis because this government failed to budget for them. I look forward to more information from the minister about that.

Again, thank you to all of the partners who are making these projects happen.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Thank you to both of the opposition members for their comments.

Again, I’ll just quickly go through some of the questions that were asked concerning Safe at Home. The \$1 million allocation was part of what we looked at for the existing budget for that.

Certainly, we can get into a longer dialogue. We haven’t had a debate yet in Committee of the Whole on our housing budget for this year, and I think that will be a really good opportunity to answer more of the detailed questions that have been posed today concerning things such as operating models that I just won’t have time in the next couple of minutes to get into.

I absolutely agree; I think that red tape is something that I don’t want to be dealing with, and when you see red tape come into play to stop projects, that’s something that we need to deal with. I appreciate the comment from the member opposite.

As well, the 16 applications — I think when we get into debate we’ll have an opportunity to go through, because I’ll get some more detail, if those projects or applications needed more detail, if they wanted to hold off — there is usually a number of different things that come into play on those decisions.

We’ve highlighted several of the approved shovel-ready projects in my opening statement. These projects will create a total of 44 homes in rural communities and a total of 138 homes in Whitehorse. We have also approved project concepts developed by community organizations Connective and Grey Mountain Housing Society that would create another 80 homes.

The development of a total of 262 new homes are receiving funding through this fifth intake of the housing initiatives fund. This fund continues to incentivize the development of long-term affordable housing across the Yukon. It requires that homes are energy efficient as well and that 20 percent of the homes in a multi-unit building are accessible. Additional consideration is given for projects that directly support needs along the Yukon's housing continuum, prioritize the needs of seniors, lower income tenants, people experiencing homelessness, youth aged 18 to 25, full housing solutions for First Nations, and support staffing strategies for local businesses and all levels of government.

Some of the larger projects that have previously received funding we touched on today — the Boreal Commons project, as well as the Cornerstone building. I think we can talk a bit more about the operating when we get into budget debate.

It's great to see some of these long-standing housing gaps in the territory being filled through partnerships and innovative projects. I do believe in the work that we're doing here. There might be a difference on the funding model or the financing model, but I think it shows that it's working here.

Over the last four years, there have been more than 1,000 new homes built in Whitehorse. That's a 60-percent increase over the previous four-year period. I think we have something that's working very well here.

In the last two years alone, the municipalities across the territory have issued almost 1,300 permits for residential construction — significantly higher than the historic average. In 2021, residential construction investment in the territory hit a record high with \$267 million being invested to build homes in the territory, shattering the 2020 record of nearly \$200 million.

Again, in this year's budget, we've included \$60 million for housing initiatives across the Yukon and \$255 million in capital alone over the next five years to support access to stable, affordable housing to allow for future development.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Financial support for fertility treatment and surrogacy-related expenses

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

For Yukon families who struggle with fertility, the idea of starting a family is complicated and difficult. Not only are infertility challenges extraordinarily stressful, but the cost of fertility treatments and surrogacy-related medical expenses are significant barriers. One way that government can help with this is by providing financial support to hopeful parents who struggle with infertility.

Will the Government of Yukon help Yukon families who face challenges starting a family by creating a new program to provide financial support for fertility treatments and surrogacy-related expenses and travel?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm pleased that the members opposite have been reading our platform from back in 2021. Of course, this was included in the platform for the Liberal Party

and for all those who ran as members of the Liberal Party. It is an important issue. Our Department of Health and Social Services has begun looking at this issue to determine, first of all, cross-jurisdictionally, how it can be done in other jurisdictions and how we might make it available here to Yukon families. I appreciate that I have the opportunity to reiterate our commitment to Yukon families who are struggling with fertility and the opportunity to speak about the good work of the Department of Health and Social Services.

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat.

One of the most common fertility treatments is in vitro fertilization, or IVF. A single round of IVF can cost as much as \$25,000 to \$30,000 and requires a trip down to a larger city like Vancouver for as much as a week. And that's just one round.

Currently, most Yukoners are required to pay this out of pocket.

Will the Yukon government consider developing a new program to help defray some of the significant costs faced by Yukoners who face fertility challenges?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think I just said that, of course, we will be doing that. We are developing a program to support Yukon families who are struggling with prenatal or fertility issues. I should note that we do support Yukon families already in many ways for portions of this particular issue and the medical care that is required.

Our government is ensuring that families have access to the services that they require in their home communities, as much as we can, by continuing to enhance services. A newly formed working group explores prenatal supports for at-risk expectant individuals and is working with communities. We continue to support — as I have said, in our platform, was a commitment made publicly during the election and also made publicly by the Department of Health and Social Services since then. We will continue to support this important service for Yukon families.

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat. For those struggling with fertility and for those who need to access fertility services in order to have a baby, there is a significant negative impact on their mental health. These impacts are compounded by the significant financial costs that come with the already stressful situation. Other jurisdictions have various supports in place, but there is very little support here in the Yukon.

When will the government launch a program to provide financial support to Yukoners who are unable to have babies and who need to access fertility treatments or surrogacy-related costs?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Our government has committed — as I have said here, as well as in our platform — to supporting Yukoners in creating reproductive care plans. As part of this process, we are looking to subsidize the cost of fertility treatments and the related medical travel. Additionally, we are also looking at supporting Yukoners who might need birth control or period products. We recognize that nearly one-quarter of women here in Canada struggle to afford menstrual products, and that is completely and utterly unacceptable.

I should note that there is coverage for birth control for youth enrolled in the children's drug and optical program, which is coverage that we have. Services and funding are also provided to the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic to support clients who receive birth control if they're in financial need. Yukon health care insurance plan provides coverage for a consultation for initial fertility testing, including certain follow-up tests, such as ultrasounds, examinations, and some types of pregnancy tests. We are committed to supporting Yukon families.

At this time, just as a note, it might be of interest — Ontario is the only Canadian jurisdiction that provides some insured coverage for in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, or intrauterine insemination, but we are looking at this issue to help Yukon families.

**Question re: Magnetic resonance imaging program**

**Mr. Cathers:** Last week, the Minister of Health and Social Services revealed that the wait-list for non-urgent MRIs is around 1,000 people and wait times are as much as 20 months.

Following that, the minister told the *Yukon News*: "... medical professionals have the option to send patients down to Vancouver if an urgent need can't be accommodated in the Yukon."

That costs a lot more per MRI, and it's not an efficient way to provide service to 1,000 people on the MRI wait-list. In November, the CEO of Yukon Hospital Corporation told this House that they have a plan to improve wait times, which includes two things: looking for temporary resources to address the backlog and adding permanent staff to run extended service hours for the MRI on a more sustainable basis.

Has the minister included any money in this budget to help the hospital specifically address the MRI wait time backlog, and if not, why not?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm very pleased to rise to respond to a preamble and a question of which I agree with almost all of what was been said by the opposite party. I don't often have that opportunity.

Certainly, the MRI wait times are considered to be unacceptable for us. The Yukon Hospital Corporation, which has the responsibility of providing the service through their funding to them — through the funding from the government — is working on the issue.

I guess I want to make sure we emphasize and remind that currently wait times for patients who require an urgent MRI here in the territory are less than seven days. The Whitehorse General Hospital endeavours to support semi-urgent cases to access MRI services as close to 30 days as possible, and in February, which is the last statistic I have — from February 2022 — semi-urgent cases were being completed within 44 days. For non-urgent cases, as noted, the wait time is past that, of course.

The work at the Hospital Corporation is currently using a combination of locum and casual technologists to ensure acute care in time-sensitive cases.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, the CEO of the hospital said wait times for MRIs are too long, but they need the resources of government to act on that. The simple fact is that the quickest way to reduce the wait-list and wait times for MRIs is for the government to finally provide more resources to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The minister has already acknowledged that the current capacity is insufficient. Will the minister now agree to finally provide the Yukon Hospital Corporation with additional resources so they can hire more staff and the wait-list and wait times for MRIs can be reduced?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** By investing in the territory's healthcare system, our government is increasing access to medical services while reducing wait times and the need for out-of-territory medical travel; we agree on that. A total of \$88 million will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to continue providing Yukoners the best possible care and services. We have, once again, increased the Hospital Corporation operation and maintenance budget, as we have in each of the last five years, to ensure that Yukoners receive the standard of care that they deserve.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, what the minister is glossing over is that there has been chronic underfunding by this Liberal government to the hospital, including some years with their increase being less than the rate of inflation. When the hospital appeared before the Legislature last fall, they told us that current MRI wait times are well beyond what they would like them to be. The CEO said — quote: "Semi-urgent wait times, which should be 30 days or less, are approximately 54 days, and we like to see non-urgent wait times at less than six months, but they are around an 18-month wait time."

Last week, the minister told us that things have gotten even worse and are now closer to 20 months. The CEO also told us the solution: They need new permanent staff to run an extended service for MRIs. So, will the minister agree to provide the hospital the new funding they need so that they can increase capacity and shorten MRI wait times?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the senior leadership at the Yukon Hospital Corporation for our renewed relationship between their work and the work of the Department of Health and Social Services. Of course, we meet regularly and we discuss the kinds of issues that have been brought up here because they are critically important to Yukoners.

We have invested in the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We have a total in this budget of \$88 million that will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation and continue to provide Yukoners with the best possible hospital care.

I think it's incredibly important, based on the preamble in the question, to emphasize that, once again, we have increased the operation and maintenance budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as we have in the past five years — each and every year of the past five years — which is certainly more budget provided to the Yukon Hospital Corporation than was ever done by the former government.

**Question re: Inclusive and special education**

**Ms. White:** In 2009, the Auditor General released an abysmal review of our education system under the Yukon Party. The Department of Education was failing students across the board, especially indigenous and rural students and students in need of special and inclusive education.

In 2019, 10 years and two governments later, another report was released, and not much had changed. Education was continuing to fail Yukon children. The Liberal government has said that they're committed to fixing inclusive education in the territory, but they have failed to deliver.

Can the minister tell Yukoners why, after nearly six years of promises from this government, the education system is still leaving children behind?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I had opportunity to speak about this already this week. It's a really important question, and I thank the member opposite for bringing this to the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Yes, in 2019, we received an Auditor General's report that was not much different from the 2009 report. I want to really focus Yukoners' attention on the fact that the 2019 report really does reflect on the Yukon Party's performance. Ten years is a long time, and the Auditor General's report of 2019 clearly says that there wasn't enough action, if any, in really key areas.

What I want to say to Yukoners is that we are focused on true action. The Yukon Party left our children behind. We have a generation of children who did not benefit from the changes that were recommended by the Auditor General of Canada. We take those reports very seriously.

The difference between 2019 and 2009 is our response, and I'm happy to continue to build on my answer.

**Ms. White:** It's nearly six years — four and a half years of those as a majority government — and I would think that if this government actually cared about children, something would have been done by now, instead of blaming the previous government.

After a shocking pre-election announcement that the government had unilaterally decided to cut individualized education plans, they backed down — not willingly, of course. We all know that the Yukon NPD and public pressure forced them into reinstating IEPs.

While Yukoners are happy to see IEPs reinstated, we keep hearing from parents because their children are not receiving the supports that they are entitled to. As Autism Yukon states in the letter that we tabled yesterday, IEPs are not just a piece of paper to be filed in a filing cabinet; supports actually need to be in place for these students.

Will the minister tell parents when their children can expect to start receiving the supports that they are entitled to, as directed in their IEPs?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I do have to continue building on the answer around what we have done as a government since the 2019 Auditor General's report. We take our responsibilities very seriously. Despite the fact that we entered in quickly to a global pandemic in 2020, we launched a review of inclusive and special education. We felt that we needed to respond — the former minister needed to respond to the important

recommendations that were brought forward. We launched our universal childcare model. We enhanced early kindergarten in rural communities. We established the Yukon First Nation School Board. We advanced, again, the review of inclusive and special education. We created a data-sharing MOU with First Nations, and recently, we announced the work to develop a student outcome strategy, which is underway.

So, we have taken very, very clear steps. In terms of inclusive and special education, we have launched a number of working groups to dig deeper into all of the areas that need to be addressed that were pointed out in Nikki Yee's report. I will continue to build on my question and move on —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. White:** So, in response to the 2019 Auditor General's report on education, the government made great promises to collaborate with stakeholders in an effort to move forward. However, in what seems to be this government's signature move, they called a summit — a summit that, according to education partners, ended up being a simple online workshop for Department of Education staff with an option to join committees.

Autism Yukon's letter to the Public Accounts Committee states — and I quote: “The urgency of these suggestions is currently being lost in the development of committees ... these very concrete suggestions do not need any more discussion. They simply need action.”

So, Mr. Speaker, when will this minister start listening to experts and start taking concrete actions?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that I have been really clear in terms of our commitment to work with partners, including Autism Yukon, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, the Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon, Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and many others, all of whom are represented in one way or another on really key committees that we work with — Yukon First Nations Education Commission and our advisory committee on education.

In terms of the work that has been done, yes, we do have communities of inquiry. We need to bring everyone along with us. Making top-down, unilateral types of decisions, I think, would not be acceptable to Yukoners. To realize the change that we're seeking, we need to help people to trust in our intentions and do the hard work to create the change that needs to happen — again, a long time in the making.

I know that there is an inherent tension between getting to action and swift response and taking the time needed to build trusting relationships. That is what we're committed to doing.

I'm happy to continue answering questions about this and working with all of our partners.

**Question re: Finlayson caribou herd**

**Mr. Istchenko:** In November of last year, I asked the Minister of Environment for an update on the efforts taken to help recover the Finlayson caribou herd. At that time, the minister said he was not in a position to answer. We're hoping that he has now been briefed.

In 2018, the former minister announced the closure of the hunting opportunities for both licensed hunters and outfitters. Since then, the hunting community has been looking to see that the department takes real steps to help the herd to recover.

So, other than just closing hunting, what steps has the department taken to help the herd to recover?

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

The size of the Finlayson caribou herd peaked in 1990. Since then, the department has monitored a declining trend in the size of the herd.

We continue our efforts to work with Liard First Nation and Ross River Dena Council to stabilize the number of Finlayson caribou, including addressing harvest levels.

In order to address our shared concerns for the herd, as indicated by the member opposite, no resident hunting permits have been issued for the Finlayson caribou since the 2018-19 hunting season. Outfitter quotas have been set at zero for this herd. This was a commitment we made in 2018, and that continues to today's date.

Since the closure of the licensed harvest of Finlayson caribou, we have continued to monitor the herd with annual composition surveys. Composition surveys provide estimates of adult sex ratios and calf recruitment and allow us to monitor long-term population trends. We plan to conduct a population survey of the Finlayson herd in 2022 — this year — and we will share those results on yukon.ca.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I asked what steps have been taken to recover this herd. It has been since 2018. It sounds like the minister, like his response when I asked him before, just says that they are working on it.

As we pointed out previously, we have concerns that the Liberal government has been too quick to shut things down, but too slow, like I said previously, to take action to help wildlife populations recover. In 2018, the minister said that while they were closing down hunting of the Finlayson herd, they would have what she called a “collective management plan” within six months. That is a long time ago.

Can the minister tell us the status of that management plan that the former minister said would be ready in six months back in 2018?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We have invited the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation to participate in the upcoming population survey with respect to the Finlayson herd. We will review the survey results of the Finlayson caribou herd with the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation during our management discussions. Any future licensed harvests of this herd would require an agreement of all three parties.

The department introduced a permit hunt authorization for the Finlayson caribou herd in 1998, issuing 30 permits annually until 2018. Between 2012 and 2016, the licensed harvest of the Finlayson caribou herd, including outfitter guests, averaged fewer than 10 bulls per year. The population estimate in 1996 was 4,537 animals, which had declined to an estimated 2,712 animals in 2017.

### **Question re: Canada Winter Games infrastructure**

**Ms. McLeod:** Last Monday, the Minister of Community Services told reporters that it would cost \$100 million to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games. Then on Thursday when we asked him to confirm that cost estimate, the minister said — and I quote: “We have no idea really what are the cost of the games. It may be \$50 million; it may be \$150 million; I’m not sure.” The minister appears to be pulling estimates out of thin air. Yukoners are looking for cost certainty, and this minister’s estimates are unreliable at best.

Can the minister explain why he told Yukoners that the Canada Winter Games will cost \$100 million when he later admitted that he had no idea of the cost?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I’m really happy this afternoon to talk about the exciting initiative that we have before us: the 2027 Canada Winter Games.

The Yukon government, of course, is excited to once again have the opportunity to host such an event. We’re working very closely with the City of Whitehorse to refine what facilities we need and how much they cost.

We do know — I was asked for an estimate of the cost of the games by a local media outlet, and I said that it may cost up to \$100 million. I base that estimate on some of the very, very rough cost estimates that we have right now, but, Mr. Speaker, if you look around the world right now — and I don’t know if the members opposite are reading the media — it is a very, very challenging environment to make any predictions these days. We still have COVID-19. We are sitting here with a land war in Europe that is hurting our supply chains around the world. So, really, at this time, it’s very, very difficult to say anything except that the games are going to cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$100 million. As I said on Monday, it may be more; it may be less.

We are going to work very hard to put on the very best games that we can for the people of the territory and the people of Canada. I look forward to continuing this line of questioning in a few moments.

### **Question re: Physician recruitment and retention**

**Mr. Cathers:** The Liberal government’s lack of action on physician recruitment and retention has created the unfortunate situation where thousands of Yukoners — over one-fifth in fact — do not have a family doctor.

This has meant that the Yukon Medical Association has had to fill the gap on its own. On their own initiative and with their own funds, the YMA hired a physician recruiter. This has been done with zero support from the government.

Will the Yukon government finally take some action and actually work with the YMA on physician recruitment by, as a first step, financially supporting their efforts to attract more doctors to the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Once again, the members opposite have proven to be unreliable here in the Legislative Assembly, providing information to Yukoners that is simply not the case.

The transfer payment agreement between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association clearly states that there are funds available for a

recruitment officer — recruitment activities. They have chosen to hire a recruitment officer, which we are very pleased about. We are working closely with the Yukon Medical Association in order to work on having additional physicians come here to the territory.

One of our best resources in that way is Yukon physicians who can describe to their colleagues the great working relationship, the great working conditions, and the opportunities here in the Yukon that do not exist, I would say, anywhere else in Canada. We're working closely with our physicians here to obtain more physicians for our community.

**Mr. Cathers:** Unfortunately, again, the Minister of Health and Social Services is an unreliable source of information. Over one-fifth of Yukoners —

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

### Point of order

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The Government House Leader, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Under 19(i), the Standing Orders state that we won't use abusive or insulting language and that we won't personalize debate. I believe that the debate was just personalized by the Member for Lake Laberge.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** In the minister's response, she accused us of being an unreliable source of information. I'm merely returning the favour in response, but apparently the Government House Leader thinks it's a point of order when the same criticisms they direct at us are directed at them.

### Speaker's ruling

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

Please continue.

**Mr. Cathers:** One important aspect of recruitment that often gets overlooked is the need for the physician community to recruit locums to fill in for doctors who have to go on leave for both short and long periods of time. One common reason doctors need to take leave is for maternity. We have heard that as many as five family doctors are about to go on leave over the next few weeks for this reason. We've heard that almost none have been able to find sufficient locum coverage.

What is the government doing to help family doctors recruit locums to provide coverage when they need to go on leave for maternity or other reasons?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I should note that the physicians here in the territory and the Yukon Medical Association have contracted a physician recruiter and that physician recruiter is now working with support from the Yukon government. We should note that the physician recruiter has to determine how to recruit physicians to small, rural, remote, and northern contexts — in those contexts — which have historically been a challenge.

I can also note that the majority of medical clinics here in Whitehorse are physician-led private businesses that oversee

their own recruitment and locum coverage. I can indicate there are funds in the agreement that provides funding to the Yukon Medical Association for locum recruitment activities and that is supported in the funding that we provide to the Yukon Medical Association.

Again, it is not just about providing funding; it is about having a great relationship with the physicians here in the territory, and we can work in partnership to solve these issues.

**Mr. Cathers:** We hear a rosy portrayal from the minister; we hear something very different from physicians, and I would encourage her to double-check her claims on funding.

There is already a massive shortage of doctors in the Yukon, with thousands of Yukoners, over one-fifth, without a family doctor. We have heard that the problem will get even worse as, as many as five local family doctors are expected to go on maternity leave. We have heard that the difficulty in finding locum coverage could create a massive service disruption in primary care over the next year.

Has the government taken any action at all to prepare for the service disruption, and what steps has the government taken to help family doctors, who will be taking maternity leave, to help find the necessary locum coverage?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that I have just answered that by talking about the funding for locum recruitment and services that is provided to the Yukon Medical Association.

I just want to correct the record for Yukoners. It is important for them to know that the Canadian Institute for Health Information — which is often quoted by the member opposite — and the National Physician Database here in Canada indicates that there is an average of 173 resident physicians per 100,000 people in the fiscal year 2019-20, but comparatively, in the Yukon, there were 221 resident physicians per 100,000 people during that period of time. In addition, we have numerous specialists and service providers who arrive here in the territory to help Yukoners with their health care. We are also working to launch a talent acquisition website in the spring of this year, which will be a dedicated recruitment site for Health and Social Services staff, including nurses, and which will be focused on rural recruitment and retention — working constantly on this important issue for Yukoners.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

### Notice of opposition private members' business

**Ms. Tredger:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 6, 2022. They are Bill No. 304, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and Motion No. 114, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

**Mr. Cathers:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called for debate on Wednesday, April 6, 2022. It is Motion No. 378, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

### Motion re appearance of witnesses

#### Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 5, 2022, Lesley Brown, president and vice chancellor of Yukon University, and David Morrison, chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 5, 2022, Lesley Brown, president and vice chancellor of Yukon University, and David Morrison, chair of the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to Yukon University.

Is there any debate?

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just note that, as we indicated at House Leaders', our priority for this Sitting is budget debate. The witnesses were here last fall, and as we indicated to the government, we believe that the House's time would be best spent this spring focusing on the budget, noting in fact that spring 2019 was the last time there was a full Spring Sitting to debate the budget.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further debate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will just note for everyone that we are working as a government to move back on to a regular schedule of witnesses. We were seeking to bring in the university this spring as we have in the past. I appreciate that the Official Opposition, I've heard, doesn't have questions for the university. That's fine. We will work to get back on to our regular schedule with witnesses this Sitting and for the coming Sittings.

**Deputy Chair:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Count.

### Count

**Deputy Chair:** A count has been called.

*Bells*

**Deputy Chair:** All those in favour, please rise.  
*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** All those opposed, please rise.  
*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** The results are seven yea, eight nay. I declare the motion defeated.

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 6 negatived*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

### Department of Community Services — *continued*

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Deputy Chair. I welcome back the officials. It's a delight to have them here. I thank the minister for continuing the conversation that we left off yesterday.

So, the very last thing we were talking about yesterday was about the four transfer stations that are being shut down. The last thing I left on — and I'll just replay it — was highlighting the amount of responsibility that we share with volunteers in unincorporated communities at this point. So, we talked about EMS crews, volunteer fire crews, and others. I said that it seems to me that it's odd that we never once looked at running these facilities on a volunteer basis and having, for example, designated drop-off days.

Can the minister share with us if the conversation was ever had in those unincorporated communities about running the transfer stations with volunteer people-power and designated drop-off days?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the House for its patience this afternoon as I do this. I have been thinking about the cliff-hanger finale that we had yesterday all evening, so it has been on my mind. I thank the member opposite for the question.

The transfer station issue has been a live conversation in the territory for years now — I think probably since the ministerial report came out. I know that my colleague has done an awful lot of work with the communities. I know that I have

heard from many people on this issue, and I understand that change is very difficult. It is difficult for people, and we are asking people surrounding four of the smallest transfer stations to change their behaviour in the way that they deal with waste. I know that it will be an inconvenience and it will be a hardship on some. It will certainly be a change and will require a change in behaviour, and I know that is not easy.

I know, as well, that the Department of Community Services has also been listening and working with both my predecessor and me to come up with ways to ease the transition as we move to a new waste management regime in the territory. So, we are looking at providing bear-proof garbage bins for cabins and residences because we heard that it was an issue. We are looking at electric fencing for some people because they realize that they have bears and they are worried about that. They want to make sure that the bears are protected because there is a lot of love for those animals in the territory. We have also heard about a trailer — perhaps they need help getting the garbage to one of the major regional landfills. So, a trailer perhaps gifted to the community association to make it easier to organize and haul waste or compost bins to reduce waste — these are all things that we're exploring. We will continue to work with these communities to help bring down their waste.

Currently in the territory, we're generating about 900 kilograms of waste per individual in the territory — 900 kilograms — and it's going up. It's going up across North America, but here in the territory, we're creating an awful lot of waste and we have to do better. So, putting a cost on the waste that we generate, making it a little more inconvenient — we've certainly made it inconvenient for the citizens of Whitehorse. We are going to do it for other areas just because we have to do better. This is where the municipalities came to us and said that we have to deal with this. There are liabilities involved in the landfills that we have, and we have to make sure that those liabilities go away.

The four transfer stations that we've been talking about — at Keno, Braeburn, Johnsons Crossing, and Silver City — currently cost the territory \$500,000 to operate every year, and that savings will accrue to all citizens of the territory once it comes around.

It will also put some pressures — this whole initiative has to make us think more about our waste and bring down our waste management. It's about the environment in the end. It's about greenhouse gas emissions at our landfills. It's about making sure that we look after our environment. To do that, we have to reduce the amount of waste we're producing, and that's what we're striving to do, that's what municipalities asked us to do, and that's what we're working on.

So, all of this is to say that we did — and my predecessor did and so did I — look at whether or not volunteers or other options — of course, we explored other options for this initiative, but it still comes down to a liability issue at these landfills that has to be addressed. It has to do with an area that will not be as well-supervised as some of these other landfills, and that's creating another environmental hazard in the territory that will need to be eventually remediated.

It also comes down to training and actually having the human resources in the neighbourhood to be able to manage this, and it's just not feasible. So, the very short answer to the member opposite is that, yes, it was considered, and, no, it is deemed not feasible to have these transfer stations run on a volunteer basis.

**Ms. White:** So, the minister just referred to the inconvenience for our residents of Whitehorse in comparison to those unincorporated communities where the transfer facilities are being closed.

Can the minister help me understand what the inconvenience is for me in Whitehorse to get to the waste management facility compared to, say, a resident of Keno getting to the waste management facility in Mayo?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** My dad told me when I was a young man that comparisons are odious, and I was not making a comparison between rural Yukon and Whitehorse. I simply said that the new rules that we have in place have made going to the landfill more inconvenient for Yukon residents in the fact that they now have to pay a tipping fee, which they never had to pay before. Is it equal? No, it's not equal. It is not equitable. There will be more inconvenience to some people who are living on the fringes of our society; there's no two ways about it.

I am not trying to draw a comparison; I never was trying to draw a comparison. I was just saying that we generate an awful lot of waste in the territory, and we have to do better. We have to have fewer conduits for the storage of that waste in the territory. The cost of the storage spaces that we have is a lot. Municipalities have come to us and said: "Please, you have to do something", so we are doing something. We are closing some of the areas that are less supervised and we are moving people to go to regional landfills, which we're better able to manage. They have the capacity and they have the volume of garbage going into them that makes it a lot more efficient to run. That is the model that's used in most places in the country, if not all, and that is the model we are going to here in the territory.

Just to correct any misconceptions, I never meant to compare rural Yukon to Whitehorse. I am just saying that, in order to better manage our waste in the territory and bring down the volume of waste — and it's massive — that each individual, me included, are generating in the territory, we have to do better. We have to put a cost on that. There has to be a cost. The cost is sometimes time and sometimes it's money, and that's what we're trying to do.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that clarification.

Can he let me know what he means when he says those "living on the fringes of our society"?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Really, what I was referring to in my previous answer was the catchment basin for landfills. There are people who will be closer to a regional landfill, and there will be those on the edge of the catchment basin for that. That is true of all communities. There are people in Whitehorse who live farther from the dump than others and have to travel more. So, there will always be an increase. What I was trying to convey is that there will always be an inconvenience for those



who are living farther away from a centralized facility than there is for those who live right next to it.

Another point that needs to be made, I think, is that the cost that individuals are actually paying in tipping fees, for example, is about one-fifth of the cost. What we're trying to do through this process — through this new waste management system that we were asked to bring on from municipalities — is that the Yukon government pays the lion's share of the cost of these regional landfills, and individuals are paying a portion of that cost. Through that portion, there is actually an equalization between all communities to what people pay. So, we're asking people to pay the same in every community, and the Yukon government will pick up the difference between what the residents pay on a universal charge to use our landfills and those living farther out — some of those landfills cost a lot more to run, but the residents are still only going to pay a flat fee that would be equal to that in Whitehorse.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that clarification from the minister. I'm just letting him know that folks in rural communities have sent e-mails since yesterday. I just wanted to make sure that he got his clarification out there before I got the e-mail tomorrow about what he meant when he said "fringes of society".

So, I'm going through the 2017 Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste report. There are examples of the community waste survey results from communities like Faro, Whitehorse, Carmacks, Watson Lake, Teslin, Haines Junction, Mayo, and Dawson City. But the one thing that I think bears mentioning is that folks in the communities that will be affected by the closure of these four transfer stations say that there are some calculations that aren't being taken into account by government. So, while the minister said that there were discussions with his colleague who was previously responsible for Community Services about volunteer transfer stations, the interesting thing is knowing how far people in some of these communities will have to drive. I don't think that it said they're opposed to the tipping fees. What it is — imagine that you drive a Toyota Tercel hatchback and you are going to save up your garbage for a month before you drive it into town to do your grocery run. It is about putting your garbage in your car and having to drive.

In some communities, there are folks who live in these rural communities without access to vehicles. I think a lot of concern that has been highlighted is that people want to know how their neighbours are going to be supported.

So, when was the last time that the minister and his department had conversations with the communities of Silver City, Keno, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn about doing it on a volunteer basis — of having someone at the drop-off facility — and whether the conversation of tipping fees was ever brought forward with them?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Again, I thank the member opposite for the question.

In my role as minister, I have had conversations with individuals in the community about volunteerism and exploring that, as has my colleague before, so it has been considered. The cost of putting gates and properly managing these very, very

small transfer stations is very expensive. We ask an awful lot of our volunteers already. We've had lots of talks about volunteerism in the territory and the House of late. We know how difficult it can be to get those volunteers. It is the backbone of the territory for sure, but we ask an awful lot of volunteers already.

We are exploring through Community Services the avenues of volunteerism beyond actually sitting at a landfill for X number of hours a day to do this. There might be opportunities for volunteers — if we, as I said earlier, have a community association trailer or something, volunteers might be able to collectively take the garbage from the community to the landfill and back, and that would be an avenue for volunteers to perhaps get involved. Of course, there is always an opportunity for volunteerism that would help with the remediation of the garbage we produce on a daily basis and that does go beyond actually having somebody sit at a regional landfill that is not only expensive but also difficult to monitor on a regular basis.

**Ms. White:** A number of years ago when I started to be the critic for Community Services, one of the habits that changed in my life when I was travelling around the territory was actually to go and look at waste management facilities — so, what we used to call "dumps" or "transfer facilities" — and it is interesting that the minister has just referred to the sheer cost of having to gate off these things. Johnsons Crossing has a beautiful drop-off area. It has fences on all sides, and it actually has a gate that comes down across and has bins similar to Silver City and beyond.

Again, the challenge that I have — and I was just looking at the waste or the community waste survey results. It is interesting that, for the unincorporated communities of Silver City, Braeburn, and Johnsons Crossing, it is just an estimate on population. So, for example, the estimated population for Johnsons Crossing is 25, but I can tell you that, in conversations with residents in Johnsons Crossing, they figure that the facility is accessed by closer to 80 individuals, including people who live down the Canol as opposed to just in the area.

I guess the reason I am coming back to this is that I feel like there is a real opportunity to continue working with those communities and finding solutions. The minister has talked about whether or not a trailer gets donated to the community association and it gets towed in that way — well, then I have questions about liability, I have questions about insurance, and I have questions about a vehicle capable of driving that. The reason why this gets talked about so often is that the decision is being unilaterally made in Whitehorse — by people who may not be so far on the fringes of access — for people who have to drive quite a distance, and so, that becomes a barrier. One of the really important questions that has been asked by folks is: If the concern is environmental, who will be in charge of picking up the waste that may end up in the environment?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will keep my answer relatively brief on this one. We can get into the costs of running these regional landfills — the smaller ones. Jurisdictions across the country have launched models very similar to this. They are

closing landfills across the country. It's very similar to this proposal.

In the Yukon, we have 14 unincorporated community landfills and the five waste transfer stations. We are going to a regionalization model. It's not just about cost; it's also about the environment. There is an environmental cost to having all of these landfills and waste transfer stations in operation. The member opposite mentioned insurance, liability, and all the rest of it with the trailer. Well, those same costs apply to transfer stations and the people running and working those transfer stations. As a matter of fact, they are actually far more pronounced, because there is a liability to having a transfer station open and that liability grows every year it's open. It is just exponential. It is a financial and an environmental liability.

We have declared, as the member opposite knows, a climate emergency in the territory. We are working very hard to deal with a number of different things to get greenhouse gas emissions down. One of the things we are doing is trying to limit the amount of waste we produce, which again contributes to greenhouse gases and everything else. This is another part of that whole drive.

There is a myriad of — it's very nuanced and there are a lot of factors that go into these decisions. We have looked at these. We have had lots of conversations with our rural residents about this. Like the rest of the country, after weighing all of the options, we have made a decision to close these transfer stations, which are the very smallest waste facilities in the territory. Like the other ones, they have a financial and environmental liability that grows every single year that they are open.

I know it's not an easy decision. It certainly is a decision that impacts the people who live in the neighbourhoods — the small communities surrounding these transfer stations — but in the end, the regionalization model is one that has been used and is being used across the country, and it's one that again, for the reasons that I've explained today, we made that decision.

**Ms. White:** It's interesting, because when I go back to the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste report, it talks about the solid-waste operational costs to Yukon government in fiscal year 2017-18. It's interesting, because for example, the community of Keno was not in red, so it's not an estimate. It says "20", and it's interesting, because yesterday, the minister talked about the 24 or so residents. So, we also see in our small unincorporated communities that they are also growing in population.

Yesterday, I received an e-mail from a resident of Keno. The one thing that they really wanted to be a part of this conversation is they said they don't feel that some factors are being taken into account. For example, the seasonal population swings that aren't accounted for, visitor-produced garbage is not accounted for, and in the case of Keno, it says that "we're busy enough in our busy season to require monthly hauling". So, they've underestimated the true number of users. Again, it goes on to say that there are very long distances to travel to access the service.

So, we have heard these different community concerns, for example, like the tourism effect. If you're visiting Keno, folks

are doing that. We want to get them out to communities; we want them to visit; we want those dollars to go out. Someone takes in groceries for a week of camping — not everyone is going to pack it up in the car to take it away. So, it's going to be left to the citizens of Keno to deal with.

I'm talking in circles at this point; the minister and I are talking in circles. I say we should keep them open, and he says we're going to close them, but I think there are a lot more factors involved. So, I would urge the department to continue having those conversations and looking toward that.

Again, we have members in unincorporated communities act as EMS; we have them act as fire crews; we have them doing all these volunteer positions. I mean, the suggestion in Keno when I was there — they were saying to put a gate and a lock on it; make sure only residents have access to it.

Again, Johnsons Crossing — it's surrounded by chain-link fencing. I think there are opportunities. I can tell you straight up here that, as an individual who lives in Whitehorse and who plans to go to the waste transfer facility in the city, if it was only open on Saturdays or if it was only open on Wednesday afternoons, I would change my schedule accordingly; I would go when it was open.

So, it's not that it needs to be open seven days a week for multiple hours at a time. I think the communities are definitely in a position to be able to work that out among themselves — "We're going to be open this many hours on this day and this many hours on that day", and people will change their habits.

Going through the different liabilities on that in this report from 2017, I guess it begs the question: Has it been updated? Do we know what the current numbers are? Are we still just relying on these numbers from 2017-18, or are we talking about more current numbers?

I'm going to stop talking about transfer facilities, because I don't feel like we're getting anywhere, but I do think it's always important to bring up, because until it is a fait accompli and it's a done deal, people in these communities want us to talk about them.

Yesterday, the minister said one of the ways that people in unincorporated communities could get their voices heard or their opinions brought forward was through MLAs. Like I highlighted yesterday, there are three MLAs in this House who have talked about transfer facilities on multiple occasions. Unfortunately, it doesn't seem to be going anywhere.

Yesterday, also — and part of the reason why I suggested that the minister clarify what he meant when he said "fringes of society" is that I did hear from Keno. They just wanted to correct the minister who said — and I'm quoting him from yesterday: "We have continued to meet regularly with the 24 or so residents of Keno. We met in January. We met again. I know the new acting fire marshal met with Keno residents recently — sometime near the end of the month. We're in the process of recruiting two fire champions in that community."

So, the resident of Keno wanted to make sure that the minister knew that they had a Zoom call in December and one last month, that two residents put their names forward as community safety champions. She said that hasn't gone live yet. They have not had an on-site visit from the fire marshal. It

hasn't occurred yet, and the visit has been twice postponed due to COVID within the Fire Marshal's Office. So, that's where they're at. They're interested in having those conversations, but they haven't gone quite so far as was alluded to yesterday.

But, again, it goes back to — this is something that's really important. It's important to protect people's property and their investments.

Again, yesterday the minister couldn't give me a timeline for when we're going to see fire response ability available in, for example, Destruction Bay where, in that same e-mail, I was told that there have been no discussions on fire protection with residents of Destruction Bay. But I think people are really interested in timelines.

So, what needs to happen in order for that to happen is important, and then I am going to move on because we don't want to talk about waste transfer facilities anymore — at least I don't.

We have heard — I think that recycling is a really important thing. The minister and I talk — well, I have talked with different ministers and this minister now for a while — about the importance of recycling. What that comes down to is also the importance of recycling centres. We know that the recycling centre in Dawson City is — if it's not shut down now, it is on life support. So, have there been any conversations between the minister and his department and the not-for-profit that manages the recycling centre in Dawson City?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that the recycling centre in Dawson City is indeed a municipal project run by the City of Dawson — procured by the City of Dawson. They did have a plan to build it. When they got the plans, it was larger — we are working with the City of Dawson and funding a consultant to help the municipality come up with a recycling facility in the town that meets its needs, and that is where it stands right now.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I do appreciate that it's in conjunction with the municipality or with Dawson City itself. One of the concerns that I would highlight for government is that, if one of these centres shut down, it means that goods that could be recycled and repurposed into other things then become part of the waste stream.

If the minister believes, as he has said, that we want to reduce the amount of waste that we put into landfills and such things, making sure that recycling centres are viable — well, not even viable. Let's be honest; recycling is a public good. Making sure that this service is available in communities is really important.

We have been talking a fair amount about recreation opportunities in rural communities and recreation centres. We know that we have had a ministerial response to a centre being built on the traditional territory of the White River First Nation. I wanted to know if the minister has other communities that are in line for recreation centres or complexes in the near future.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am happy to refer the member opposite to the Budget Address 2022-23 and to pages 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14. There are a number of pages there that go into all the community infrastructure projects that we have planned for the next five years. Some of the highlights include: Mayo arena upgrades; the Dawson City rec centre; some

improvements to the Mount Sima ski hill; the Mountain View Golf Course; and the Pelly Crossing pool facility. There is a youth centre going into Dawson; there's the White River Community Centre that the member opposite talked about; and there's a gymnastics and climbing facility in Whitehorse. There are a number of projects — and not only just recreation centres, but a lot of other things going in, too, from public works, fire hall upgrades, and other things throughout the territory. They are highlighted in quite a bit of detail on pages 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 in the Budget Address.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for the reference toward the Budget Address, but I'm asking him as the Minister of Community Services. If he wants to expand on that, I would appreciate it. If he doesn't, I guess I can let people know that they can refer to the Budget Address.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I would love to expound on all the great work we're doing. We do have a number of projects being done throughout the territory, much of it funded through ICIP funding — the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. There are an awful lot of programs in there, and I could expound on them, but it would take much longer than we have this afternoon and probably into next week, so I will leave that because I know that there are a lot of important issues that people want to deal with this afternoon.

**Ms. White:** One of the things that was asked of all three political parties during the 2021 election campaign was a request by the Polarettes Gymnastics Club and the Climb Yukon Association about building a new facility. Can the minister walk us through the Liberal response to that request?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We supported such a facility. Planning work continues on the gymnastics and climbing facility. A tender for design of the project will be issued this spring, with a construction tender expected in the fall of 2022.

**Ms. White:** Will that be funded through the Department of Community Services?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, it will be. It's one of the Investing in Canada infrastructure projects that is being pushed through that stream.

**Ms. White:** Is the Yukon government putting forward a portion of any of that money?

Sorry, Deputy Chair, I wasn't speaking into the microphone.

Is the Yukon government putting any of its money toward that project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We will be putting our own money into that project.

**Ms. White:** We are in budget debate, so could the minister tell me how much of Yukon's money will go toward that project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I know the member opposite is anxiously waiting for me to give a number. I'm not going to give a number on the floor of the Legislature today. As I said, a tender is about to go out, and I really don't want to interfere in the tender process and give people any indication about what the Yukon government might be willing to spend on this project.

**Ms. White:** I guess I will wait for the ministerial response or statement that will come forward; then I will have the pleasure of responding.

Where are we with the completion of the Carmacks arena?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We expect it to be completed by the fall of 2022.

**Ms. White:** At this point in time — so, understanding that the project needed to be retendered in March 2021 after the Yukon government terminated the right of the original contractor to continue on the work of the project on December 15, 2020 due to performance issues, where are we as far as — I mean, we've obviously blown through the timelines, so it's not about being on time. Where are we in the budget of that? How much has that project cost to date? How much do we expect to spend before its completion?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The current estimated cost of the Carmacks arena replacement is \$16 million. Because of the history that the member opposite touched on, there is a claim against the builders and we'll see how that resolves. The Yukon government is endeavouring to get money back from the original builder of this project.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that one of the things that we've highlighted in the past is — and this is a conversation that can be held again with the Minister of Highways and Public Works — but if the government is in the process of — is in the middle of having a claim against the builder, is there any mechanism in place so that builder is unable to bid on future government buildings?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I would encourage the member opposite to talk with my good colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, about that issue. I know that — I'll just leave it there, actually. I know my good colleague is probably the best person to answer those questions.

**Ms. White:** Although the answer is not unexpected, I always hope that, when we talk about a one-government approach, we can have these conversations across departments.

So, the minister just referenced a youth centre in Dawson City when I asked about recreational opportunities. I wanted to know if he was referring — is there a second youth centre going into Dawson City? Of course, the new Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in youth centre in Dawson is open now. When he mentioned "youth centre in Dawson City", is he referencing a second youth centre?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** No, it's the same youth centre — the one that we talked about earlier in this Sitting. I believe there was a ministerial statement on that.

**Ms. White:** Thank you for that, Deputy Chair. I thank the minister for that answer — which is interesting, because I was told to reference the budget speech to find out projects, and so I just wanted the clarification from the minister.

Has he been having any conversations with youth in Carcross? I can say that I've personally heard multiple times that youth in that community would like a youth centre. Has there been any conversations with youth in Carcross or the Carcross/Tagish First Nation about supporting a youth centre in that community?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Not a youth centre per se in the Carcross area, but basically a community centre of some design. We just recently got some representation from the LAC and the community club for that, and I have responded in writing to them to put that on the priority list for the community.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I had a walkaround as well during the 2021 election campaign about the community club and the hopes for its revitalization or its exchange, so I'm glad to hear that the minister is encouraging them to move that up the list.

A question that I have asked recently — actually, in the Assembly during Question Period — was about community transportation — so, transportation between communities. It is critical for a whole bunch of reasons. Today, as a matter of fact, I was talking to a person who highlighted that when you leave treatment — so if you come into the Mental Wellness and Substance Use office here and go to a treatment program, when you get released from that treatment program, there is no ability or support to get back to your home community.

There was a report that was paid for in part by the Department of Economic Development, but I would imagine that community connectivity would fall under the guise of Community Services. Is the minister working with communities to look at transportation and connectivity between communities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It is a very interesting subject. When Greyhound pulled out of the territory, when in my previous role as Highways and Public Works minister, we did have discussions of this at the national level, but in my role — in this role as Community Services minister — inter-city transportation is not something that the Yukon government currently offers. If we do — we deal with municipalities in funding their inter-municipal transit services. We certainly are working with the City of Whitehorse to improve its intracity transportation, and that is really where our focus has been.

In my travels throughout the territory, I have not heard a lot of communities asking me about intra-territorial transit services in any way, shape, or form. It would require an enormous — a lot of consideration from a policy and actual execution, because it is not something that we currently do.

We do have private companies, and some First Nations are actually providing that service for their citizens. But as far as the Yukon government, it's not a field that we're currently in. We would have to require a lot of planning to actually execute on such a thing if it was something that we were contemplating getting into.

**Ms. White:** Has the minister had an opportunity to read the report that was paid for in part by the Yukon government called the *Yukon Community Travel Project Final Report*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have.

**Ms. White:** Well, that's fantastic news because that gives us a spot to start. Within that document, it recommends that community transportation actually be looked at and moved forward. Again, we have a government that talks about issues of affordability, access, and inclusion. When you live in a community like Beaver Creek and the nearest groceries in

Canada at any significantly sized store are in Whitehorse, you are talking about more than a 10-hour roundtrip.

I'll just ask the minister again: Through Community Services, is he having these conversations with municipalities about connectivity between Yukon communities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my last answer, it has not organically come up from any of the municipalities that I have met with in the last year or so.

**Ms. White:** I probably wouldn't guess that the conversation would have organically come up in Keno that they wanted their transfer facility closed, so I'm asking the minister: Is he going to have these conversations with communities about community connectivity, as recommended in that report?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to have conversations about any manner of services that municipalities and citizens across the territory would require. As I said before, the territory is currently not in the inter-city transit system business, and I have not had those entreaties from municipalities. If they came to my attention on my community tour, I would be happy to have the conversation and start to explore it in more detail.

I have read the report of the committee that met, but those types of conversations did not come to my attention when I was on my community tour last year.

**Ms. White:** I just hope that the pathway to communication is open.

Something that we talk about — or that I talk about often in this Chamber — is the discrepancy between community librarian wages and those of folks who work in the library here. As we know, we have had ministers across the way wax lyrical about the importance of libraries and the important role of librarians.

I have just a question to the Minister of Community Services: When is the department going to look at the wages that are paid to community librarians, and when will we see that wage be reflective of the work that they do in rural communities?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We as the Department of Community Services — Yukon Public Libraries is currently looking into the possible options for assessing and evaluating salary dollars for community libraries. That work is being done as we speak.

**Ms. White:** That is the first time in 10 years of asking that question that I have a response that I am jazzed with. There's real hope here for community librarians and I appreciate that. I really hope to see that work. I have to say that I am almost at a loss for words. I have asked that question so many times and not had a response that I liked, but I'm going to move on. I didn't even know that I would be able to move on after one question; that's so exciting.

The *Societies Act* is a piece of legislation that falls under the purview of Community Services. First of all, has the minister heard from anyone about the *Societies Act* or their concerns around the *Societies Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, I have heard some concerns from societies about the new *Societies Act*. We are in a transition period and I have listened to, logged the concerns, and actually connected the individuals with the Department of

Community Services who are working individually with those groups who require assistance. That is the tack that we are taking within Community Services.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that the minister has acknowledged that he has heard from folks with concerns, which is good, because I am looking at a letter that was sent to us on Monday, February 7, 2022, where it says — quote: "I am writing to you this morning to see how you can help solve a constant problem that we, as small non-profit organisations, are facing when we ask the Yukon Government staff at the Corporate Affairs to clarify questions about the New Societies Act. When YG announced the change to this new act, it mentioned that there would be videos and material to support its clients, being us the NGOs, to facilitate the transition. However, beside the information on the web and the webinar that VBY has produced, I have not seen anything else. Most of the time we ask a question to the Corporate Affairs office for clarification on the new Act, we get the reply I got this morning", and that reply was to consult a lawyer.

So, is the department planning on creating more material to support folks who sit on boards to better understand the *Societies Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As the member opposite noted, it was a letter that we both received. I immediately reached out to the department and inquired about the letter that I had received. I am told by my deputy, Matt King, that the department has reached out to those individuals and is working with them on that.

In terms of getting materials and helping groups with the transition, I committed just moments ago to help groups with that transition. We have come through a pandemic in the last two years with this new legislation. The department has done quite a number of things to help with this transition. Obviously, more needs to be done. I have asked the department to help to provide the service that Yukoners need to make the transition to this new piece of legislation, and I have every confidence that the department will do so.

**Ms. White:** I guess the concern I have is that when questions are asked — and so, for example, new legislation passes this House and is quite complicated — this is not a criticism to folks on the ground; I can't imagine trying to navigate through this without having the supports in place — my concern is there's a one-off approach of answering questions to people, as opposed to making the information more systemically available. I don't disagree that we are indeed in a pandemic. That is true, but things continued on. I am sure that policy papers were written at different desks or kitchen tables around the territory as things went on, because work still continued.

So, are there plans from the department to make sure that there is material available to NGOs across the spectrum when they have questions as they try to navigate the new *Societies Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Department of Community Services is doing a lot to help Yukoners transition to the new *Societies Act*. There are always going to be more concerns. We are talking about a letter that was received. I certainly know that

the folks in Community Services have reached out and are working on that issue.

I will go through some of the things they've done. They have provided a public presentation on the new societies legislation on October 27, 2020. They developed training materials, modeled bylaws, and frequently asked questions and answers on the new legislation and made all of those available on the societies website for the launch of the new legislation on April 1, 2021 — about a year ago. They updated web materials and update them on a regular basis. They held public webinars on the new legislation, transition, and the new processes on October 9 and 10, 2021. They wrote and mailed the newsletter to all societies, clarifying the regulatory position regarding concerns expressed regarding the new legislation.

They provided a public presentation to societies on September 8, 2021. The meeting was facilitated by the Volunteer Bénévoles Yukon society on the new legislation transition processes and provided a public presentation to societies on September 8, 2021. The meeting was facilitated by, again, the same volunteer society regarding the required bylaws, directors, duties and responsibilities, and a transition checklist. They developed multiple online resources, including presentation materials, step-by-step video tutorials, et cetera, and made all those available on the branch's website.

We do know that despite all this great work — and it's a tremendous amount of work that a very small branch has done — that there are still going to be problems. Some people are not going to be able to get all the answers they need. I have asked the department to reach out and work with those groups, and they will continue to do so.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that answer, but if it's possible, instead of rushing through it, if he could read it maybe at half that speed just so someone like myself could take notes as we go forward and be able to actually fully hear the conversation, I would appreciate it.

Again, one of the concerns is that some of the advice people are being given when they contact Corporate Affairs is they're being told to contact a lawyer for clarification. Although it's true that there has been a lot of work done and, based on the timelines that the minister said, even in the middle of a pandemic — so within that two-year span — but there are still questions that exist. It's not a criticism to what has been done; it's just asking if more will be done and more information will be available to help people.

Again, societies — NGOs in many cases — fill a lot of the gaps left by government, and we certainly don't want to discourage people from participating on those boards that do all that work because they're having a hard time navigating the legislation that's supposed to rule them.

So, it's just asking that more be done so that we don't send people, for example, asking for legal advice on how to decipher that legislation.

I'm going to move on, actually, to the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Some of the stuff that you can get from online is supplementary information about the department. One thing that I thought was really interesting is that there's an entire section under Regulatory and Consumer Services entitled

“Residential Tenancies”, and it talks about the number of dispute resolutions that occurred between landlords and tenants. The actual number between 2020 and 2021 was 111. The estimate for 2021 to 2022 was 120. The estimate for 2022 to 2023 is 160.

One of the questions that we often have when we talk about the dispute resolution process — and I'm going to talk about trailer parks because mobile home parks are something that are near and dear to me. When a person files a dispute resolution — when they go into this process — and it goes in front of the board, it is a binding legal resolution that happens there, but sometimes there's a direction given. I want to know: How does the residential tenancies office follow up on those directions?

For example, if a landlord or tenant is told to do something, how does the office follow up to make sure that action has been taken?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Before I move on to the residential tenancies office, I am going to go back to the *Societies Act* and just let the member opposite know that Corporate Affairs staff are prevented from giving legal advice. They can't give legal advice. They are not lawyers in that office, in many cases.

When model bylaws are used, such as the ones we put on the website for societies to actually model their bylaws on, it makes it a lot simpler for the staff to guide societies through the process. When societies customize bylaws — come up with their own — they will probably need legal advice to ensure compliance with the *Societies Act*, so we are trying to make things as clean as possible. Some societies are older and have customized their bylaws, and it's very difficult for staff to wade through those problems.

I have asked the staff to do their very utmost to provide top-tier service to the clients who are Yukon citizens and are seeking advice, and I have no doubt that they will do so. I just wanted to clarify that one piece. When you get into societies and bylaws, that realm can become very tricky for a public servant to make a judgment on how a bylaw can be interpreted in a particular case, especially if they are not sort of boilerplate templates that the department has provided — so just that clarity.

As far as the residential tenancies office, the residential tenancies office does follow up on orders and rulings that it makes, especially when those rulings include a date by which a landlord or tenant must do something. If it's just an open ruling that they have made, then it's generally complaint-driven. That is, if the landlord does not comply with an order that has been given by the office, then it relies, in some cases, on the tenants to come forward and say that they are not doing what you asked them to do, and then they will follow up at that point. But if there's a date involved, they will often follow up themselves and make sure that the landlord has taken the action that they ordered them to take.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate both of those mentions from the minister, especially around Corporate Affairs. Folks at that office do a lot of work, but it seems to me that if the *Societies Act* is pushing non-profit organizations toward having to ask for legal advice, then the next question becomes: How does

government support that office to make sure that societies, as they try to follow this new *Societies Act*, are supported?

I know that it's complicated and that the issue is probably one that has been thought about before, but again, how do we support individuals who are doing that?

The minister just mentioned the residential tenancies office and how they will follow up. One of my concerns is that, if we have, for example, a multi-unit building that has had a fine or there has been a decision — when the onus of responsibility falls on tenants within either that one building or a park to follow up to make sure that the park or the multi-unit building has done what it said it would do, it really puts people in a vulnerable position.

As we know, one shortcoming of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* is evictions without cause. We're one of the only jurisdictions in the country with that, and so, can the minister expand on how he thinks that tenants who have already fought the process the first time should follow up to make sure that the direction has been followed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** If a tenant believes that they have been wronged, they should contact the office. I guess that is the first thing. If they feel that their rent has been increased inappropriately, they should definitely contact the office and bring it up with the officers there.

I will also say that a landlord cannot take retaliatory action against a tenant who raises a concern with the office. If a landlord does retaliate against a tenant for doing so, they should contact the office. That does fall within the office's jurisdiction to investigate and levy penalties.

**Ms. White:** Again, although I appreciate the minister's response, I know, going through previous decisions from that office, that, for example, when the office issued the direction that a new correction letter must clearly indicate that it replaces the earlier letter — and it goes on to say that the \$100-discount still stands — that letter never went out to that mobile home park.

The minister said here in the House last year, I believe, that he had seen the letter. I asked if he could show me the letter, and he never did. So, this is very specifically about a mobile home park.

Again, is the expectation that, when the office makes a decision that affects a multi-tenant situation, it is up to a resident to come back and say that this hasn't happened?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, first of all, let me begin. The process used by the residential tenancies office is the same used by the courts. It is a quasi-judicial process that has been set up within the office. As in court, if one party is ordered to do something, the aggrieved party must follow up. It mirrors the court system — the system used by the residential tenancies office.

The second piece has to do with the letter within the trailer park. So, the office did follow up, did actually confirm, and did get a copy of the correction letter dated June 17, 2021 to the residential tenancies office. The review by the tenancies office confirmed that the letter complies with the order. Further, the landlord confirmed that they hand-delivered this letter to all residents.

That was confirmed by the tenancies office. If a resident did not receive the letter, or misplaced it, the tenant may request another copy from the landlord directly.

So, that letter did go out following the order that was made. We did investigate and we did follow up the letter to the officials — they did follow up, did see the letter, and did confirm that it had been hand-delivered to every resident at the trailer park.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. White:** I just want to thank the minister for that assertion and for the confirmation that the residential tenancies office has followed up. I do appreciate that, so thanks to them and thanks to the minister for answering that question in that way. I will follow up with folks there particularly. I do appreciate that answer and I do appreciate that assertion, and I thank the folks in that office because I know that it is not easy. I thank the minister for that answer.

Following up on that piece of legislation, the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was debated here in 2012, and I can say that it was me who did that debate, and we recognized some of the faults in 2012, but it was substantially better than what existed before.

I mentioned today that having evictions without cause is definitely a loophole that I recognize. Is there an intention from this minister to review this legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Thank you very much to the member opposite, the Leader of the Third Party, for bringing up the letter and the mobile home park. It is an important issue; it really and truly is. No tenant wants to deal with these things, and so I really do appreciate her advocacy. I want her to know that it is a matter that I take very seriously as well.

I know that the residential tenancies office works very, very hard on these things. They don't have a large staff, and they are working very hard to provide the very best service under the law that they possibly can to both landlords and tenants, but it is usually the tenants who have the heart-rending cases.

Whether or not we are going to take a look at the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* is a good question. We are going to have to review it at some time. It currently is not on our legislative agenda, but it is a piece of legislation that I have asked many questions about within the Department of Community Services to get acquainted with it and to find out its strengths and weaknesses. I think that at this point, though, it is not on our legislative agenda for review.

The Department of Community Services is responsible for one-third of all the legislation in the territory, so it's a very legislation-heavy department. We are currently undertaking the CEMA review as well as looking at the *Health Professions Act*, so we have a lot of legislation to oversee. We have a lot of legislation to improve. That is not to say that this piece of legislation is not important and it is not to say that this piece of legislation does not deserve a second look, especially given the current housing climate. But at this moment, I will tell the member quite plainly that it is not on our legislative agenda at this time.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for his honesty there and would urge him to move up the review of that legislation, just due to the sheer importance of what it means to people who are tenants and landlords in the territory because there are a fair number of them and that affects people. That's a piece of legislation that essentially governs their ability to access housing. So, I would encourage him to move that up, knowing that the review for CEMA and the *Public Health and Safety Act* was in his mandate letter — that this was something to go above and beyond.

Another thing that was in the mandate letter — it says: “Begin work to revise the *Health Professions Act* to improve how we regulate healthcare service professionals.” It also says that it “... will be led by the Department of Community Services with support from the Department of Health and Social Services.”

So, can the minister update us to how the work is going on revising the *Health Professions Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** This is a task that I take very seriously. I have had lots of discussions with people about this. We've had discussions on the floor of the Legislative Assembly about this issue. It's currently focused around psychologists, but it applies to so many others — to physiotherapists, to optometrists. You could go through any of the professions, and this is a piece of legislation that really does need to be modernized and brought into true.

That is no easy task. It touches on a number of different bodies that all govern themselves differently. We have a very small territory. When you are trying to regulate these industries, you often have conflicts of interest. It has to be explored. There are a lot of policy questions. We're currently scoping those out and scoping out how this interacts with all of the policies within government. I wish it were easy. I know that we've explored the psychologists working with some of the other schools of medicine, like in Alberta or BC — partnering with these groups and trying to bring them in so we have some oversight and to bring some view to these professions so that the public can have confidence in them. I've heard from psychologists about how they feel an erosion in confidence in their profession because, quite frankly, they feel that anybody can come up here and throw a sign on their door and start practising that type of work. They know that this is not — it's definitely not healthy. It doesn't help Yukoners. It opens them up to all sorts of — they potentially could be taken advantage of and not get the service they need or, worse, be taken advantage of.

So, we understand that. I understand that. I take this very seriously. I know my colleague, the predecessor in this role, also took and takes this seriously. We are working on this file.

We have had meetings on this just prior to this session starting. We have sought legal advice to see what we could do to sort of streamline this and expedite it. We have staff dedicated to this review. It is going on.

The question is — we have to have some discussions internally, but what direction we're going to go — whether we're going to take the hard, longer route or whether we're going to take a more expedited route, which may not get the results we need. So, those are the questions we're grappling with internally right now.

I guess I'll leave it there at the moment. I understand this is a priority, because these professions have been woefully neglected for quite a long period of time, and unravelling this issue with medical professions in the territory and regular health professions, rather, and regulating them properly and bringing them into a modern regulatory environment is a big task.

I guess I'll leave it right there, Deputy Chair.

**Ms. White:** So, although I appreciate the points that the minister made there, the mandate letter says: “Begin work to revise the *Health Professions Act*...” So, my question was: Has work begun to revise the *Health Professions Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes.

**Ms. White:** Excellent. Thank you, Deputy Chair. I thank the minister for that.

He did just mention psychologists. I appreciate that, when he met with them, they highlighted their concern. I'm sure it's the concerns that were echoed both to me and the Yukon Party as well. Specifically, in Question Period, there isn't much opportunity for an exchange on what's going on with that.

The minister mentioned reaching out to schools in both Alberta and British Columbia, as far as partnering. We know in Northwest Territories, they work with the school of psychology in Alberta. In Question Period, he said that there were barriers that existed for Yukon. If he could maybe expand on that, that would be helpful.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I do appreciate the opportunity that the member opposite is affording me to delve into this issue a little bit more, because it is complicated. Of course, Question Period is, at the very least, a short story, if not a précis to other issues.

So, when I met, and I am sure — the briefing that I had from the association, I'm sure, was mirrored with the other parties. I heard a strong interest in being regulated through a memorandum of understanding with the College of Alberta Psychologists or another school. The Alberta college has confirmed with us that it currently has memoranda with the Government of Nunavut and the Government of the Northwest Territories to support them in regulating their profession.

Both Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, however, have legislation and/or regulations in place requiring that psychologists be licensed by the territorial government to practise. The Yukon does not, and that is causing a major problem for us here in doing this. So, the Alberta college



supports both governments in regulating the profession by assessing the credentials for entry into practice, helping to develop standards of practice, and managing complaints and disciplinary processes under contract.

We are working with the Department of Justice on this — trying to find a way forward to find a way to put in a stopgap for psychologists who are willing to see themselves governed by another school of medicine in one of the other provinces. We want to make sure that we do that. I would be very happy to do that, but we also — so, we are exploring that opportunity. We also want to fit it into the actual regulation of health professions so that we don't have a one-off that then complicates the regulation of health professions as a whole, as we go forward.

We have two streams right now. We have this one profession that we're looking to accommodate. We're trying to find ways within our existing legal frameworks to do that. We are exploring those options, but we also have the bigger package, which is trying to find a way to properly regulate a number of other professions. There are many. There are chiropractors, dental hygienists, dental therapists, dentists, denturists — it goes on and on. There is a very long list of people who are looking for a modernization. As we look to do that in an elegant way that makes sense for the territory and doesn't perpetuate red tape and make things really unwieldy, we want to do this right.

We are looking at all of these options. We are working very hard. We do have people dedicated to this role and we are trying to find a solution to properly regulate these professions.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate that answer from the minister.

I guess one of the concerns I have, especially after having conversations with the Psychological Society of the Yukon, is just the real seriousness of the work that gets done and that there can be real harm done. Although the minister wasn't here in 2011-12, there was a tragic loss of life, and that was when oil-fired burner mechanics weren't required to be registered in the territory. It was that lack of registration that caused the death of five people.

My understanding in having the psychologists reach out is that they are really trying to prevent a tragedy in the future. I would hope that this issue wouldn't require a tragedy for the Yukon government to move fast on it. I was there for that time. I sat through the coroner's inquest at the time and heard how many times that tragedy could have been prevented. Knowing that these professionals have signalled that they are concerned about the risk that can be caused by unlicensed and unregulated folks practising in their profession, I would urge the minister to continue on and be the champion around the Cabinet table for this legislation to be developed, because I think that it is critical.

I do thank him for the clarification as to why it is not as easy as it appears in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut — that they both have legislation, which I did find online — but I just hope that it doesn't take the same kind of tragedy we saw with the oil-fired burner mechanics before those folks were required to be licensed in the territory.

I'm just going to leave that there. I thank the minister for the acknowledgement that it's important. I would just

encourage him to be the champion of that issue around the Cabinet table.

So, going back to the minister's mandate letter, there's a bullet point that says: "Partner with the City of Whitehorse on improvements to public transit and active transportation." We have seen changes recently to public transit, but I want to know what the minister is doing and what his department is doing to support the City of Whitehorse on improvements to active transportation.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to thank the member opposite for her remarks on the psychologists and the health professions modernization.

She mentioned the tragedy that happened in early 2011-12 with the loss of life. I had a different perspective on it. I was aware of and working on the same file from a different angle. It is tragic; we have to do better. I could say to the member opposite that if there's anything that keeps me up at night in this job, it's that type of tragedy, so I am working on this job and trying to. It's an easy sell for my colleagues in Cabinet. They are fully behind us. We are working very, very hard to sort this out. We know it's important. We are, as a group, aligned on the need for this modernization.

So, active transportation is a subject that is near and dear to my heart. I know it is for my good colleague across the way, as well, although I will confess that this has been a terrible year for me on the active transportation side. I'm hoping, in the next couple of weeks, to resume my use of our active transportation network here in the City of Whitehorse.

One of the — probably the primary way that I help and facilitate active transportation in the City of Whitehorse — because it is a municipality under the control and direction of an elected city council that actually makes the decisions on this front — is that they will bring their requests and their ideas to Community Services. We work with the City of Whitehorse — and indeed any municipality in the territory — to further their active transportation system and try very hard to connect the municipalities to the federal sources of money to help actually expand some of those networks. So, we're basically, in many cases, in a funding role — although I do meet with the City of Whitehorse on a regular basis to have these discussions.

There may be some other synergies within the sport and rec branch, but generally it's to help connect the municipalities — in this case, the City of Whitehorse — with the money they need to actually expand and build their active transportation system.

When it's done — when it's actually executed — in some cases, my good colleague in Highways and Public Works will also work with that as well, but generally, our role as Community Services is to connect and help the City of Whitehorse with their funding requests to the federal agencies.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that and I encourage him, when he's ready, to get back on his bike. It's a great way to get to work, although I think my near-death experiences every single day at times are enough to make me reconsider. I'm hopeful that, working between the City of Whitehorse and the territorial government, some of those really

scary incidences can be minimized, but that's for a different discussion.

There is a point in *Our Clean Future* — and I'm just going to quote from the report. It says: "Develop detailed guidelines by 2025 that can be used by the Government of Yukon and partners to develop walkable, bike-friendly and transit-oriented communities."

So, is the Department of Community Services participating in developing those detailed guidelines by 2025 to make Yukon a more walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-oriented community?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have a role, of course, in this item that the member opposite has brought to us from *Our Clean Future*, and we do work with municipalities across the territory, so we will be a conduit for that information. I will reach out to my colleague in Environment, because the Department of Environment is the lead on this plan, and I will get more detail from my colleague in Environment as to where we are with this. As far as Community Services — I mean, all departments — we work with Highways and Public Works on trying to expand our active-living infrastructure. As I said earlier, we work with the City of Whitehorse as well.

But, as far as this one item in the *Our Clean Future* strategy, I will have to refer back to the Department of Environment to see where we are at with that. They are the lead on the report.

**Ms. White:** Then maybe I'll just put in one pitch for the minister based on that one bullet point in his mandate letter to encourage his colleague, both the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Highways and Public Works, who is responsible for what can only be described as a bike trap outside of the Yukon tourism building. It's the only wooden sidewalk along the entire Millennium Trail. It gets repainted every fall with grippy paint — it's supposed to be grippy paint — that wears off before the end of the season. It melts at different temperatures. I see cyclists go down every single time it rains and when it starts to snow and on the melt. In his efforts to partner with the City of Whitehorse on improvements to active transportation, maybe he can encourage his colleague to change the surface of that woodwork because it's dangerous. It is dangerous, so I look forward to seeing it changed.

Another point in the minister's mandate is: "Advance the government's bid to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games in partnership with the City of Whitehorse." I know my colleague from the Yukon Party was going through this conversation with the minister the other day, but it's interesting because I found an editorial that the minister had written previously in his position as an editor. He talked about — "taxpayers build white elephant" — "The Yukon government has spent, at the moment, \$31 million on the athlete's village.

"That is a pile of money."

It goes on and it actually has lots of questions about the timing — so this is an article from the *Yukon News* from April 1, 2006. Unfortunately, I don't think it was an April Fools' joke.

Can the minister tell me — he has criticism in this editorial about the amount of time that the government had to prepare

for the Canada Winter Games. I would say that it's almost the same reflected — it's 2022 now and the games are in 2027. Can the minister tell us how far along they are to advance the bid to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am looking forward to this, actually. I really do appreciate the opportunity to discuss this on the floor, so I really do thank the member opposite for this.

I will start by talking about that wooden stretch of road by the tourism building. I know it well, and I have learned that it is a dangerous stretch of the Millennium Trail. I have taken a header on that stretch in the early morning. I believe it was probably about 6:45 a.m. coming into work. I, too, have skidded on that very slick piece of trail that sometimes has grippy stuff. I love the word "grippy", but it's not grippy. It wasn't grippy that morning, so I do know about it. I perhaps mentioned it to my officials in Highways and Public Works. I am not sure where the responsibility lies, but it is a good flag for me. I do remember it and I will bring it up.

At some point, if the member will indulge me — I commend the member opposite on her research skills to dredge up an editorial from 16 years ago, I think, by my math. It was a long time ago and I would love to refresh. I sometimes go over my old writing when I come across it. Sometimes, it's one of those moments where you say, "Holy smokes, that was tack-sharp" or "Oh, my goodness, what was I doing that day?" That is the beauty of daily journalism or weekly journalism, as the case may be, but I would love to refresh my reflections from 2006 with the man I am today. I would love to see what sticks and what has changed.

I will say, to the point, though, that the sentiment that the member opposite lit on from the editorial about the timing of the athletes' village and some of the challenges that were faced by politicians at the time are front and centre in my mind as I move through this Canada Winter Games bid and prepare for it.

I do know that, in the end, they ran out of time on the athletes' village and the cost of providing — and the solutions that they came up with were quite expensive. It absolutely was in my mind as we go through this, and it is continually top of mind. I think that my officials will know that I keep saying: "When does this have to be done?" and "Let's work back from that date and see when we have to have the plans done and the construction begun."

So, the member opposite is right. I don't have the particulars of that said time in my life — a lot of water under the bridge — but the sentiment that she did express, the trepidation of the cost and how it was executed is certainly part of the DNA that is Mostyn of 2022, and I am reflecting on that as I go forward with this games' bid.

Currently, the Canada Winter Games Bid Committee in Yukon government has confirmed the bid details, including — we have explored the financial commitments, the bid process, and the evaluation details. We have confirmed the bid evaluation technical committee chairs as of January. We had the host bid info session with the city in April 2021; that has been done. The board has provided the Yukon government with the final bid procedures and hosting standards document. That

happened in September. The Canada Winter Games Bid Committee and Yukon government launch of the 2027 bid process was begun in September 2021 and completed. The bid committee submitted its technical information in March. That has also been done.

Right now, we are in the next stage, which is that the bid committee submits its comprehensive information — the full bid. That is in process; that is supposed to be completed by October 2022, and then the Canada Winter Games Bid Committee and the Yukon government will jointly announce who wins the bid in November 2022.

So, right now, we are working out the specific information about our bid in preparation for the final comprehensive full bid, which is happening in October. At that time, we will have much more detail on the fourth ice sheet, the athletes' village, and some of the other pieces of infrastructure — the concrete details about what the Yukon is prepared to do in hosting the 2027 Canada Winter Games.

**Ms. White:** I guess I will just hold off on this, then, and we will see what happens. I guess my hope is, just to quote this document, that government doesn't jump in, dither, and, in the end, run out of time — because that was one of the things that he had written in that editorial.

He also had some great suggestions, like approaching the Canadian military about upgrading the cadet camp 20 minutes south of town for housing, but I'll keep that, because maybe it will be an interesting topic of conversation when the time arises. Similar to Hansard, it turns out that editorials also make for great fodder.

I would like to move on to paid sick days. So, the Making Work Safe Panel recommendations for permanent paid sick leave and amendments to the Yukon *Employment Standards Act* — that report was completed in January 2022. I'm actually on the Yukon Liberal caucus website right now, where that report is posted. I want to know where we're at in making those amendments to the Yukon *Employment Standards Act* to make permanent paid sick leave a reality in Yukon.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, I can report that the panel's report that was delivered on time is being reviewed by the department, which will advise on next steps, including the policy and legislative work, engagement, and other considerations regarding the best way to move forward on this matter. That's the work that the department is doing right now.

In the meantime, the Yukon government has extended the paid sick leave rebate to the fall of 2022 so that employers can apply to be reimbursed in order to support their employees who take sick leave during the ongoing pandemic.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate that the minister just referenced the program that still exists under the Department of Economic Development, what I am looking for is the commitment in this report about amendments to the Yukon *Employment Standards Act*, which does fall under the purview of the Minister of Community Services.

Can he tell me — he said that the conversation is ongoing, but can he be more specific?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** At this point, I can't. The department is actually going through the necessary policy analysis to figure

out exactly how we implement it. There will be more conversations with the community as a whole to find out the appetite among the business community, labour, and Yukoners in general about some of the specific policy initiatives that will come up through the work of the Department of Community Services.

**Ms. White:** It is not often anymore that I have the opportunity to have the floor for the afternoon. Although I have more questions, I want to make sure that my colleague from Kluane has the opportunity to ask questions. So, I thank the minister for the exchange today, and I thank the officials who are here in support, of course, and everyone who works in the vast Department of Community Services. I do look forward to picking up my conversation where we left off the next time I get the opportunity.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to welcome the staff who is here today to aid the minister. I guess I do have a few questions. The first one I want to ask is: In this year's Budget Address book — the five-year capital concept under "Community and First Nations infrastructure projects" — it has phase 3 of infrastructure upgrades in Haines Junction. It has \$1.2 million for 2023, \$1.2 million for 2023-24, and \$1.2 million for 2024-25. I was under the understanding that, this coming year, phase 3 would be completed. The contractor was supposed to start last year. As you know, we are two or three years behind on this infrastructure upgrade.

Can the minister confirm whether this work is only going to be \$1 million to \$2 million a year for the next three years, so it will take three years to finish phase 3?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to welcome the Member for Kluane into the discussion this afternoon. It's always a pleasure to speak with him on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

I am going to take a little bit of exception to his characterization of the five-year capital plan that the Department of Highways and Public Works staff work so very hard to compile for every year. They're doing such a remarkable job, and to hear it disparaged on the floor of the Legislature is a bit hard.

I will note that, even as the member opposite disparages the five-year capital plan, he is using it to ask me questions in the House, so I'm glad he's finding some utility in the five-year capital plan that the Department of Highways and Public Works so diligently and thoughtfully pulls together every year for the benefit of all territorial citizens.

As far as the water works that are going into Kluane and that he has used the five-year capital plan to identify and to talk about, we are working very, very hard to get that done as soon as possible. My officials are currently looking into that project to get more detail. When I have it, I will endeavour to provide it to the member opposite.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. It was noted that it's over three years. I was under the understanding — and I'm pretty sure that the municipality was under the understanding — that it would be done next year. There's still phase 4 that needs to happen. It looks like the minister will have an answer, so I'll wait.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will report to the member opposite that our revised schedule here at Community Services shows that we're endeavouring to get phase 3 completed by the end of 2022-23.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

So, there has been a lot of conversation already today and over the last little while about community transfer station closures. I just have a couple of questions. I know that my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, has done quite a good job actually of asking and bringing the concerns forward. I just have a few more.

So, in Question Period on March 21, I asked the Minister of Community Services about the transfer station closures and the lack of consultation with rural Yukoners. In his response, he said — and I quote: “People are throwing out a lot of stuff. When we came into office — my colleague has talked about this before — municipalities come to this government and said, ‘You have to do something...’”

So, can the minister confirm which municipalities asked for those four dumps to be closed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to visit this issue this afternoon on the floor of the Legislative Assembly again. I will say to the member opposite that in December 2016 — it was actually tabled in January. The report was finished in December and tabled in January. The report is dated January 2016. Association of Yukon Communities — *Solid Waste Management: Vision for a Sustainable Model for Yukon Communities* landed on the Yukon Party minister's desk at the time, I'm sure. Maybe it was read; maybe it wasn't. But that is the genesis of this whole plan. The plan then morphed when the municipalities — when we came to office, they came to us and said, “Please, we have to do something.”

So, it talked about regionalization and liability and control. That's what the genesis of the report that came to us in 2018 dealt with. It was talking about the committee's recommendations that were as follows: developing a user-fee system at Yukon government and municipal waste and management sites; exploring improved household hazardous waste and waste-oil collection programs and service levels; exploring organics diversion and composting programs in communities; exploring waste transportation and collection efficiencies; and advising the Minister of Community Services on solid waste, specifically focusing on solid-waste governance models, stewardship, and funding models and service objectives.

Through that report, as I said, it came down to regionalization — reducing the liability, regionalizing our landfills and making them more efficient, and asserting control. As we explored how to achieve those three things, we hit on the regionalization model. We're now in the middle of implementing and moving — we're in phase 2 of this plan already. Phase 2 sees the establishment of regional landfills in rural Yukon communities such as Haines Junction, Mayo, and Teslin. As we do that, we're actually closing those other sites — the small transfer stations — that continue to provide a hole in a bucket, as I've been saying, and actually provide an avenue for greater liability, greater cost, and greater environmental

pollution. That's exactly what we're trying to prevent, and we're trying to make this more efficient. So, that's the model that we're pursuing, and that's where that comes from.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister. I know he relies quite a bit on the previous minister to help him with some of this stuff and I do thank the both of them.

So, the minister also said — and I quote: “This government has been listening to Yukoners since we were elected to office and we are continuing to do this. I know that my colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, did extensive community tours — in some cases, with the Premier — to all of these communities and talked to them about the issues that matter to them, and I know that I have followed in his footsteps to do exactly the same thing.”

So, those are the words of the minister. Earlier today in the House, the minister said “... lots of conversations with our rural residents.” So, I know that the previous minister and this minister — there have been conversations with the people of Keno. But can the minister provide — and I know that the good staff at Community Services keep track of their community meetings. When we were in government, we travelled; we had staff with us. We met — a long list of to-dos. I've been to lots of those community meetings — had people holler and scream at me and all kinds of different stuff.

So, can the minister provide dates and times of public community meetings that — the one city he keeps talking about that he organized and attended with a number of attendees — basically in Destruction Bay and Burwash, where they discussed dumps? I know of one. I was there with the Leader of the Official Opposition. I'm looking for other dates and times.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said before and I will repeat again, change is difficult. There are no two ways about it. This plan is going to alter the way that Yukoners get rid of the 900 kilograms of garbage that they are producing every year — each individual. It will. It is going to make it harder for everyone, some harder than others. That's tough. It is hard. I do empathize with people who are seeing their lives changed and made a little more difficult in getting rid of the material that they consume, buy, and discard. This is something that, across North America and the world, we are struggling with — this type of change in the way we drive, transport, in the way we've had to deal with the pandemic, but we also have to deal with it in terms of our global consumption and the detrimental impact we're having on our environment, from the oceans, to the lands, and to our lakes and rivers.

If we don't, as the UN just notified us this week, we're in big trouble, and we may have already passed the threshold. Yes, life on this planet, if we are going to have the effect of perhaps sustaining the life that we have now and not have it degrade any further, is going to have to change. It is going to be inconvenient and hard in some cases.

The question we have as we stand at this point in time is: Do we act or do we not act? Do we take these tough decisions or do we cave to the convenience that we have had for decades and say, “No, we're going to continue that”? I know where I stand on that. A lot of it is outlined in *Our Clean Future*, and

we have had glimmers of it through this pandemic, which has forced us to change the way we work, change the way we interact with each other, and had a profound effect on our greenhouse gas emissions around the world. It's just a glimpse of the change that may be necessary in our lives to actually keep the planet functioning as we have grown accustomed.

To the member opposite, I say that my colleague has met with people across the territory and heard their concerns. I have heard the concerns not only of the single meeting that we both attended — it was great to see you up there — but also in other communities across the territory. We have heard the entreaties from the representative of those ridings, from the residents of those ridings; I have heard the concerns. As I said, I empathize with the change that is happening and we are working as a department to try to mitigate and answer some of the concerns we have heard from those residents. I outlined some of them earlier today, and the member is reading the Blues. I encourage him to read them again and he can get those answers and read them back to me at a future date.

The reality is that we are hearing — we have heard the concerns — and we have come up with some suggestions to perhaps mitigate some of the issues that may affect residents in rural Yukon as we adapt to the changes necessary to have an effect on, in this case, the incredible amount of garbage that we are producing in the territory and trying to manage it more efficiently in a way that ends the ongoing and growing exponential growth in the liability that we are facing. The municipalities came to his government in 2016 in January and came to our government shortly after we were elected and said: "You have got to do something." Well, we are doing something.

It is important; I believe in it. I believe in the change. As I said, I know that some people aren't going to be happy with it. As I said, I am more than happy to meet with them as I did up in Burwash. It was a very expressive meeting, but I heard their concerns and I am happy to do it. I wasn't offended, I wasn't frightened, and I wasn't concerned. It is important. And I understand the frustration and the challenge that this change is bringing to people. I also believe that it is necessary.

As I said, I was at that meeting. My colleague was at meetings across the territory in, I believe, probably every community. The MLA has brought the concerns forward. That is another avenue for these people to do it. The AYC has heard these things. We have seen letters to the editor in the newspaper. I used to work in that industry, and it is another avenue to make your voice heard, and I have read the stories. I have heard the concerns. I will work to address what we can, but it comes down to a decision to do something or do nothing, and we are going to do something. We are going to regionalize our landfills. We are going to make them more efficient, and we are going to make them controlled.

We are going to take the ones that are large enough to be viable and we're going to put the money in there to put in the weigh scales, the electricity, the gates, and the staff to make sure that they are properly supervised so people don't go dumping noxious chemicals, waste oils, old televisions, old couches, and old fridges without any supervision. People will

bring their garbage to those sites, they will pay a tipping fee, and the tipping fee will be subsidized.

Those other sites that are unsupervised and are not viable — are not big enough to become a regional landfill — will be closed. We will work with those communities to address their concerns as much as we possibly can.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The reality for the minister is that we wouldn't be chatting this long and this often about dumps if the minister and the previous minister would have actually gone and had a discussion with the constituents of my riding — the residents of Silver City, Destruction Bay, Burwash, and Keno. My fellow colleagues from Lake Laberge and Pelly-Nisutlin — you know, that's the reason why you are in this trouble today. That is why constituents aren't happy. You just needed to go and consult. You probably would have found some great solutions.

The University of Calgary Arctic Institute of North America wrote the previous minister a letter. I can't even remember how far back it was, but it explained everything to him. This guy is smart. He has a university degree in exactly what the members opposite keep talking about. He had a solution for you in that letter.

So, the conversation that my colleague from the Leader of the Third Party and I had on dumps — we'll share with our constituents again. I'm sure we'll have more questions. I have to say that it's disappointing. It's disappointing that the minister will mislead people when he keeps saying that we've met and consulted —

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

#### Point of order

**Deputy Chair:** Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on a point of order.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Standing Order 19(h) says: should not charge "... another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood." The member across just said that the minister is misleading Yukoners.

**Deputy Chair:** Member for Kluane, on the point of order.

**Mr. Istchenko:** On the point of order, I would ask the minister for dates and times of meetings. He couldn't provide them, so that's why I said that he was misleading the House.

#### Deputy Chair's ruling

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Kluane's initial comments did not suggest intentional misleading; however, his follow-up comments on the point of order did. Therefore, I would ask him to carry on without implying intentional misleading.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*

### **The following document was filed April 5, 2022:**

35-1-63

Bill No. 304, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, letter re (dated March 31, 2022) from Tharian Botting, President, All Genders Yukon Society, to Emily Tredger, Member for Whitehorse Centre (Tredger)

### **The following written question was tabled April 5, 2022:**

Written Question No. 15

Re: Investing in Canada infrastructure program (McLeod)



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 62

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, April 6, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, April 6, 2022 — 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 made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 379, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Porter Creek Centre, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is a duplication of Motion No. 378, already standing in her name.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to please welcome guests who are here today for the tribute to Dan Kemble. It is a long list and I apologize to anyone if I have missed any names, but there are: Casey Kemble, Dan's little brother, and Virginia Smith, Amy Kemble, Serenity Jones, Dan Patterson, Jan Brault, Terri-Lynn Drineyer, Karin Jasma, Nathalie Parenteau, Lance Scoville, Cameron Good, Kirsti Devries, Kathy Dremeyer, Bradley Vanderlou, Byron Gilday, and Lori Eastmuire. There are also some guests who went to school with Dan in Carcross many, many years ago, in the 1970s: Joanne Macdonald, Rob Macdonald, Gerry Quarton, and Geoff Rushant. Please also welcome Dan's sons, Wesley Kemble, Vince Kemble, and Dan's lovely wife, Nancy Maides.

If we could welcome them all, please.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Dan Kemble**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise today in the Legislature on behalf of all members to pay tribute to Dan Kemble. Dan passed away in an accident last summer while hiking along Pooley Canyon on Montana Mountain. Dan never sought recognition. He didn't speak about himself much, he didn't brag, but he certainly led a remarkable life.

So, let me remark on Dan's life, to share with Yukoners. I knew that Dan was a very capable carpenter who loved to salvage old materials, but I didn't know that he helped to rebuild the *SS Klondike* in the early 2000s. He also helped to refurbish one of the dredges in Dawson and White Pass' *Duchess* train engine. Dan worked on the restoration of the Herschel Island whaling station.

He loved the outdoors and, in particular, birdwatching. He loved the work on Herschel as he got to witness Arctic coastal birds and mammals — jaegers, bluethroats, Arctic loons, muskox, belugas, and Arctic foxes. I certainly knew that Dan loved the outdoors and birds. My pin today is a painting of a whiskey jack that Nancy's daughter, Jenny, painted in honour of Dan.

I knew that Dan contributed to his community. He was a councillor on the South Klondike Local Advisory Council, and he groomed the cross-country ski trails and coached the kids in Carcross for decades. But I didn't know that he was the fire chief for the Carcross Volunteer Fire Department for 20 years.

Dan also volunteered for EMS, search and rescue, chairing the local area planning committee, and the Carcross recreational board. I know he used to take the kids to cross-country meets in Whitehorse all the time. He cared about Carcross.

I knew that Dan had moved from Ontario to the Yukon at a young age. What I didn't know was that he travelled to the Yukon by jumping trains as a teenager. He landed at the alternative school in Carcross as a student. At Christmas, he hitchhiked to Keno to work in the mine for a bit. Before he was 20, he had built a cabin at Striker Pass, which he loved, I know. He chose Carcross as his lifelong home. He loved the area.

Dan was adopted into the Carcross/Tagish Ganaxtedi clan. He loved the outdoors and birds. Dan loved to paddle, hunt, ski, and play hockey outdoors down at Ten Mile. He loved hiking and he made many trips to birdwatch. For many years, Dan organized the Christmas bird count in Carcross. He was a member of the Yukon Bird Club from the 1970s when he first came to the Yukon.

I knew that Dan wasn't into computers. I didn't know that he had a real aversion to e-mail, cellphones, and social media. He wrote letters by hand and read books, and he cared. Dan cared about nature. He cared about community. He loved Nancy and his family, and he lived with intention.

Despite all of the remarkable things, Dan didn't make a big deal about it. Despite a remarkable life, he was a humble man and a true Yukoner. When you met Dan, you could feel him to be gentle, reflective, and caring. It was somehow just how he was.

So, today, Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of all members of the Legislature to share a remarkable life. From Percy Bysshe Shelley's famous poem, *To a Skylark*:

In the golden lightning  
Of the sunken sun,  
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,  
Thou dost float and run;  
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling today a *Global News* article dated March 20, 2021 entitled “Conservative party members vote down resolution to officially recognize climate change”.

**Ms. White:** Today I have for tabling a letter from the president of Queer Yukon in support of Bill No. 304, *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the ongoing opioid crisis in the Yukon by:

- (1) providing nasal naloxone training to every worker at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter; and
- (2) allowing Whitehorse Emergency Shelter staff to independently administer nasal naloxone.

**Ms. White:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:  
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to:

- (1) demonstrate its commitment to the spirit and intent of the mutually binding treaty relationship set out in the 11 Yukon First Nation final agreements with particular reference to the objectives set out in chapter 11 of Yukon First Nation final agreements, including to ensure that social, cultural, economic, and environmental policies are applied to the management, protection, and use of land, water, and resources in an integrated and coordinated manner so as to ensure sustainable development;
- (2) consistent with its stated commitment to implement the recommendations set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Government of Yukon work with Yukon First Nations without ratified treaties to put in place mutually respectful arrangements regarding land use and disposition; and
- (3) pending finalization of the above, the Yukon government implement an interim moratorium on mineral staking in regions of Yukon where land use plans have not been finalized.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Electric vehicle charging stations

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to update the Legislature about the progress that the Yukon is making in supporting Yukoners’ transition to electric vehicles. The transportation sector is the territory’s largest source of greenhouse gas emissions. Under *Our Clean Future*, we committed to developing a territory-wide electrified

transportation network. We have made substantial progress over the past few years, and I am here to update colleagues.

Over the last 12 months, we installed seven new fast chargers in the communities of Carmacks, Teslin, Watson Lake, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Stewart Crossing, and Dawson City. These seven new charging stations expanded the Yukon’s existing electric vehicle charging network to 12 fast chargers, plus, in the coming year, we will add an additional seven fast chargers to the communities of Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Mendenhall, Faro, Ross River, and two more in Whitehorse, bringing the total network of electric vehicle chargers in the Yukon to 19 by the end of the year.

Yukoners can now travel the entire Klondike Highway, the Silver Trail highway, and the Yukon portion of the Alaska Highway in an electric vehicle with the ability to find charging support along the way. In addition, earlier this year, I announced that the Yukon government, in partnership with the federal government, will be supporting the installation of up to 200 level 2 electric vehicle chargers across the territory by offering municipalities, First Nation governments, and businesses up to 90 percent in rebates to install level 2 chargers.

Mr. Speaker, by investing in electric vehicle chargers, we are in turn incentivizing Yukoners to purchase electric vehicles. Since our government launched a suite of clean transportation rebates under the good energy rebates program over a year ago, Yukoners have been buying and driving more electric vehicles. I asked for an update from the department. We went from 22 electric vehicles in the fall of 2020 to 129 registered in the Yukon as of this January. Our goal is to have 4,800 electric vehicles registered in the Yukon by 2030, and although there is definitely more work to do, we are committed to this goal.

In budget 2022, our government outlined over \$2 million to support zero-emission vehicles and charging stations across the territory. We continue to see promising indications that more and more electric vehicles will be on the Canadian market. In fact, just last month, the federal government announced \$4.9 billion to create an electric vehicle battery plant in Windsor, accounting for the single largest investment in the Canadian auto industry to date.

Mr. Speaker, we see a future where electric vehicles are commonplace and that it is possible to travel in an electric vehicle between all of the Yukon’s road-accessible communities. Helping Yukoners to shift to electric vehicles is one of the ways we will reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, reduce our collective greenhouse gas emissions, and meet our commitments in *Our Clean Future*.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Thank you for the update from the minister on electric charging stations for vehicles. Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Liberal government has been expanding the use of diesel generation for electricity in the territory. In recent years, they have spent over \$14 million on renting dirty diesel generators. They have spent over \$3.3 million on infrastructure upgrades to house their rented dirty diesel generators, and they spent \$6.3 million on planning for permanent new diesel generators and the cancelled LNG site.

I want to note that the \$6.3 million of Liberal energy decisions haven't been applied to electrical rates yet, but they will be when the minister gets his rate review and jacks up our electrical rates even further. That's right, Mr. Speaker. The Liberals are building new diesel generators that Yukoners are going to pay for. In fact, there's a tender closing today to build 12.5 megawatts of diesel-generating power in Whitehorse, Faro, and Dawson City. What this means is that, in recent years, rather than make our electric grid greener, they have actually increased our dependence on diesel.

My first question is: For these electric charging stations, how much of the electricity is going to be generated by fossil fuels? As we know, some of these charging stations are being put in communities that rely solely on diesel generation. Because if the Liberals are just replacing vehicles that run on fossil fuels with electric vehicles that are charged using electricity from fossil fuels, then this is nothing more than a shell game of greenhouse gas emissions.

Can the minister tell us how much of the electricity at EV charging stations is going to come from diesel?

Another question that I have for the minister is: Who is paying for the electricity at these charging stations? Is it essentially just free fuel subsidized by taxpayers, or do the people actually have to pay?

Finally, I have another question for the minister. On March 23, I asked the minister what consultations he has undertaken with respect to consulting the mining industry on emission targets for their industry. At the time, the minister said that the way he conducted these consultations was by participating in some sort of panel. He committed in the Legislature that he would provide the transcript of the so-called "consultation". After receiving radio silence, basically, from the minister, I e-mailed the minister asking for this information. Since that time, the minister still has provided nothing.

Can the minister confirm if consultations with the mining industry on emission targets have taken place? When did they take place? What was the outcome of the consultations? Will the minister finally provide the information that he committed to provide on March 23?

**Ms. Tredger:** We know that transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Yukon, and we have to start there if we are to meet our emissions targets for 2030. The Yukon NDP platform called for the building of one rapid electric vehicle charging port in every grid-connected community. This announcement means that the government has almost achieved our platform commitment, so I'm glad to see that we agree on this issue. As the Premier has said, good ideas can come from all sides.

The minister spoke about reducing our collective emissions and the importance of travel between road-accessible communities, so I want to take a moment to talk about a collective solution for travel between communities, because we know that not everyone can afford to drive a car, much less a new electric car, and not everyone is able to get a licence. Let's talk about transit.

The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce community travel project called for an intercommunity bus service in the territory. The 2021 Yukon NDP platform committed to introducing a scheduled bus service between rural Yukon communities and Whitehorse. The per-person, per-mile emissions of a bus trip are 32-percent less than a private car. That's a meaningful difference. Supporting accessible and reliable public transit is not only a proven climate solution, it's also a matter of equity and safety for our communities.

I also want to talk about the framing of this government's response to climate change. What has been presented here today is a change in technology; it's not a change in the way we travel, the way we work, the way we consume, or the way we live. I'm concerned that this government is relying solely on technological fixes for a much bigger problem.

In the 2021 Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change report, they discussed prioritizing — and I quote: "... reconnection and sustainable relationships with the land and people to ensure that social and economic systems are based on reciprocity and supported by ecological integrity. Overall, this results in a changed mindset and way of living to sustain a healthy planet."

This government thanked that panel for their work and, in their response letter, dismissed their recommendations. It was the kind of letter that almost — not quite, but almost — made me miss the Yukon Party, who are at least honest about their disregard for climate activists. It is nothing short of enraging the way this government asked youth to be leaders, to pour their time and energy and passion into recommendations, and then refused to engage in an honest conversation when they heard something that they didn't like. To actually tackle climate change and make our society sustainable, we need a new relationship with the environment, and technological fixes alone won't get us there.

I recently heard a very compelling metaphor about this. During the women's rights movements, dishwashers were invented, which reduced the amount of household labour they had to do. While this was certainly a good thing — I'm personally grateful every day for my dishwasher — it did nothing to alter the balance of power in the home and the fundamental inequality that women face in society.

In the same way, technological changes will not fundamentally change our relationship with the world around us. So, yes, I'm excited about electric cars and charging stations. I appreciate the work being done to make them more accessible to Yukoners, but I'm afraid that this government is losing sight of the real work that's ahead — the work of creating a new way of living and a new relationship with the world we live in.

What does that look like? It looks like reframing our ways of thinking about consumption and development. It looks like prioritizing sustainability, even when that is hard. It looks like acting like we're in an emergency, because we are.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I wish I had more than four minutes.

I know that tomorrow we are bringing in witnesses from the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation, and I look forward to that discussion.

I will start with the Youth Panel on Climate Change and read now from the Premier's letter to the Youth Panel on Climate Change. I will table it for members: "The Government of Yukon would like to express our sincere gratitude to all of you who served on the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change. Your insights, passion and dedication are essential to building a stronger and more resilient Yukon and represent an important step in developing inclusive climate change policies." I could read the whole thing. There are some great suggestions there, so I thank the youth panel. By the way, we have a new youth panel, which has just been announced. Thank you.

With respect to diesel, we do have an islanded grid. Our electrical grid here is not connected to the Outside, and as such, we require that there be diesel or LNG backup if one of our main transmission lines or one of our main turbines goes down, so that is correct — and we will continue to upgrade those.

What we really need to be talking about with the members opposite — with the Yukon Party — is about their interest in building another diesel plant to deal with the increased demand for electricity. No, we do not want to do that. I disagree with that. I think that the Yukon Party is completely wrong. In fact, I think that they are unreliable around this issue.

When it comes to diesel, the Member for Kluane asked me what percentage of electricity would come from renewables. Because it would come on to our grid, the answer is roughly 95 percent. Sometimes it is down to 93 percent, sometimes up to 97 percent. Of course, it depends on whether it is summer or winter, but that's how much renewables we have on our grid right now. What we are doing is expanding the amount of renewables we have on our grid. We are bringing on a grid-scale battery just up the hill from here. That will get rid of four rented diesels, but not if we built a diesel plant, as the Yukon Party wishes to do. No, because then you have built the plant, and now you have to pay for it. This is the difference.

I believe that we have to set an ambitious climate goal around what is happening here in the country, in the world, and in the territory. We just saw that another report came out from the sixth assessment of the intergovernmental panel on climate change work and it's talking about how critical it is that we cut our emissions. Transportation is the biggest set of emissions that we have. I recall when the Yukon Party put forward their plan around climate change, and they asked me as a climate expert to come in and give them some advice. I pointed out to them — which, by the way, was led by the Leader of the Yukon Party at the time — and I pointed out to them: "You're not even talking about transportation. It's over half of the emissions in the territory."

No, we're going to put transportation and emissions around transportation front and centre. That's what we're going to do and we are committed to this. I believe that we have all sorts of types of innovative projects around transforming to renewables. I thank you for the brief time that I have to respond to the ministerial statement today.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Cost of living

**Mr. Hassard:** Earlier this week, when the Minister of Energy was talking to media about the Yukon Party's proposal to defer collection of the fuel tax for the year, the minister said — and I'll quote: "One of the ones that has been suggested to us is to drop the gas tax but remember all of the gas tax is rebated to Yukoners. So that isn't helping in a sense because all that money is going back anyways."

Can the minister explain those comments and tell this House how the fuel tax is rebated to Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I was speaking about is the carbon price. The carbon price, of course, is a federal policy that is brought in but which we support, and what we have done is design a program where all of those dollars are rebated to Yukoners. They go back to Yukon families; they go back to Yukon businesses; they go back to First Nation governments and municipal governments. They don't come back to us. We make sure that all of that money is rebated to Yukoners. We've discussed carbon pricing very often in the Legislative Assembly and that's what I was referring to.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'll remind the minister; that's not what he said and that's certainly not we had asked.

Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is that what the minister told the media earlier this week was flat-out wrong. The fuel tax is not rebated to Yukoners, but given the inflation crisis that Yukoners are facing, we believe that it should be. The most impactful way the Government of Yukon can help with the crisis is to suspend the collection of the fuel tax.

So, will the government agree to cut the fuel tax on Yukoners while they face this unprecedented cost-of-living crisis?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I don't recall seeing the member opposite there when I was speaking to the media. I will check back to make sure that it was clear that I was talking about the carbon price, but I'm standing on the floor of the Legislature today to say that this is about the carbon price and the carbon rebate. I am really happy that we, as a government, have agreed that all of this money will go back to Yukoners to support them and that the price signal will help them.

What this is about, Mr. Speaker, is making sure that we don't continue to create a dependency on fossil fuels. We really need to move off of fossil fuels. We just had this discussion through the ministerial statement moments ago. I hope that the members opposite from the Yukon Party are not suggesting that what we want to do is invest more in fossil fuels — I think that is the wrong direction.

We have brought in place an interim rebate on electrical bills. We think that is the better approach, and we will continue to look for the many ways out of this year's budget and beyond in how we will support Yukoners right now and in the coming months.

**Mr. Hassard:** You know, we hear often about the importance of providing accurate information, and it is clear that the minister is certainly not doing that today. Even the

Liberal government has admitted that the cost of living is skyrocketing and the fact that they think that \$150 a year is going to help with that shows just how out of touch they really are.

Jurisdictions across North America have been announcing that they are taking action by cutting or suspending their fuel taxes, but here in the Yukon, government ministers have demonstrated that they don't even know how the fuel tax works and have incorrectly suggested that it is already rebated.

So, will the Government of Yukon follow the lead of so many other jurisdictions and cut the fuel tax on Yukoners for the year to help them deal with the unprecedented cost of living?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The minister has been clear when it comes to the rebate of carbon pricing, and we have also been clear that we believe that affecting the cost of living on a positive basis on the electrical rates is a better approach forward.

We do know that other Tory governments that are facing elections are in the situation where they are cutting the fuel price through their tax system. We don't believe that's necessarily what we should be doing. We have designed a whole budget that addresses inflation since August. We have been making lives more affordable for Yukoners. The member opposite is part of the team that has been proven very unreliable when it comes to carbon pricing. They just put a press release out saying that they have never been in favour of a carbon pricing mechanism, but yet they campaigned on having one.

Again, they could say that we are mincing our words about carbon pricing when it's absolutely not true. We have been consistent about carbon pricing since the beginning. We have also been consistent with our rebates and our efforts to make lives more affordable for Yukoners since day one.

#### **Question re: Cannabis retail sales**

**Mr. Dixon:** One of the most obvious ways that government competes with the private sector is in the cannabis market with online sales. The government retailer allows patrons to go online, search products, select them, pay for them, and have them shipped. Private retailers, however, are not afforded this sales channel. We have pointed this out numerous times over the past number of years.

Back in October 2020, the former minister promised online sales for private retailers, and yet again, this government has failed to deliver on that promise. So far, the private retailers haven't even been consulted on the regulations yet.

When will private retailers have access to the same online sales channels that the Liberal government allows the government retailer to use?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that partly today the question from the member opposite has to do with some statements made by the Yukon chamber today and some other private sector retailers. First of all, I believe that the statements today were outdated. We had broad discussions here in the fall. During those discussions, we talked about the fact that we committed to bringing online sales into place in May of this year. We're committed to that, and we'll deliver that.

Again, we also meet with our retailers — in some cases, weekly or biweekly. I'm scheduled to sit with them tomorrow morning, I believe, at about 10:05. We have sat and we have listened to folks as we've gone through this system. We're committed to it. We brought the price down for them just last year, and again, we're doing to deliver on what we said.

I think it's just a little disingenuous, the comments across the way. Again, I look forward to questions 2 and 3.

**Mr. Dixon:** Well, just on the radio this morning, the chair of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce was on the radio saying that the government was competing with the private sector. That's a direct quote from this morning. I don't think that's disingenuous at all.

Since the 2021 election, we have questioned the Liberals' model on private cannabis sales. We have said that this system sets up the government to compete with the private sector and doesn't give businesses in this sector the tools that they need to compete with and displace the black market.

Now, today, the Yukon chamber has added their voice to the voices of businesses in this community on this issue. They have written a letter to the government that notes the points that we have raised: that the government is competing with the private sector.

Why is the minister continuing to allow the government to sell cannabis online, but not allowing private retailers this very same opportunity?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, as stated in the answer to the first question, I think what spurred this — or the catalyst for this — were the comments that I made this morning. The first point I made was that the comments were outdated. The reason they are outdated is because we made a commitment here in the fall. I am going to reach out to the chamber. I think we need to sit down with the chamber members and bring them up to speed on what has happened.

Again, the wholesale markup was adjusted from 22 percent to 20 percent in December 2021. We reduced the price. We also reviewed the cost-of-service charges on products. So, under the previous cost-of-service rate, large formats, such as 28-gram bags, had a cost-of-service charge on licensees of about \$14 per unit. Under the new rate, the cost of service for 28-gram bags is \$2.15 versus \$14.

One of the things that we have done is gone out to public consultation and engagement when this all came about. We heard very clearly from Yukoners. We have debated this and I am looking forward to debating it again. If we want to go back and be redundant, we can talk about it again.

The "what we heard" document was very clear on the governance structure that Yukoners wanted to see and how this would be dispersed. We are committed to May. That is what we said in the fall. Absolutely nothing has changed. When you write up regulations, you have to go through an internal process, such as making sure you have French translation, making sure that it goes through the legal system, and all of those things. They can laugh. The former Minister of Justice should know, instead of laughing, that this is what is happening. It will be in place in May.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, this government made a conscious choice to allow the government retailer to continue to sell products online while the private sector is unable to do so. That is directly competing with the private sector. One of the biggest disadvantages that private cannabis retailers face is the burdensome price structure imposed on them by the government-run distributor. Not only does the government impose a distribution markup, but there is a raft of handling and stocking fees on top of that. This means that before the product even arrives on the retailers' shelves, there are significant unnecessary costs to the product. This would be all the more simple if private retailers could order directly from licensed producers.

Will the government get out of the way of private retailers, stop competing with them in the cannabis market, and allow them to purchase directly from licensed producers so that they can be even more competitive and stand a better chance of displacing the black market?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, it's important to know that, statistically, we've done phenomenally in displacing black market based on what we've seen for sale the last couple of years.

The other thing that we will do is make sure that we take the direction of Yukoners. We can go back — the member opposite and I discussed this at length when the regulations came through — and the last work we did — I think that we had the unanimous support of the House. I think the member opposite who is asking me the question today voted in favour of this. So, we will continue to go down the road we have planned to. We will make sure that there are online sales available in May. We will listen to Yukoners in the structure that we had. We will continue to do a phenomenal job. I thank the member sitting next to me for the work in setting this up and displacing the black market.

Again, we've reduced prices. The commitment that we made was that we would not make profit on this transaction, and that's the commitment that we are sticking to. We are making sure that retailers have the opportunity to make as much as they possibly can. We want to see this in the hands of the private sector. The commitments that were made here about opening a store and putting it in the private sector's hands are all things that we committed to and all things that we did.

#### **Question re: Health care services**

**Ms. White:** Yesterday, the minister told the media that she was — and I quote: "... working on the first government-supported walk-in clinic" set to open this spring. To say that Yukoners are flabbergasted would be an understatement. After being asked directly in this House by the Yukon NDP and after the minister dismissed several times the very idea of a public walk-in clinic, it seems the government just did a 180-degree turn. To be clear, the Yukon NDP is thrilled that the government changed its mind, but we need clarification. After all, the minister herself said only a few months ago that people who spend hours in the ER would unfortunately just have to wait. The thousands of Yukoners with no family doctor are on the edge of their seats.

Can the minister confirm that the government is opening a public walk-in clinic this spring?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am surprised by this question. I am certainly happy to be able to speak about the changes and the progress that the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services is making in response to the needs of Yukoners, but I have mentioned a government-supported walk-in clinic in this Legislative Assembly at least twice prior to my conversation yesterday in response to the media questions. I am happy to even locate those, perhaps in Hansard, and provide them to this Legislative Assembly. It is not the first time I have mentioned this. As a matter of fact, I can remember doing it the very first time in response to a question from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin.

The *Putting People First* report, of course, indicated that, as we implement the recommendations from that report, we should consider the concept of primary health care services and, in particular, a walk-in clinic supported by government. We are currently working toward opening a new walk-in clinic in Whitehorse. This initiative is just one piece of the work that we are doing to expand access to primary health care here in the territory.

**Ms. White:** The minister at different times has mentioned the bilingual health clinic, but that was the first time that we had heard about a public walk-in clinic.

So, the news isn't just a shock to us, but it caught everybody off guard. In fact, it was so unbelievable that when the minister said that she was working on the public walk-in clinic to open this spring, journalists offered her a chance to clarify. When she was asked a second time, the minister confirmed and said yes — point blank — that a government-supported walk-in clinic will open this spring.

Again, the Yukon NDP and everybody who has heard the news are thrilled, but considering that we are already in the spring, the deadline is fast approaching. Can the minister confirm that, in her calendar, spring ends on June 21?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm going to assume the member opposite is being facetious and she doesn't really care what I think about when spring is or spring isn't. However, a walk-in clinic is in fact an important aspect of the responses that the Department of Health and Social Services and this government are providing for Yukoners in need of primary medical care. It is not the only response. It will not be the golden panacea of responses or of solutions, but it will be one important aspect of the work that we are doing together with the Yukon Medical Association and with the Yukon medical providers of service here in the territory to expand services of all types for Yukoners to have primary care options.

**Ms. White:** The minister will have to forgive me, because when the Yukon Housing Corporation minister told me that the Jeckell housing project was going to open in late spring and I asked for clarification, I was told June or July.

So, the thousands of Yukoners who have been waiting years on the family doctor wait-list are excited too. Until they heard it on the radio this morning, no one had any idea that this was in the works. In fact, information on this public walk-in clinic is nowhere to be found. It's not on the government's

website, in the government briefing notes, or even in this year's budget.

Given that this clinic is supposed to be up and running in a matter of months — spring of this year — can the minister tell Yukoners where they are supposed to find information about this new walk-in clinic?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I never want to enter into a back-and-forth here in the Legislative Assembly where I just say “X” and the opposite folks say “Y”, but I have a briefing note in my hand. In addition to the fact that this is incorrect — I have mentioned it here in this Legislative Assembly on at least two other occasions, and I will look for those references. I will apologize if I am wrong about that, but it is certainly in my memory that it was the case with respect to this spring session.

The most important information is that we are working on this in conjunction with the medical community here in the territory for the purposes of determining how and when this can happen. When we have that information, we will provide it immediately to the Yukon public. We will have it on yukon.ca and the information that is available online with respect how individual Yukoners can find that information, and yesterday is not the first time that I mentioned this. I am sorry that the members opposite weren't listening. I was happy to have that question from the media yesterday. I, certainly, being in front of them, very close to them, did not understand that there was any surprise. As a matter of fact, the clarification that was asked about was whether or not that clinic would be open in 2022 or by the end of the year, and I said yes.

#### **Question re: Inclusive and special education**

**Ms. McLeod:** In a recent letter, the Yukon Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Association of Yukon criticized the Department of Education's lack of recognition and investment in speech and language services. They said — and I quote: “The Department requires additional FTE allocation for S-LPs in order to provide their specialized services in an equitable manner across the territory.” Currently, there are four speech-language pathologists in the department.

Will the minister consider increasing the number of SLPs in the Department of Education?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question.

I want to always start by saying that we strive to ensure that we have the right services and supports in place for our children, and that is certainly my commitment always. This is an area that has been discussed at some length, and it was certainly discussed in the Public Accounts hearings that happened in January. Information about student needs and supports — including diagnoses such as language disorder — are contained in individual files for students. As part of the work to respond to the findings of the review of inclusive and special education, we are working to identify options to improve our tracking and monitoring of learning plans, specialized assessments, strategies, and supports for students. Yes, we currently have four FTE allocations for speech-language pathologists. They are a very valuable resource.

I will continue to build on my answer going forward.

#### **Question re: Campground development**

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, Yukon government's budget includes money in the five-year capital concept for a new campground. We know that the Department of Environment has been engaging six First Nations about this possible site and that they are targeting a location within a two-hour drive of Whitehorse.

Can the minister please tell us which sites have been identified and are currently being considered?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I'm pleased to share the work that is underway to select a new campground location. Indeed, this is an exciting project to provide greater opportunities to all Yukoners and to the guests we welcome here on an annual basis.

Six Yukon First Nations whose traditional territories are within a two-hour drive of Whitehorse were invited to discuss possible campground locations and partnership opportunities with the Yukon Parks branch. We are working with First Nations to identify a location that would meet the requirements for the new campground laid out in the *Yukon Parks Strategy*. Yukoners will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the new campground after a final location has been selected in consultation with affected First Nations.

In order to get to the construction phase, we will also need to complete the necessary planning and design work. The new campground will provide economic opportunities for First Nations and the private sector. There will be opportunities to bid on tenders for campground design, construction, and ongoing operation.

As well, the new First Nation procurement policy will also be followed to enhance economic outcomes for Yukon First Nation people and businesses.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, we know the government has considered a fairly large site and they have said that it would be as big as 150 well-spaced sites. They have also said that they hope the sites will have access to a body of water. This means there are only a few possible sites that may be considered. We know that Yukoners would like to know which sites are currently on the table.

Can the minister please tell us which sites he is looking at and are currently being considered?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The member opposite is correct that various sites within a two-hour drive from Whitehorse are being considered. The final decision has not yet been made, but I can advise that, as indicated, the proposed campground could be larger than 150 campsites. It should ultimately have a rustic atmosphere and well-spaced campsites, have a quiet zone available, and provide active recreational opportunities like hiking trails.

I will continue to be briefed on the selection of the new campsite during the course of this year. I have also been told that there is a possibility of this plan being divided into separate and discrete but smaller sites that may be identified, but that is still contingent on the discussions being had with the six impacted First Nations.

But we certainly look forward to welcoming all Yukoners on April 30 for the second year of the extended Yukon summer camping experience, as we will be opening up on April 30 and closing later as well. We hope to have a near-normal experience for both Yukoners and for the guests who we will be welcoming from around Canada —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Question re: Health human resource strategy**

**Mr. Cathers:** Thousands of Yukoners are without a family doctor, which means they have serious issues accessing primary health care.

Over one-fifth of people don't have a doctor. This issue is getting worse by the day. Over the next few months, as many as five local family doctors will go on maternity leave, and we have heard that many of them can't find sufficient locum coverage. It's clear the Yukon needs an integrated health human resource strategy, which needs to include immediate actions, as well as a longer term plan.

Will the minister agree to work with Yukon Medical Association and other health care professionals to immediately begin work on developing an integrated health human resource strategy for the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am pleased to be able to stand today to answer what is a repeat question from yesterday. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to say again that of course we are working with the Yukon Medical Association. The question is: Will the minister agree to work with the Yukon Medical Association? The answer to that is yes. We are doing that work.

We agree that there needs to be primary health care services and options for Yukoners who are without a primary care doctor. We have continued to recruit through national and online forums, and we have supplemented staff with agencies, locum doctors, and other opportunities for out-of-territory resources. We continue to explore options to connect Yukoners to primary health care services. We have the "find a doctor" program. We need to continue to work on expanding that service so that more doctors are registered to take additional patients. We are working to hire additional nurse practitioners to work in our communities and in integrated primary health care clinics to help meet the needs of Yukoners. We meet with the Yukon Medical Association to address physician recruitment, retention, and the issues of locums.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister paints a rosy picture, but we hear a different story from doctors and patients. Lack of access to primary care is having real consequences. We hear from Yukoners frequently about the impact the shortage of family doctors has on their lives. Over one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a doctor.

We also hear from the physician community that they are struggling. Doctors are experiencing burnout, and some we have heard from are thinking about cutting back clinical hours. Newer doctors are increasingly turning away from primary care and choosing not to take on patient practices because they are not getting the support they need from government.

What's needed to address this is an integrated health human resource strategy with immediate actions, as well as a longer term plan. Will the minister agree to make this a priority and get to work with health care stakeholders immediately on a new health human resource strategy?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This has been a significant issue for some period of time, certainly through the period of COVID. It has been a primary concern of mine and a priority for our government since I was given the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Services a little less than a year ago. It continues to be a priority for the work that we are doing in building trusting relationships with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Nurses Association, and all primary health care providers.

We need to support the individuals who provide that kind of acute care here in the territory. Having been through two years of a world pandemic, having recognized the local, the national, and the international shortage with respect to health care providers for what are probably obvious reasons but nonetheless which bear repeating here, that they have been understaffed in some situations and certainly overworked with respect to responding to a world pandemic — we will continue to support them. We will continue to build those relationships, and we will continue to work to provide Yukoners with the primary health care that they deserve.

**Mr. Cathers:** These problems began before the pandemic and have been made worse by the lack of action by this Liberal government.

It's clear to us and many in the medical field that we need a new integrated health human resource strategy. As health minister in 2006, I announced our health human resource strategy, but time has passed and the Yukon needs one that meets the challenges of today.

We need to start seriously thinking about how many doctors the Yukon needs, where they are coming from, and what specialties we need. We also need to look at regulatory barriers that are holding back medical professionals from delivering the care Yukoners need. We need a strategy to address all of those issues, one that has immediate actions, as well as ones for the longer term.

Will the minister agree to set aside her talking points and actually take action by immediately beginning work to develop a new integrated health human resource strategy for the Yukon, in cooperation with health professionals?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am always puzzled when criticism comes from the opposite side of this House about having notes. Part of my job is to come here prepared. I come here prepared with notes to potentially answer questions from the opposition on behalf of Yukoners. I think that this is actually my job and my responsibility, so the criticism that I bring notes is always interesting to me.

Nonetheless, during the 2020 calendar year, the Yukon was supported by a total of 75 resident physicians and an additional 20 specialists, as well as 95 visiting physicians and specialists. Physician counts are calculated at the end of each fiscal year. I am awaiting the numbers for the fiscal year 2021-22.



Between 2019 and 2020, the Yukon's supply of resident physicians increased by approximately eight percent. This does not include locums or visiting physicians. This is an important issue for our government, for the Department of Health and Social Services, and I daresay for the physicians and Yukoners who require them here in the territory. We will continue to do the important work to respond.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

##### **Bill No. 304: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Second Reading — *adjourned debate***

**Clerk:** Second reading, Bill No. 304, standing in the name of Ms. Tredger; adjourned debate, Mr. Dixon.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I know that I have a very brief amount of time, so I apologize for speaking relatively rapidly. I am in the difficult position of having a timed 20-minute speech bifurcated into two days, between today and our last opposition Wednesday.

I will start by very briefly noting the three main points that I raised two Wednesdays ago.

Those are, first of all, my view of the importance of MLAs' roles to bring forward legislation — and the second being that I walked through the content of the bill and raised some of the questions and concerns that I had about the content of the bill. The third, I noted, was what I felt to be a need for consultation.

Having circled back to those three points, I can pick up where I left off. When I left off a few Wednesdays ago, I was quoting the Leader of the Third Party. I will just continue with that briefly. The quote that I had from the Leader of the Third Party was — quote: "Considering that, I think it is an important consideration that wasn't included in the proposal from the Yukon Party. That leaves me asking: What else might have been missed in that legislation? Again, yesterday, I wasn't in favour, and then I thought maybe we could work on it, and then I identified all the spots where I thought we would have to make amendments. Then I wondered how on Earth we could possibly make amendments to laws on the floor of the Assembly without fully understanding the ramifications, because I am not a lawyer — I am not a judicial lawyer — and some of those decisions will have consequences." That was the quote from the Leader of the Third Party. Of course, the point that I was making back on March 23 when I spoke to this last was around the need for consultation on these types of amendments.

The final point that I want to make is sort of drawing together the various points that I made both today and last Wednesday, which were — there's an inherent tension, I believe, between those three aspects: first of all, the fact that there is a very important role for non-government members to be able to bring forward legislation; second, that we as non-government MLAs have fairly limited resources when it comes

to conducting broad consultation as we don't have the staff, the budgets, or ability to lead the kinds of public consultation that government does; and third, the genuine need for that consultation to occur. What we find ourselves with is a difficult tension between those three competing issues.

My view on the solution to that — addressing that tension between those priorities — is to utilize standing committees of the Legislature or select committees of the Legislature. I believe that we already have the mechanism in place with the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments and believe that committees give us the ability to bridge that difficult gap between the importance of private members bringing forward legislative amendments and the need for public consultation.

With that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I will make an amendment to this motion at second reading.

#### *Amendment proposed*

**Mr. Dixon:** I move:

THAT the motion for second reading of Bill No. 304, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be amended by adding immediately after the phrase "be now read a second time" the phrase "and referred to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments; and

THAT the committee report the bill to the Legislative Assembly no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> sitting day of the next Sitting of the Legislative Assembly."

I have the requisite copies here.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** During the COVID protocols, we have often asked, if there is an amendment, whether there would be an opportunity to have a few minutes to consider the amendment with a small break. I am not sure if the member opposite is supportive, but that would be appreciated by our side of the House.

**Speaker:** There are no rules right now regarding taking a short break.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Then I will just request the unanimous consent of the House, under Standing Order 14.3, to take a five-minute break to consider the amendment.

#### **Unanimous consent re recess**

**Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to take a five-minute break?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

#### *Recess*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order. The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition:

THAT the motion for second reading of Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be amended by adding immediately after the phrase "be now read a second time" the phrase "and referred to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments; and

THAT the committee report the bill to the Legislative Assembly no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> sitting day of the next Sitting of the Legislative Assembly.”

**Mr. Dixon:** I believe I have about two minutes to go, so I will be very brief in my comments. The long and the short of this is that I believe that this bill has some merit, but it does require some consultation, so I think that in order to allow for consultation on this, the best way forward is for a private member’s bill to go to a committee to lead the consultation. As I discussed previously, that’s the way that I think that private members’ bills should be dealt with in general. That is what we proposed for our own bill, the bill to amend the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, just a few weeks ago, where we encouraged the Legislature to direct that private member’s bill to a standing committee, because we do believe that is a sound process.

We do know that there are a number of groups, stakeholders, and those in the education community who do have thoughts on this bill. We have seen submissions from some of them already, and there is a general sense in the education community that they would like to be consulted about this type of change before a change is made. So, I think that the way we ought to proceed is to send it to a committee, have that committee lead a consultation, and return to the Legislature fairly quickly in the next Sitting for the amendment to present the findings of their work at that time.

**Ms. Tredger:** To speak to this amendment, I would like to start by talking about this question of consultation, because it has come up quite a bit. I thought we were going to talk about it in Committee of the Whole, but we can talk about it now; that’s fine.

I want to start by talking about how this bill came forward and how it was developed. It came out of conversations with the youth of the Rainbow Room at Porter Creek Secondary School — the very people who we are talking about, the people who are at the heart of this conversation. They talked about what a difference that student organization had made for them. They talked about their schools feeling safer — about feeling safer both in that space and outside of that space, how important that was to them and what a difference that made to them as they navigated mental health crises and families who weren’t always supportive and peers who were bullying them. They talked about what a difference this place made to them. They talked about their concerns for their peers who didn’t have that. So, that is where this started; it started in a process of conversation.

Since then, in trying to come up with a response to the needs of these students, which I presented here in the form of this bill — in deciding that this was the response that would best help to respond to their concerns, I have had many, many conversations. I want to start by talking about some of the formal conversations that I have had and about the three letters of support that have been tabled by my colleagues and I over the last two weeks.

We have a letter of support from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. My colleague, the Member for Copperbelt North, just mentioned that the education community wanted to be consulted. Well, we have a letter here from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals saying they are “supportive of an amendment which supports LGBTQ2S+ students.” Further in this letter, they say they “... will always be supportive of measures and initiatives that support our vulnerable members of our schools and ask that leaders of the Yukon to think the same.”

To me, that’s a pretty powerful voice. I don’t know who knows these issues and what they’re going to look like on the ground better than the association that represents educators.

We also have a letter from All Genders Yukon, which reads: “All Genders Yukon ... would like to confirm that we will endorse Bill No. 304 that would mandate GSA’s in schools in the Yukon. This would ensure LGBTQ2S+ students have safe spaces in all Yukon schools.”

All Genders Yukon is an organization that I can’t speak highly enough of. They are in the trenches figuring out how to support their community. When they say that they think this would help, I believe them.

Finally, we have a letter from the president of Queer Yukon, which expresses their conditional support. I actually really appreciated when they talked about conditional support, because they talk a lot about the implementation of this bill and how critical the implementation piece is.

To start, I’ll just quote a little bit from the letter. It reads: “... passing the Safe Spaces bill would give desperately-needed hope to young queer, trans and questioning students and their peers.”

They do go on to talk a bit about the implementation and how passing it alone isn’t enough and that more steps are needed. I really hope we get the chance to discuss that more, because I do think the implementation is a very key part of making this bill a success, but since right now we’re speaking to whether this Legislature should pass this bill, again, passing this bill “... would give desperately-needed hope to young queer, trans and questioning students and their peers.” That’s pretty powerful, in my mind.

Those are some of the broad responses we’ve had. I also want to talk about some of the feedback that was incorporated into this bill, because I know the Minister of Education referenced “what we heard” documents. I just want to highlight information — the feedback that we got, as we consulted, really was incorporated into the creation of this bill. Some of the questions people had are: Should there be a requirement that students have to ask for a GSA in order for one to be created? That was a question I had, and it’s sort of what is reflected in the SOGI policy right now. I heard overwhelming responses from people that this was not a good choice, that these organizations and activities need to exist regardless of whether students ask for them, because it is an enormous barrier to ask a student to ask — to single themselves out and come forward and formally say, “I need this”. That’s just going to exclude so many students from this process.

Another piece of feedback that we got was about making it flexible so that it would work for all schools, and that is why we landed on the language of talking about activities that may include student organizations, because we acknowledge that there are schools of all kinds in the Yukon. There are big schools, there are small schools, there are rural schools, and there are urban schools, and our intent is that language around “activities” allows flexibility so that each school and each student body can make this their own and make it work for them.

So, we give those examples just to talk about the ways that feedback has been gained and how that feedback has been incorporated to create the bill that is under discussion today.

I also want to talk about some of the response that I have had in the last two weeks to this bill. I have had an overwhelming response. I have never gotten so many letters and messages and e-mails and calls about how excited people are about this bill, and that ranges from parents who are so excited that their children might get the support that they need, without having to be singled out and ask for it — I have talked to students who are ecstatic at the idea that this could be a reality for them; I have talked to adults who talked about how the GSAs for them were a lifeline at school; I have talked to adults who didn't have GSAs in their schools. They have told me things like: “I would be 10 years ahead in my journey if I could have had that support in high school.”

So, I have heard a lot of feedback, and I want to talk a little bit more about this idea of consultation, because I guess what is being asked for is a formal consultation. I would say that we have done lots of consultation that has been more informal, and I think that sometimes when we are talking about marginalized communities, formal consultation isn't always the way to go. The Minister of Education talked about the community consultations, run by communities or the Vancouver group, and there were a lot of great things that came out of those, but I also know people who aren't comfortable attending them. I think that asking people to show up and say things on the record for a consultation is a big ask for people who have very, very good reasons not to trust government and not to trust institutions, and I think that, actually, informal conversations — working through the relationships that MLAs have — is a very important way of reaching people who may not be reached by formal consultation.

So, I just don't want the conversation to say that is the only way we can talk to people.

Some of these concerns around consultation seem to be about potential unintended consequences of this bill. The Leader of the Official Opposition quoted my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party, talking about unintended consequences — and I would like to give a little context, because what she was talking about was a review of the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*. That is an enormous piece of legislation that affects all areas of the Yukon, that affects powers that are not usually given to this Legislative Assembly, that have huge, far-reaching implications — and I think that there is a lot of potential in a piece of legislation like that for unintended consequences.

The piece of legislation we're talking about today has — what is it? — three clauses, two clauses? Where is it? Yeah, it has three clauses. We're talking about three clauses of legislation here that I think are pretty straightforward. I haven't actually heard anyone talk about what these unintended consequences might be that we are so concerned about.

What my fear is here is that we're using consultation as a way to delay action. Students need this now. Students needed this a long time ago. If we pass this amendment, we are delaying the implementation — even the discussion of this bill — until well until the fall, after the next school year has started. That's a whole other year of students who will go without this support — and there is a cost to that. There's a cost to inaction.

We are talking about students who are facing enormous mental health challenges — students with rates of attempted suicide that are far beyond those of their peers. We are risking so much if we don't do this. Consultation is important, but consultation can't be used to avoid acting and to delay acting when the consequences are this serious. Our youth can't wait. They can't wait until next Sitting. They need this now.

All that is to say that I'll be voting against this amendment.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll speak briefly to the amendment.

Mr. Speaker, when Bill No. 304 was introduced on March 23, you'll recall that was the last private members' day. On that day, we debated Motion No. 288, which was brought forward by the Member for Porter Creek North — I think on March 9 originally. Then we debated on March 23. Then at the end of the day, we began second reading on Bill No. 304. The Leader of the Official Opposition had the floor. I was interested to hear some of his remarks. He was talking about his perspective around private members' bills, and he said that his — quote: “... views have personally changed over the last number of years.”

He was talking about being supportive of bills coming forward — private members' bills coming forward. He referenced that previously he had been dismissive of those types of bills.

I thought, “Okay, that's good”, but that stood in contrast to the fact that Motion No. 288 saw all eight members of the Official Opposition rising to speak — the first time that had happened since we debated whether there was a state of emergency, and there was a filibuster for three days to get to that debate.

I thought to myself that maybe that was just genuine debate and now we are going to hear some serious debate about this. What is being recommended now in this amendment is to refer this to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments.

I looked back again and checked with the Clerk's office quickly to try to understand when the last time was that this committee had done any substantive work. The answer I got was 1987. That is 35 years ago. It might be before some of the Members of the Legislative Assembly were born.

I'm feeling that it would be better for us to have the debate here and talk about it. I agree with the premise that it is important to engage with Yukoners on issues, but I see that this

bill in front of us with a very specific amendment to improve our schools is very targeted, whereas the bill brought forward by the Yukon Party to amend the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* was rather broad. They had a specific suggestion, but there was a lot going on in there where it was blended from other pieces of legislation and it just needed a lot more work.

I think that it would be better for us to just move forward with second reading and to debate it here, as we are all here to debate it, and then move forward from there, rather than refer this to committee. I am not supportive of the amendment, and I hope that this is not an indication that the Official Opposition will be seeking to filibuster the bill today.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise in support of the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Official Opposition. If passed, the amendment would refer Bill No. 304 to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. Mr. Speaker, you will recall that we recently proposed sending our own private member's bill to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. As we have repeatedly stated, we believe that having more all-party committee discussion of legislation would be a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that, during the Yukon Party's time in government, we supported the use of all-party committees to discuss proposed private members' bills, including Bill No. 104, *Smoke-free Places Act* — which was a private member's bill tabled by the late Todd Hardy, Leader of the NDP — and Bill No. 102, *Act to Amend the Human Rights Act*, which was a private member's bill tabled by a Liberal MLA.

We also supported all-party committees on the safe operation and use of off-road vehicles, whistle-blower protection, and the *Landlord and Tenant Act*. All of those committees held public consultations and recommended changes, including legislative changes, which were passed by the Legislative Assembly.

There are other good reasons for using an all-party committee approach for private members' bills. Due in part to the very limited amount of time during which a private member's bill can be debated in the Legislative Assembly, it is rare for a private member's bill to pass and become law. After having only a short time for debate, the member who tables it has to wait weeks before having another chance to debate it.

We have heard concerns and questions from some people about this legislation. We have also heard from people who support it. Having an all-party committee conduct public consultation on this proposed legislation would allow questions to be answered and allow all reasonable input to be considered. We urge all members to support referring Bill No. 304 to this all-party committee and tasking them to hear from Yukoners and report back.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will just speak to correct the record. I understand that the references being made by the Member for Lake Laberge are all important pieces of work that were done previously by this Legislative Assembly, but they made reference to special committees and not to the Standing

Committee on Statutory Instruments, which is being proposed here — just to be clear.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Disagree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Disagree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Disagree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Disagree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are seven yea, nine nay.

**Speaker:** The nays have it.

I declare the amendment defeated.

*Amendment to motion for second reading of Bill No. 304 negatived*

**Speaker:** Is there any further debate on the motion for second reading of Bill No. 304?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise to respond to Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, tabled by the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

We know that there is a significant amount of academic literature citing health and academic disparities among LGBTQ2S+ youth. This can be a result of school-based discrimination or unwelcoming climates contributing to lower academic achievements and well-being.

It is hard to be a youth gaining more responsibility, freedom of thought and opinion, and coming into your own. Being a youth is hard at any time, but particularly in these turbulent times with inflation, a pandemic, the unjust, unlawful, and barbaric acts perpetrated by Russia in the Ukraine, and a climate emergency — which are all currently in sharp focus. We know that it is even harder if you are marginalized.

Not only are youth undergoing substantial physical and emotional changes, but their parents and caregivers are also navigating the evolution of their children with uncertainty and

trepidation. This is all the more complex when the intersecting layers of identity, gender, and sexuality are considered.

Schools are a critical setting for youth development. It is where they spend the most time, after all. Everyone deserves safe access to education and a place where they are respected and celebrated for who they are and how they choose to identify.

Within society at large, LGBTQ2S+ youth find themselves faced with many barriers, including feelings of isolation. Within spaces designated clearly for them, they have additional safety and support to process their experiences and navigate their own unique identities as they come into their own.

This is also a space for allies and any youth in general who may be experiencing bullying or feeling marginalized for an array of reasons. As school-based groups, gender and sexuality alliances — or GSAs, as they are more commonly referred to — promote resilience for LGBTQ2S+ youth, as well as youth who identify as heterosexual. These are inclusive, supportive spaces.

We know that the presence of GSAs has grown on a national level. This presence, intended as a setting for youth to receive support, socialize, and engage in advocacy, is paramount to constructive and healthy overall youth development.

We understand more and more that youth in schools that have a GSA report greater well-being and safer climates than youth in schools without a GSA. This is meaningful data that tells us a story that we want to be part of.

While there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution for gender and sexuality alliances, we know that access to a GSA can be critical and potentially life-saving — life-saving because we know that LGBTQ2S+ youth experience higher rates of suicidal ideation and behaviour than their cisgender heterosexual peers. Statistics Canada reports that transgender persons in Canada were more likely to report their mental health as poor or fair than their cisgender counterparts, more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes, and more likely to have been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder. These disparities are unacceptable. They are unacceptable because it has been demonstrated repeatedly that a range of protective factors have been connected with lower rates of suicidal ideation and behaviour of LGBTQ2S+ youth: gender and sexuality alliances, LGBTQ2S+-inclusive curriculum, affirming school policies, familial support, peer support, and mental health interventions.

Schools offer a unique opportunity to support suicide prevention by combatting minority stressors through promoting positive social relationships and a safe community for LGBTQ2S+ students.

We need to ensure that allies can indeed have a place, or perhaps a particular role, in these groups to help support the community and to continue to break down barriers. We all have a role to play when it comes to diversity and inclusion. We know that it takes a village.

Ongoing efforts to study GSAs stand to contribute to the larger aim of promoting the healthy development and support of all youth. Consistent with this approach, the Third Party has

not made this act particularly prescriptive, ensuring that every school can design their gender and sexuality alliance in the most positive and customized manner to fit their community and context. This is important as we know that every school is unique and will have different needs in order to meet its own distinct deliverables. It has been clearly demonstrated that GSAs have an empowering, motivating effect, particularly on personal relationships and overall social empowerment. GSAs have the potential to nurture the leaders of tomorrow.

GSAs are agents of change and they have the ability to showcase what inclusivity and, by extension, what a brighter, more collaborative future looks like. Allies to LGBTQ2S+ youth can find space in a GSA to unlearn gender constructs, discover critical thinking strategies for the first time, and take their first steps toward what it means to be a true ally at school and beyond.

We know that, most often, allies are given a so-called “free pass” to enter a space in which they are automatically privileged and may take for granted, or even expect, that their privilege goes unnoticed and unexamined; however, the failure to acknowledge and examine unearned privilege as power actually reinforces that power. True alliance to the LGBTQ2S+ needs to be accompanied by examining heterosexual and/or cisgender privileges. GSAs certainly contribute to unpacking these complexities.

Scientific studies indicate that greater GSA functioning is beneficial for all students in schools that have a negative school climate toward anything outside the status quo, and they are particularly protective for transgender students. Just a few weeks ago, there was footage of more than 500 students participating in a massive walkout at a high school in Orange County, Florida in protest of HB1557, entitled *Parental Rights in Education* bill, which was given final passage by Florida's legislature earlier this month. This bill is also known as the “Don't say gay” bill. Many of those kids — children and young adults — were walking out in solidarity with their friends. This was indeed such a hopeful sight.

Mr. Speaker, in recent months, there have been more than 150 anti-LGBT bills that have been introduced at various state legislatures in the United States. This is, of course, a disconcerting trend. It is especially upsetting when you think about how this has been a dynamic decade in terms of LGBTQS+ awareness and acceptance. Increasing visibility in pop culture and the media brings some issues that this community faces to the forefront, and school climates can and must reflect these same issues.

In the mid-1960s, same-sex relationships were deemed illegal by the courts, seen to be a sign of illness by the mental health establishment and sinful by religious institutions. Society is steadily progressing and moving toward greater inclusivity in the educational environment — and inclusivity in the educational environment is absolutely necessary and an important priority for our government.

Unfortunately, too frequently, students continue to be harassed and remain closeted. LGBTQ2S+ students in same-sex relationships are prohibited, in some jurisdictions, from tactile freedoms — tactile freedoms that are granted

routinely to hetero couples. The *Hall v Durham Catholic School Board* decision was rendered 12 years ago. You will recall that this was when a Canadian teenager successfully took his school board to court after he was barred from bringing his boyfriend to prom. It must be noted, however, that still, LGBTQ2S+ couples rarely attend their graduation events or proms together, even today. This needs to change.

In the mainstream literature curriculum, there is a noticeable absence of reference to gay, lesbian, or transgender authors and characters in plays, novels, and poetry. In social studies and other classes, LGBTQ2S+ persons and events — both historical and contemporary — are seldom, if ever, recognized and highlighted. It is not, Mr. Speaker, a task that is easily accomplished, nor is it likely to be effective without buy-in and involvement by a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

That is why I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this important amendment to the *Education Act*.

I would like to quote a person identified as “Elliott” — an eighth grader — quote: “The first day of the GSA at my school was probably the most memorable. It was early in the school year, and my best friend and I had been collaborating with the faculty advisor for a few weeks to prepare for the first meeting. When the day finally arrived, we all walked into the classroom. The advisor had us go around and introduce ourselves by stating our name, grade and pronouns and then told everyone to stand up. She then said that if we wanted cupcakes, we had to dance to loosen up. Now, I usually don’t dance in front of people, especially at school, but for some reason, during that first meeting, I danced in front of friends and complete strangers...for some reason, I trusted them. Perhaps it was the common ground we shared that allowed me to feel comfortable around them in that moment.”

All of that said, I would like to add that research indicates that participation in a GSA for young students cannot offset other negative impacts of hostile school climates for LGBTQ2S+ students. It is vital that school staff and administration support other efforts and issues that have been shown to be beneficial for LGBTQ2S+ students in addition to GSAs.

Implementing LGBTQ2S+-inclusive curricular resources must be paid attention to, as well as policies that are explicitly supportive of LGBTQ2S+ youth, such as anti-bullying policies that include protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as policies that guarantee transgender and non-binary students the right to attend school and access facilities as their affirmed gender identity, rather than their legal sex.

In the previous Assembly, to give credit where credit is due, my recollection in Bill No. 9 — conversion therapy debate — I recall that the current Member for Watson Lake graciously thanked GSA students who petitioned for having this objectionable practice banned.

Mr. Speaker, let us continue to embrace this positive change — this declaration of common ground — and demonstrate true caring and unconditional support for all Yukon students and youth. All of us benefit from a more inclusive society.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of Bill No. 304 at second reading. Again, I would like to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing this amendment to the *Education Act* forward.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It is my pleasure to have the opportunity to rise today with respect to Bill No. 304. I can indicate that it is my pleasure to speak to this. I think there’s a perspective about designing and amending and drafting legislation that I’m happy to speak to, but I should first, I think, recognize that Bill No. 304 is an act to amend the *Education Act*. I certainly note the distinction or the context that the Member for Whitehorse Centre was trying to make when making reference to the Leader of the Third Party’s comments and distinguishing those, but I don’t think that the reference to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* — although, of course, it is broad and has lots of authority in it — I’m going to just note that I think the *Education Act* is equally as important in a different way.

Certainly, it is broad. It is the governing legislation and law with respect to how we run schools, with how children are — given the responsibilities of the government — to provide education for every student in the territory, and the responsibilities there for government to have children educated in a way that best suits them and meets their needs.

This bill has been aptly spoken to by my colleagues, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Highways and Public Works. They have very clearly outlined our government’s support for, and leadership on, making this territory truly inclusive. It is something that we are very proud of. It is something that we have been dedicated to as a team. It is something that we have spoken about on many occasions because of our personal experiences, because of the people who sit on this side of the Legislative Assembly.

I am quite disappointed in the accusations and insinuations that have been levied in this Legislative Assembly earlier in this Sitting that we are somehow not committed to this work. The work of supporting all Yukoners and the work of supporting an inclusive society is something that we have been dedicated to. We have done extensive work in this area, because it is something that we all truly believe in.

We have engaged with community. I will speak a little bit more about engagement. We have engaged with community members, and we have budgeted funds to support inclusive organizations to build better community.

We have, as mentioned by the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — just the renaming of that directorate, that organization, that part of government, I think, is critical. It was done at the leadership of the minister. It is certainly something that was supported by all of us. It is a move that has never been considered, I dare say, by the Yukon government before, and it is one of the true pillars of leadership to speak to every Yukoner every day when they’re making reference, or getting service, or thinking about that particular part of government — because the name must be inclusive and the name now is inclusive. That’s just one tiny action, but an important one nonetheless.

We've developed an LGBTQ2S+ action plan — something that has truly never been considered by a Yukon government before. We have changed the laws. We have brought forward, as mentioned by my colleague, the conversion therapy, or anti-conversion therapy, legislation which now exists here in this territory — a leader in Canada yet again.

We have brought forward changes to the *Human Rights Act*, the *Family Property and Support Act* — I can go on and on and list others. These actions are to name but a few of the real actions with real impact on the lives of Yukoners that we have dedicated ourselves to, continually brought forward. I'm going to say — I think, with some confidence — that we have had a bill or a piece of legislation and certainly regulations during every Sitting of this House since we became government back in 2016 that have dealt with issues to be more inclusive, and we will continue to do this work throughout our time here in government. And because I know all of the people sitting on this side of the House, I know we will continue this work throughout our lives.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to make this commitment crystal clear lest there be any doubt of our commitment as a government to these issues — to inclusivity, to making the lives of all Yukoners better but, in particular, to making the Yukon society an inclusive one.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make one more correction that I would like to note here, as I address this bill today. Earlier in this legislative Sitting, the Member for Whitehorse Centre stated that a letter that was written to me on November 5, 2019, by the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance, was never replied to. Now I know — and I note that the Leader of the Third Party has corrected that information and has apologized for that error, but it is extremely important to me in a personal way that I note that this was not correct.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre was clearly given incorrect information. The response from me to that important correspondence was dated November 20, 2019, and it was addressed to the gender and sexuality alliance and delivered by e-mail to Mr. Jason Cook, who was recently visiting us here in this House. It is important to me because of my dedication to answering all correspondence, as our entire team has that value and that practice, but it is incredibly important to me because I know very clearly that the energy, effort, and confidence that it took for that group of students to write to me and express their opinions not only deserved an answer, but it deserved a quick, detailed, and comprehensive answer. I recall that, as part of that letter, they asked to meet with the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and me. We, of course, said that we were pleased to do so.

As I have said before, changing laws is an important method for societal change. Sometimes changing laws comes as a result of an opportunity for citizens to speak to their government and say that this is something that we want to have happen. In other cases, it is a matter for leadership. It is a matter of government saying that this is our priority, this is our platform, and this is what we think should be a direction taken for a society or a community, and it directs transformation in

that way. It leads the way, and it also entrenches values and direction for government and embeds them in society.

However, consideration must be given to what tool is the best one to effect change. If an assumption is made that changing legislation is always the best way to do this or to make change in any way, that would be incorrect. As legislators, we must understand the full impact of what method is being chosen. There are actually many tools in the toolbox, and we must choose the right one. In order to choose the right one, the issue, the concern, or the problem must be properly formulated. We must ask ourselves: What is the problem that we are trying to solve, or what is the issue that we are trying to address?

To fail to do this and to answer a question in a real way can result in unintended consequences. We have heard some comments about those already — or it could lead to issue creep, or it can lead to a solution that does not actually solve the problem, or it creates more issues than it solves.

I think that it is important to note that the development of good, comprehensive, solid legislation requires a comprehensive policy analysis and a legal analysis in order to provide formal advice on any proposed amendments. The reason I am speaking about this today is because I appreciate and I know — and I have just very clearly said — that the Members of the Legislative Assembly who sit on this side of the House support this legislation for all the reasons that the Minister of Highways and Public Works spoke about — or the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. I know that it is the case, but that doesn't take away from the fact that, in order to do this properly, we must be careful. We must take care, and in order to take care, we want to always make sure that we are developing good, comprehensive, and solid legislation that actually solves the problem. I say this in the development of legislation and also with respect to the amendments of legislation because that is important.

Ultimately, approving amendments to legislation prior to undertaking a policy review and analysis could result in unintended consequences, and that delays the changes that are needed and that would result from a thorough review and analysis. By way of example, if the goal is to develop a piece of legislation, regardless of the topic — and that is the goal — then you have chosen the tool already. You haven't designed a review of the problem or designated the problem in a way that you would then say that the problem is: Are students inclusive? Are they being included in their schools?

It is probably a bad example because that is the debate that we are having right now, but let's say that it is another problem. If we choose the fact that we want legislation before we decide what the actual assessment of the problem is, then we have already taken two steps ahead. The process for developing or amending good legislation means that you must undertake a policy review and you must analyze: What are the questions that I have already noted? What is it that we are trying to do? What is it that we're trying to solve?

Any review of legislation should be completed in a comprehensive manner. This is especially true because we must take into account the total act and all of its interconnected

provisions. A single piece of legislation — some are more simple than others. Certainly, my submission to this Legislative Assembly is that the *Education Act* is not a simple piece of legislation. It is interconnected. It deals with responsibilities of people who work in the system. It deals with responsibilities of the minister. It deals with responsibilities of school councils. It deals with responsibilities of school communities. There are definitions of each of these things. It deals with — as we know in relation to Bill No. 304 — responsibilities of principals. As such, any review or amendment of legislation has to take into account all of these interconnected provisions.

If a review of legislation or if a proposed amendment is to be the preferred approach, experts generally conclude that a review begin, as I've noted briefly, with the delineation of outcomes, issues, and successes. So, identify the problem. The scope can be fully delineated and researched and analyzed to develop informed solutions. What will be the outcome of choosing path A, path B, or path C? If the analysis suggests that an act should be amended or that new legislation should be prepared, a legislative exercise can then be undertaken.

Copying legislation from one jurisdiction to another is not a good way to go. We have said that so many times in this House in relation to motions to certain pieces of legislation that have been proposed. It can result in unintended consequences because the legislation in Manitoba is not the same as the legislation in Nova Scotia or the legislation here in the Yukon.

Amending legislation requires us to be informed by what we have learned about an issue, about a topic. A review should include research to include the approaches that are taken in other jurisdictions. I'm not aware of whether or not Bill No. 304 comes to us having had research or what's commonly known as a "jurisdictional scan".

Jurisdictional scans require engagement with other jurisdictions to gain insight into the scope of their legislation, their regulations, their policies, their procedures, the approval process, and so forth. Not all jurisdictions have similar legislative context, which makes the need for engagement essential in order to understand the mechanisms used by others to respond to an issue or a problem, as well as whether or not those mechanisms are effective.

So, identify the issue, determine what the right tool in the toolbox is, and then look to see what the outcomes are that we're seeking and if those choices will get you there. In other words, relying solely on the laws as they are currently written could result in replicating issues or maybe even not addressing an issue or a problem.

The importance of engagement is something we discuss many, many times here in the Legislative Assembly. In the territory, engagement with Yukoners, with First Nation governments, with businesses, with NGOs, and with others about their experience — a good example, with respect to Bill No. 304, would be with students, with educators, with principals, and with individuals who work in our school system and in our school communities. Engaging with them about their experiences is critically important and should be completed prior to amending existing legislation or creating new legislation.

I appreciate that the Member for Whitehorse Centre has said that she is engaged in an informal way with a number of people. I appreciate that the members opposite have letters of support from certain organizations. I appreciate the one from the Yukon education professionals — in their new title — but I'm aware that there are almost 500 teachers in the territory. I'm not suggesting for a second that you would go and speak to each of those teachers, but it is important that they have an opportunity to speak on these issues.

Informal engagement, I dare say, will not be sufficient for the members opposite should the government come and say that we've done informal engagement on a bunch of things or on a piece of legislation, but I appreciate that there will be a question for the member opposite who is bringing forward this bill — and a valuable one.

The information is essential to understanding how legislation works, the concept of the engagement, what obstacles the legislation presents, and whether changes should be made and how we will do that. Engagement is also required to consider the context in which the changes will be made. In this case, what do the schools want? What do schools already have to support their LGBTQ2S+ students? How might they be able to achieve the spirit and the intent of the legislation? How will it actually work on the ground? Should it apply to all schools in the territory? To junior or senior high schools only? What about schools in small communities like in Burwash Landing with under 10 students or schools like Grey Mountain Primary School with only K to grade 3?

I know that these things will be worked out, but these are the kinds of things that are required when you are bringing forward legislation — to think about the actual impacts on how it will happen.

Changes to any legislation should not be contemplated in isolation, and I guess that is what I am really saying. A review should consider how to best balance the risk with the accountability and the transparency, and the timeline for response should always reflect upon the context and provide the flexibility that is required.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak generally about the implications of determining —

**Ms. White:** It is interesting — it is interesting to be here today to talk about this and this topic especially, Bill No. 304, *Act to Amend the Education Act*. It is interesting because I have just heard the Minister of Justice do a long laundry list of all the reasons to vote against this legislation. All the reasons why — maybe she was more in agreement with the Yukon Party about sending it to committee.

What I would like to say is that the reason why we are bringing this forward is because policy hasn't work yet — because we need more than policies that haven't worked. The SOGI policy initially came in under the Yukon Party government in 2012, and I am going to read excerpts from a *Yukon News* article from 2013. I just want to say at the outset that I have had a conversation with both the student who is mentioned in this article and her mother, because this is where



policy didn't go far enough. The effect of what happened to this human was because the government wasn't there to support. So, the title of the article is "Vanier student says school ignored harassment" — quote: "When 16-year-old Shara Layne walked up to her locker at Vanier Catholic Secondary School in October, what she found scared her so much she had to leave school, and hasn't been back since." So, that is the headline. "I looked up at my locker and the word 'faggot' was carved into my locker. It was spelled wrong," Layne said.

"Worse than the graffiti itself, Layne said she was stunned and hurt by how the school administration responded to the harassment.

"Me and my friend went to the office to tell the principal and he just laughed in my face, and said he's not going to do anything about it," she said."

"He was like, 'Ha ha, someone wrote "faggot" on your locker? Why would they do that?'"

Layne is openly gay, but according to her, her principal was indifferent to the graffiti.

"I asked him to figure out who it was, and he said he wasn't going to do anything, even though they have security cameras," Layne said.

"Layne called her mother, Leah White, who immediately contacted the school, but the principal also told her he wouldn't do anything right away.

"They said they needed to secure a paint that would match the colour of the locker," White said."

The principal didn't return calls for comment by press time.

"The graffiti was visible for a week until one of Layne's teachers and his class took it upon themselves to cover the offensive word with a poster and supportive messages.

"It was wonderful for the teacher to do that, to cover it up. For another teacher to take this on, that's a really positive thing," said White, adding that in her and Layne's experience, many teachers and students at Vanier don't share the church's conservative views toward homosexuality.

"Even so, the ordeal has left Layne with extreme anxiety and panic attacks. She said she can't stomach the thought of going back to the school because she still doesn't know who her tormentor is. The principal never bothered to do any investigation, she said.

"Before the incident, Layne had been on track to graduate a semester early. Instead, she'll enroll at Porter Creek in September, but that still leaves her almost a year behind. She likely won't graduate with her own class.

"I'm not going back to that school, ever. Not even to clean out my locker," she said.

"Vanier's policy on sexual orientation and homosexuality came under fire last week after the News reported that a policy document posted to the school's website labels homosexual actions 'intrinsically disordered,' and a 'moral evil.' It also violates the Department of Education's own policy on sexual orientation and gender identity." That is the SOGI policy, Mr. Speaker. "The department has since told the school it must remove the policy from its website and redraft a new one.

"Layne and her mother said that the school's response to Layne's harassment is proof that the policy is shaping action and opinion at the school.

"Layne came out in August. She said that it was an easy decision, and she never expected the school would treat her the way it has.

"It wasn't that hard. I thought the school would be pretty accepting because they were years before, but ..." she said, trailing off.

"She wasn't even allowed to hold her girlfriend's hand, she said, even though the same restriction doesn't apply to straight couples.

"Layne said the Catholic Church's position on homosexuality is not just a guiding principle. It is also being preached in classes at the school.

"They are definitely teaching it. I've heard some of the new teachers say that being gay is wrong. In class they were talking about abortion and saying it's like genocide," Layne said.

"Although Layne doesn't plan to return to Vanier, she'd still like an apology from the school's administration.

"I guess I want an apology at least — them saying that they messed up. They need to make the school better for gay kids. My friends were pretty outraged that this happened," Layne said."

That's from an article dated March 6, 2013.

I just want to share some stuff from an access to information — from this very same school. This is dated February 1 at 11:41. I'm just going to read excerpts because we don't need to really get into it.

Let me just give the context. This is about a bulletin board with a sign that says "Love is love" with a pride flag. This is what this discussion is around — "Love is love" with a pride flag. This would fall under what we're asking for. It's an activity. It's a bulletin board that is welcoming and inclusive.

So, this is from one of these e-mails: "So, I told them that a bulletin board-sized rainbow flag that has a heart in the centre with the words 'love is love' was too provocative and did not reflect the, admittedly nominal, Catholic ethos of the school."

That's that being denied there.

This is another one from February 3: "There really is no balance ... as the legislation is clear, and there is no interest in accommodating any of my concerns. While I do not know exactly what they are planning ... it does involve a bulletin board display with a rainbow flag and the slogan 'love is love'. Doubtless there will be some other paraphernalia handed out like rainbow tattoos and I don't think they have picked location ... Meanwhile, rainbow flags are proliferating in the hallways, which tells me where we're at with this."

February 4: "The GSA can put up their bulletin board wherever and however they like. I tried to engage in a conversation about the appropriateness of such a display at our school. They asked if I would approve. I said not as it is. I suggested ... something less brazen that lines up with the church teaching."

Less brazen than "Love is love" with a rainbow flag — less brazen than "Love is love" with a rainbow flag — so, when the

Minister of Justice asks if this is the right move, I would say that maybe if the policy was strengthened, maybe this wouldn't be where we were. She did get a letter from the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance in 2019 that had concerns. She did respond. I have apologized. I apologized in a letter. I sent it to her. I tabled it. I apologized on the floor. But the concern still exists. They've asked to meet with the current Minister of Education with their concerns around it.

I was listening to the Leader of the Yukon Party talk about consultation and my statement around the CEMA amendments that the Member for Lake Laberge brought forward. I appreciate where my colleague for Whitehorse Centre was going, and I don't think she meant "the legislation" but those amendments — there were unintended consequences with those amendments; there could be. What we're asking for right now is — this is going to amend, I believe, section 169 of the *Education Act* where it talks about what a principal must do. It's just going to put it right in there — just this little bit about making schools safer and more welcoming for LGBTQ2S+ students.

So, it's baffling to me that we're having this conversation in 2022 and that we still need to talk about how to make sure that rainbow youth feel safe and supported in Yukon schools. I can say that the student from 2013 — she's just about to graduate from her program; she's doing well, which I'm really excited about, but there were a lot of hard years. It still affects her and it still affects her mom. Had that school been required to do things differently, she would have had a better time.

So, we're still talking about this because we know that rainbow students leave our schools every day feeling defeated, demoralized, and like they don't belong in their schools. You might ask how I know this. I know because they tell us — because I've been told that. But fortunately, they are also telling us what they need in order to make things better for them — ways to make their schools safer and how to ensure that they feel heard and supported.

What we're talking about here this afternoon is the outcome of a group of two-spirit and queer youth asking us to help them make schools safer for all Yukon students. This came down from a conversation in the Rainbow Room. This is where it started. It was in direct response to the selections of those e-mails that I read — where they were worried about other students in other schools. This came from that conversation. There are many things that those of us who are cisgender, heterosexual politicians don't know and what we will never know about the queer experience. We know that data regarding 2SLGBTQ2I+ Canadians is limited, but there are some things that we do know about, and I am hopeful that we can all agree on these issues.

We know that rainbow youth face unique challenges on a daily basis, and we know that their sometimes troubling realities are exacerbated by other intersecting factors, including ethnicity, abilities, age, and socio-economic status. We know that students whose names and pronouns are not respected and honoured are at a higher risk of depression, self-harm, and suicide.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago, I didn't start conversations by telling people my pronouns, and it was kids who taught me the importance of using my pronouns. I have to tell you how hard it was to sit in a room with teenagers when they told me that their preferred pronouns were "they" and "them" — their "preferred pronouns", not "their pronouns". We had a conversation and I said: "It's not your 'preferred pronouns'. What do you want me to call you? What are 'your pronouns'?" They and them. It is why we have changed our signature — so many of us — on our electronic signatures, why we include pronouns — because we all recognize how important it is to recognize someone's identity, someone's self.

We know that members of the transgender and non-binary communities face higher rates of violence and abuse. We know that mental health challenges persist for two-spirit and queer youth. It is part of the reason why we want clinical counsellors in every school.

We know that for many rainbow youth, school is the only refuge that they have from families and communities that reject them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. For a lot of kids, school is that safe place.

We know that in 2022, despite all the advancements to date, discrimination still persists — right there in that e-mail from February this year. So, how are we — the people charged with protecting and supporting and educating rainbow youth — setting these young people up for success? Well, I think that the hard and sad reality right now is that we aren't. We might be trying, but I think we can try harder because, as it stands right now, some of these rainbow youth are leaving our schools utterly traumatized. We send them into a world where they may face higher rates of homelessness, substance abuse, violence, sex work, physical and psychological illness, and some will unfortunately turn to suicide.

So, I believe that what we need to do right now is that we need to help rewrite these outcomes, and today's amendment to the *Education Act* is a step in that direction. The Minister of Justice asked about small schools with populations of 10 students. That is why we included activities. That is why we didn't say that they had to be student-led organizations because it could be a tea; it could be a picnic; it could be a parade; it could be posters. It could be one bulletin board that is always going to be that safe place. It could be a rainbow flag in the principal's office — any of those things. Any of those things go a long way.

So, in 2022, we cannot allow that there even be a single school that doesn't permit rainbow youth to hang their pride flag. You know, I would like to say that even if no youth have identified themselves, we should be hanging those pride flags — that they should be there, and if kids have questions, we should be able to answer those questions.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we, the people in this room, need to do everything possible so that these young people have a chance at being successful in a world that is going to throw a lot at them. Let's build them up right now so they're more resilient. You know, according to our *Education Act*, all kids have the right to an education, and we believe that these kids — these rainbow kids — have the right to an education. But

like we heard from 2013, rainbow youth are not going to attend school if they don't feel safe, and that's a fact.

Fortunately, we have seen some success on this front in the Yukon. Porter Creek Secondary started its Rainbow Room program in April 2019. The Rainbow Room is Porter Creek's first safe space. I think the really incredible thing is that, because of the success of the Rainbow Room, we've now seen the development of a cultural room being supported by the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate, and it is also a safe space. But the Rainbow Room is a safe space for any of the school's students to go and just be. They don't have to worry about judgment or bullying. They can just be themselves and connect with other kind-hearted students who are just like them.

I can tell you that I have attended — I have gone to Porter Creek prior to this, and I have gone to Porter Creek since this GSA started. I can tell you, it feels different. In every hallway in that school, there are posters — ones that celebrate "Love is love" — there's all sorts of information in that school, and it feels different.

You know, Porter Creek Secondary School also formed a Gender and Sexuality Alliance. The GSA is a student-run group within a school that unites rainbow and allied youth to build community and organize around issues impacting their schools and communities. What a powerhouse this group of kids has been over the past few years. It was this group that advocated for the Department of Education to modernize and fully implement its sexual orientation and gender identity policy, which I've mentioned — a policy that was created in 2012 as a knee-jerk reaction to an instance of homophobia that occurred at one of our secondary schools — read the article, only to be left dormant — we've heard that from the kids.

This group also worked with GSA students from another area high school and successfully petitioned the Yukon government to ban conversion therapy here in the Yukon — thus becoming the first territory to do so. That was a good day. That was a good day in this Assembly.

Research confirms that GSAs have a positive and lasting effect on rainbow students' health, wellness, and their academic performance, but we recognize that a GSA won't work in every school, thinking about those with small student bodies, which is why the amendment speaks to activities relating to gender, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation.

The isolation of COVID has had a devastating impact on the mental health of two-spirit and queer youth around the world, and rainbow youth in the Yukon were not immune, but we find that rainbow youth at Porter Creek Secondary School are thriving because they actively have support. Is their situation perfect? No, but is it better than it was three years ago? Absolutely.

All Porter Creek students are benefiting from this hard work. Without a doubt, it has been a team effort. Their success required a supportive administrative team and staff willing to put in the effort to learn, even when they were learning about what was sometimes uncomfortable. What Porter Creek Secondary School has done is achievable in any school — I believe that.

The Porter Creek Rainbow Room program has saved lives, and now those students are asking us — they spoke with my colleague, the Member for Whitehorse Centre — and they have asked us to help save lives of other rainbow students around the territory, because that's what this is all about today. That's what it's about. It's about young kids — in some cases, very young kids. I can say, Mr. Speaker, that I have some wee friends in elementary school who are trans, and it's pretty phenomenal to see when schools are open and welcoming places and those kids aren't excluded, their pronouns are respected, and their identity is respected.

It is 2022, and I don't want to have this conversation again in 2024 or beyond. I believe that, right now, the best thing we can do to honour Yukon's rainbow students is to pass this amendment and to give them the support that they need.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thanks for allowing me some time to add my voice to this extremely important debate. I won't necessarily come and defend the Minister of Health and Social Services — she needs no defending; that's for sure. I know which way she's voting on this bill, and I know why, but it does behoove us to make mention of consultation.

We've been lectured by members opposite — put on notice due to exactly the same thing on consultation just this fall. So, we are noting that, yes, consultation is extremely important on this side of the House; however, we are also bending over backwards to support this bill. We've helped to ink it. At every turn, we have worked in coordinated fashion with the NDP because we believe strongly in what the bill serves and what the bill does.

We are going through this process. We will identify that maybe even an amendment to a bill isn't necessarily the quickest or regular process that we would do in order to accomplish the same goals. But again, we are moving past those boundaries because of the importance of what this says here and now today. I agree with members opposite that it's almost ridiculous that this is the state we're in right now — where we have to push these things through in bill form.

The incident that the member opposite talks about with the "Love is love" poster — yes, I can't agree any more how heart-wrenching it was to see and to hear about some of the reactions in that school, in that time frame. But I will say that our phones rang off the hook with support for the LGBTQ2S+ community and the alliance — more so than normal, regular, everyday things, I guess is a good way of putting it.

Our phone also rung off the hook with the St. Valentine's Day post that was put up in its stead, which was deplorable.

But I digress. That incident, I will say — there was a public meeting led by the school community with hundreds of community members, parents, and educators in attendance showing the support and showing the need to move forward.

Here's why I'm voting in favour of this bill. I've been out of the classroom as a teacher for over a decade now and out of the classroom as a high school student for too many decades to count. I remember that, when I was in grade 12, there was a yearbook company that came into our school. We were all

shuffled into the AV room for a video presentation, and it was a pitch to buy yearbooks.

It came with a slogan that high school is the “best years of your life”. I know I was mortified, and that’s as a cisgender white male, living the life of Riley at that time, and there’s no way that these are the best years of my life. This is the beginning of my life, at best. So, that was for me. My friends of the LGBTQ — I shouldn’t say my friends of the LGBTQ2S+ “community”, because there wasn’t a community then. For my gay friends — at that time — it was an even bigger insult that these would be the best years of your life, because these years for those folks were absolutely horrible. There were no advocacy groups at that time. You were on your own, and usually in the closet as well to everybody except for close friends and family, if you were lucky.

I did a lot of drama. I did drama classes from grade 7 to grade 12. I guess I liked the stage back then, too. I did music club, and those two clubs were where that community actually felt maybe some sort of support. Folks who are attracted to drama or to music usually are also attracted to people who are of different opinions, different backgrounds, different — right? Embracing what’s different — and that’s what I saw in these clubs. These were the closest thing to an official support group that our gay community back then had simply because these folks didn’t have issues with somebody from a different sexual orientation or a different background and were more interested just in people who were interesting — period.

There was definitely plenty of “normal” in all pockets of our overly hetero Catholic Scottish town. It was definitely a different time. To stand up for any reason was frowned upon. Diversity could be summed up by a Blues Brothers’ quote: “We have both kinds of music here — country and western.” That was pretty much it. My father was Protestant. We didn’t talk about that because that was different from Catholic, so those were the surroundings of a very quaint, good community, but diversity was definitely frowned upon, I would say.

We were lucky. I grew up in a town that had a university, so even though we didn’t have a lot of money, we had an opportunity to go to university — save some money by going in your home town. In that university, they had an institution called the “Coady International Institute.” There were students from every developing world on the planet that came to StFX. They would flock to this small Catholic town to study cooperative community development.

The reason why I mention this is that this first year of university, for me, was a game changer. It really was. You met so many people from so many diverse backgrounds and walks of life in that small town. The reason why I mention it is that, if we live our lives surrounding ourselves with just like-minded people, we rob ourselves of understanding the real world, the true human condition, and the real struggles of a more diverse sector of our own community.

In my first year, I took sociology courses and studied theories about why humans are fearful — why people become racist and why people become sexist or homophobic. As a species, to be able to make it through evolution to where we are today, it did help that species to fear the unknown back when

you could have been lunch for some other predator. So, to fear what you didn’t know was a survival instinct. I learned how that developed stereotypes in modern life. When we fear the unknown, we draw ourselves in. In drawing ourselves in, we surround ourselves with like-minded people. In doing so, we do rob ourselves of understanding the diversity all around us.

These alliances and organizations — everything to just a principal having a flag in an office, as the member opposite mentioned — are so important for normalization — not only to our LGBTQ2S+ community, but to all the high school students and all the members of our community at large to reduce the unknown — reduce the fear of the unknown — to show unity and to normalize a more healthy and more accepting opinion of things like gender identity.

When we show through our policies more space in our schools for more diversity, then we show more love to more fantastic people who definitely did not have that space when I grew up.

This is extremely important. I understand, in general, why consultation is important, but I will counter what the Yukon Party is saying as far as consultation to say they spent a whole afternoon filibustering us being able to talk about this bill two weeks ago. Without that, I might take them on their word.

I guess I’ll end by asking what they’re afraid of.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. Tredger:** I’m going to start by thanking all my colleagues for the debate today and before. I really appreciate us having the time to discuss this and having the time to talk about this bill, which I think has the potential to make really meaningful changes for youth.

I’m going to start by responding to some of the questions and concerns that I have heard raised during debate.

I talked a little bit, when I was speaking to the amendment, about the consultation process that we went through. I’m not going to go into too much detail here, but I do want to say I was a little offended that it seemed — about the idea that we just kind of slapped this together without thinking it through, so I want to talk a little bit more about the process.

I think I said already that this started with conversations with youth. So, we started, as the Minister of Justice suggested, with a problem that needed to be solved. Their concern was that they had support while their peers did not have support, and they felt that was really essential for them.

There was a reference to people making an assumption that changes to legislation is the only way to make change. I do not think that is true. I think there are many ways to make change. Frankly, this bill could have been a policy. If it were a policy, we wouldn’t have this discussion today. If, in the last six years, this had been made into policy, we wouldn’t be talking about this today — but it wasn’t.

For however many years of all the governments before, this has not yet happened. We still have youth without support in our schools. So, when this concern was brought to me — this

is the situation; this is where we're at — I looked at the tools that I have available to me. My caucus looked at the tools that we have available to us, and the tools that we have available to us as MLAs is to bring forward legislative changes.

So, that is what we have done. In response to a problem, we looked at the options and brought forward the change that we are able to effect. We did that with a lot of discussion and a lot of conversation with stakeholders. We listened to their feedback and incorporated it into the bill in ways that I have mentioned before and presented this bill here to the Legislature. So, that is how we got to where we are today.

I think that, when I made my opening comments — well, since then, I have been asked a number of times: “Why is this important?” I think that sometimes I forget that it is obvious to me why this is important, and it is obvious to people in my community why this is important, but it is not necessarily obvious to everyone. So, I just want to spend a little bit of time talking about why this is so critical.

I am going to start by talking about the global context, which one of the members did mention previously. So, we are in a time where we are seeing attacks on rights of LGBTQ2S+ people and, in particular, youth. It seems that people's resistance is really playing out in youth and in attempts to control youth, to constrain youth, and to prevent them from having the freedom to live their lives and to access supports.

In Texas, we have seen a recent bill passed that defined gender-affirming medical treatments to transgender youth. They said that this constitutes child abuse under state law. They stipulated that doctors, nurses, and teachers are now legally required to report parents who help their children access this kind of care to the Department of Family and Protective Services to be prosecuted. In response, Texas hospitals have stopped providing this care. We are even talking about things like puberty blockers, which are used all the time in straight children — are very well-researched and shown to be safe — and suddenly, if you are straight, that is fine, you can access medical treatment, and if you're trans, you can't. If your parent tries to help you access that treatment, they risk having you taken out of their care. They are not even allowed to leave the state to help children access this treatment, and that is terrifying.

As my colleague mentioned, just over a week ago, Florida passed the “Don't say gay” law, so this prevents classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity. It says that they may not occur in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students and according with state standards.

We are seeing attacks on our ability to support children in our communities. We are seeing many, many attacks all over — on trans athletes being able to participate in school sports. Again, this moral panic is being fuelled by celebrities and authors who are losing their mind and saying, “Oh, we can't say ‘women’ anymore” — rest assured, you can still say women; it's fine — are preventing children from competing in sports.

In Hungary, there was recently a referendum that asked questions like: Do you support the teaching of sexual orientation to underage children in public education institutions without parental consent? Do you support the showing of sex change media content to minors? Questions dripping — dripping — with transphobia. I have to applaud everyone who spoiled their ballot in that election to say we reject these questions.

So, bringing this back to the Yukon, the challenges of being an LGBTQ2S+ youth — they're real. They're really real. There are the challenges of accessing mental health care or medical care. For anyone who thinks this isn't a challenge, I can tell you that in the last couple of weeks, I've sat through medical appointments full of transphobic comments and tried to decide: Do I access the medical care I need or do I fight back with the medical profession and risk not having health care?

Some of these students have support at home; some of them don't. Some of them are being bullied by their peers. I've heard from parents who have been pulling their kids from schools because of the bullying they're facing. They may not even have support from their teachers to know that they can go to class and have their correct names and pronouns used.

So, let's talk about how this would help — how this bill would help and how having GSAs would help. GSAs would do a lot of things. I talked to a friend about a GSA that she knew. She said, “Yeah, we mostly just hang out and talk about celebrities.” That sounds kind of trivial, but there is immense power in being able to imagine a future with yourself in it. I remember when I was first kind of realizing I was queer as a teenager — I told this story in the Legislature before — but I assumed I was going to have to leave the Yukon. I couldn't imagine being an adult — a queer adult — in the Yukon, a queer person in the Yukon. Of course, there were all kinds of queer people in the Yukon at the time, but I didn't know them. I didn't know that was possible. So, something like hanging out and talking about celebrities might not sound important, but knowing there's a future for you — knowing that it's possible to be yourself in the place you live — is so important. I cannot overstate how important that is.

A GSA can be a refuge. It can be the one place that — as you're putting up with bullying and lack of support and the news of how terrible the attacks on your freedoms are across the world, it can be a safe place that you can come and know that you're okay — that you can say what you need to say.

It can be a place to connect with peers, and I think that's really powerful, because the most powerful supports I have ever received, as a queer person, have been talking to other queer people — have been talking about our experiences, what we've had in common, what has been hard, and having my own experiences validated and being able to support them. There is so much power in community. GSAs can give kids that community.

It can be a connection with a teacher, knowing that there is a safe adult to go to. It can be that teacher helping you access resources, access what you need. I witnessed a beautiful conversation in which a youth opened up about the mental health challenges they are facing and their fears. They knew

they could do that, because this was a safe space. The teacher was then able to say, “Let’s make a plan. Here’s what we’re going to do; here’s what I can connect you with.” That was so powerful.

The GSA can advocate, and I think this is so critical. I mentioned research in my opening comments about the power of advocacy and making schools safer places, but there is also power in realizing that, as a group, you have power and that you can make changes — that you can become a leader. We’ve seen that with the GSA at Porter Creek Secondary School, when they advocated for banning conversion therapy. Those sorts of experiences are what create leaders.

There is so much that GSAs can do and so much that safe activities can do in terms of creating safe spaces and supporting youth. This is, I think, really borne out by the outpouring of response that I’ve seen about this bill. I have heard from adults who had GSAs and the support it gave them. I heard from adults who didn’t have GSAs and how much that would have meant to them. I heard from parents; I heard from students.

I actually want to go back to the students, because there is no doubt in my mind that this matters to them, and I know that because, two weeks ago, they were here at the Legislature. They were here at the Legislature with signs and flags. They talked to media. They came and sat in the gallery, and they told us that this matters to them. They showed up here to tell us that this matters. They showed up. Now it’s our turn to show up for them.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for second reading of Bill No. 304 agreed to*

### Speaker’s statement

**Speaker:** Bill No. 304, *Act to Amend the Education Act*, has now received second reading and, pursuant to Standing Order 57(4), stands ordered for consideration by Committee of the Whole. Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), the Third Party designated Bill No. 304 as an item of business today. The Member for Whitehorse Centre is therefore entitled to decide whether the House should resolve into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of continuing consideration of Bill No. 304. I would ask the Member for Whitehorse Centre to indicate whether she wishes the House to resolve into Committee of the Whole.

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House now resolve into Committee of the Whole for the purpose of continuing consideration of Bill No. 304.

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Speaker:** As the sponsor of Bill No. 304 needs to participate in proceedings on the bill, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

**Speaker:** Pursuant to the request of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, I shall now leave the Chair and the House shall resolve into Committee of the Whole.

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Acting Chair (Ms. White):** Order, please.

Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 304: *Act to Amend the Education Act*

**Acting Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*.

Is there any general debate?

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you. I would like to start by thanking all my colleagues in the House for getting us to this place. It’s exciting to be moving along. Something I forgot to say when I was closing my remarks is that, back when the Porter Creek GSA was here, they gave me this bracelet. I said I would be wearing it when we discussed this bill. I’m wearing it again today. They’re going to be at the centre of all my

thoughts, as we think about the details of this bill and how it will affect its implementation and how it will affect students in the Yukon.

I don't have a lot more to add at this point. I think I'm excited to hear the questions from my colleagues, and I'm looking forward to our discussion.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this now in Committee.

I should note as well that I ran out of time at second reading, so I wasn't able to provide the full breadth of comment that I had intended. I'm hoping that members will indulge me making a few brief comments prior to asking a few questions.

The first of those is that I did want to say a little bit about the consultation piece, which — we'll get there, but the first thing I wanted to talk about is the fact that I think this is very important that we do allow private members' bills to get to Committee. I know there has been some discussion about which committee is most appropriate for various bills. One of the reasons our caucus provided unanimous support for this bill at second reading is because we really do believe that it's worthwhile to bring these types of bills into Committee and debate them in detail.

Ultimately, how Committee goes will inform how members will vote at third reading, and that's the important vote, when it comes to these types of bills.

So, to begin, I wanted to talk about the consultation process. I realize that — and I have acknowledged that I understand the limitations that are on private members when it comes to consultation and the fact that it's difficult in this position to exercise the kind of consultation that one might expect from a government bill. That being said, I do think that there is, and are, a number of Yukoners who would have liked to have had the opportunity to share their views about this bill.

I would like to note that the member who presented the bill — the Member for Whitehorse Centre — did in fact note, I believe, three separate letters that were all supportive of the bill. However, I did want to note that those weren't the only responses that we, as legislators, have received so far from different groups.

For instance, first of all, I would note that we did receive — at least, it was unsolicited on my part, but it looks like it was perhaps solicited by someone in the Department of Education — input from the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees.

This is not one that I believe has been tabled yet. I will just read it into the record. It's from Sandra Henderson, the chair of that association. It says: "Thank you for your earlier email and for bringing this proposed bill to the Association's attention.

"The Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees is supportive of initiatives which value both equity and diversity in its school communities and provides safe, welcoming, inclusive and affirming learning environments for all students. While we appreciate the work that has gone into the preparation of this bill, it is difficult however, to provide an informed response without knowing the full context as to why the bill is being brought forward, what gap(s) this initiative

would address and what other options were considered before tabling the bill.

"Other than this email, there have been no direct discussion with AYSCBC thus far regarding this initiative. We are also not aware of individual school councils having been engaged in a dialogue surrounding the proposed bill. Unless this amendment would be considered a 'housekeeping' item, which it does not appear to be the case, some form of consultation with education stakeholders (administration, school councils, school community) ought to occur prior to the passage of this bill on the floor of the legislative assembly.

"The Association would be pleased to help facilitate a discussion among Yukon school councils regarding this initiative and/or provide any other assistance in this regard.

"Again, thank you for your email and for the opportunity to offer comments.

"Regards, Sandra Henderson, Chair"

My point in reading that and providing that, putting it on the record today, is just to note that there were other groups that had provided input on this. It is clear from the AYSCBC that they were very interested in having the opportunity to have their views considered in the development of this bill and the process.

Now, in second reading earlier today, the sponsor of the bill did provide some of this information, but unless AYSCBC is listening right now, I don't believe that they would have had the opportunity.

So, I guess that my question for the sponsor of the bill is: What sort of response does the member have to that e-mail, and does the Member for Whitehorse Centre think that this kind of input shouldn't be considered?

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the member for bringing this forward. It has some questions in it that I would like to respond to. That letter asked about why this bill was brought forward, what gaps it is trying to address, and other options that were considered.

I can absolutely speak to that. I have mentioned before, but I will go through it again. The reason why this bill was brought forward was because of the request of youth for support in their schools, support for their peers, and support for themselves.

It was brought forward because of extensive conversations I had with members of the queer and trans community, with educators, with administrators, and with parents who all thought that this was a way that youth could be supported. That is the gap it was trying to fill. It's true that there are schools that have GSAs in them, but there are many that don't, so there are students who don't have access to that kind of support.

It is really important that, no matter what school a student goes to and no matter which teachers are there that year — actually, I want to speak to that, because that is feedback I heard. Often, right now, what is happening is that if a teacher happens to be in a school that supports this kind of initiative, takes it on themselves, and champions it, that's great, but what if that teacher moves on? What if that teacher gets reassigned or isn't there the next year and suddenly that doesn't really exist anymore?

This bill fills both the gaps of supports not existing and of supports being somewhat piecemeal and not continuous. It also supports students in schools where they might not have supportive administrators. They might not have teachers or principals who do support them, and it gives them some protection.

In terms of other options considered, I spoke to this a little bit before. I guess there is an option of this having been addressed with an internal policy without having gone through the Legislature. We didn't pursue that option for a couple of reasons. One is that this, as legislators, is what is available to us. I think that there is real value in the public conversation that is happening right now. So, if this was done with an internal policy, we would never have had the chance to talk to the media, hear from students, and hear from people in a way that is public. I think that public conversation is really important.

I just want to quote from the letter from Queer Yukon. They talk about that. They write — and I quote: "... we believe it is urgent for young Two-Spirit, queer, trans and questioning Yukoners to be shown that they are valid and valued by their government, their schools, and their community." I can't imagine a better way to show them that they are supported than by this conversation at the highest level — by the lawmakers of this territory — so I think that this conversation that we are having is so important. The actions we take will say a lot about our commitment to LGBTQ2S+ youth.

That is kind of the answers to those questions. There might be follow-ups, so I will let the member follow up on that.

**Mr. Dixon:** I think that the member has addressed the issues raised by the AYSCBC in terms of the questions they've asked in the e-mail, but my question was: The AYSCBC indicates that it's their view that education stakeholders ought to — or consultation with education stakeholders ought to occur prior to the passage of this bill on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. My point there is simply that this is a group that has expressed the opinion of school communities on behalf of their organization, which represents all Yukon school councils, boards, and committees, and they are saying that their membership really wants to be consulted about this. It sounds like they're supportive of the intent of the bill, for sure, but their clear expression is that they believe that the education stakeholders ought to be consulted prior to the passage of the bill.

That's the concern I guess I would raise. It's less of a question and more of a point that there are groups out there that haven't been consulted and feel that they ought to be consulted.

The second piece is that the member correctly notes that there is a useful, helpful public conversation going on about this. I agree; that's important. The member, I believe, said that a public conversation about this is important. My view — and I expressed it earlier — was that the way that we can, as private members, bridge that gap of consultation and the resources it takes to do proper consultation is by going to committee. That was the reasoning behind my motion earlier today with regard to sending this to a committee to lead that public consultation and have the opportunity for groups like the AYSCBC and others to have a forum within which to provide their input.

I think it's notable that this hasn't happened. So, that is the concern that I wanted to raise — is that there are groups out there. There was a process by which it would have been possible to seek that input, but it wasn't done that way. Again, as I've said, I respect the fact that we have limited resources as individual MLAs to lead consultations, but I do think there was an opportunity to send this to a committee and have it be considered by that committee and consulted on — having it consulted on in the public — but that was a missed opportunity.

I'll just give the member an opportunity to respond to that. It's not so much the question. I appreciate that this is an opportunity for questions, but I think these are legitimate concerns and I just wonder if the member can respond to those.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, in, I guess, a targeted consultation, which is what we did, we thought about who the stakeholders here are. Who are the priorities to connect with? My priority is the queer and trans community — and particularly queer and trans youth to talk about what they need. That's what shaped this bill and the direction of this bill. To me, those are the most important voices of the conversation.

We absolutely consulted with people from the education community — not exhaustively. The member has given an example of someone whom we didn't talk to. I'm more than happy to talk to them. At any point, they can reach out or I can reach out to them.

They have said that they support the intent of the bill. I think the questions are about implementation. I think that if we, as the Legislature, decide that this is important to us and that it is important that we give this support to youth, as we implement it, there is lots of opportunity for people to talk about how that can look in their schools, but I do really appreciate their support of the bill and their support of the intent of the bill.

I just want one more comment on consultation. There is a cost to the time it takes to consult and there's a cost to delaying this, as I mentioned. This is why I didn't want it to go to a different committee and wait until the next Sitting to be brought forward because there is a cost to delaying this, and that cost is to youth.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the member's point. I understand the point that she has made there about timing and her perspective on cost. It is an area where I do think that there ought to have been more consultation.

Another submission that was provided to us unsolicited was from the Catholic Education Association of Yukon. It was addressed to all three political parties. I don't believe it has been discussed yet, so I'll just read it into the record. It's addressed to the Minister of Education, the New Democratic Party, the Yukon Party, and the Department of Education. "The three Catholic School Councils were not consulted on this amendment to the Education Act by the Bill's proponent..." — the Member for Whitehorse Centre — "... or the NDP Party. As elected members of our school communities we believe that we have a role to play in advocating for what our schools and students need. Bill 303..." — as it was known at that point — "... was introduced on March 17<sup>th</sup> and is being debated on March 23 leaving little time for discussion or understanding.



“Yukon Catholic schools embrace the inherent dignity of each student, including LGBTQ2S+ and those who identify as belonging to sexual minorities. We support welcoming and loving schools for these students.

“We respectfully request that changes to the Education Act should take appropriate time and involve discussion with education partners before putting the changes to a vote in the legislature.”

It is signed by John Williams, the chair of the Catholic Education Association of Yukon.

I just wanted to read those two into the record because my understanding is that they haven’t been tabled or discussed yet.

So, I guess I’ll provide the member an opportunity to respond. I note that this is another group that is out there that has expressed an interest in being consulted and that hasn’t been consulted. I’ll ask the member to respond to that.

**Ms. Tredger:** I’ve seen that letter from the Catholic Education Association of Yukon. I was happy to see them make their statement about embracing students, including LGBTQ2S+ students. I was a little worried about what that looks like because my understanding is that the Yukon Catholic schools are working with the Alberta Catholic schools’ policy on safe spaces in schools, which talks about supporting students with same-sex attraction. In that entire document, not once do they use the identities that people in my community use for themselves; they couldn’t bring themselves to do that. Instead they talk about it like an affliction that needs to be managed — something that you have to put up with and be supported through.

So, I guess the question is: Did I consult with the people who don’t think that I should be allowed to get married or have children? Did I consult with the people who don’t think that members of my community should be allowed to have families? I did not.

**Mr. Dixon:** My intention in bringing this forward was not to presume what input these groups would provide but simply to note that, whether it’s the Catholic school councils or the other school councils as represented by the AYSCBC, these bodies are created by the *Education Act* itself — the one that this bill would change. There is a clear role for school councils to be consulted on these types of changes to the act.

My point is not what input the member may or may not receive ultimately; my point is about process — that these are councils that are created by the very act that we’re seeking to change with a legislated role, a democratic role, to represent their school communities, and those groups haven’t had the opportunity to provide thorough input on this bill.

I appreciate the member’s response earlier, but I just feel that the point does need to be made that these councils are created by this very legislation, they have a legislated role to represent the communities, and they haven’t been consulted. I can probably leave the point there. If the member would like to respond, I would welcome that, but I will move on.

In the briefing that the member provided to Members of the Legislative Assembly — I believe that I was the only MLA who attended it — I asked a number of questions about the content of the bill. I will ask a few of those questions as well. I

realize that there will be an opportunity to go line by line, but I think that general debate may be better suited to discuss the entirety of the bill, rather than specific lines.

So, let me begin with the questions I asked the member about the decision that the member made to use the word “must” versus the word “may” in section 2. There are two categories, 1 and 2, which lay out a series of activities. In that, one is a “must” and one is “may”. I am just wondering if the Member for Whitehorse Centre can discuss and explain why some were chosen as “must” and why some were chosen as “may”.

**Ms. Tredger:** I am actually very excited to talk about this because a lot of thought went into it. This is where a lot of the input from the consultation we did was incorporated.

For some schools, student organizations are what we are looking for — that we will be there to support students — so I am thinking of the Rainbow Room at Porter Creek Secondary School. I think that several of the high schools in Whitehorse have GSAs. That is a really good fit for them. I am really excited that any school that wants a GSA may have a GSA and that it is there, but there are also schools that this might not work for. I am thinking about some of the really small schools — some of the schools with fewer than 20 students. I think that if that school wanted a student organization, I would wholeheartedly support it, but I do think that there is a possibility that it is not realistic for a very small school, often with young children for whom a student organization may not be a familiar structure.

We still felt that it was really important that, no matter where a student goes to school and no matter which school is there or teachers are there, they have some kind of support. That’s where we landed on this “activities” language. The idea is that a school must have activities. They may be a student organization — if that is what the students want, absolutely — but there are alternatives so that it can be flexible and work for every school.

I am actually very excited to see what kind of activities schools come up with if this moves forward. I can brainstorm lots of things. I can imagine pizza lunches and maybe, for some of the smaller schools, weekends where they get together with another school in their area so that they can make connections between schools. I can imagine movie nights, and I can imagine bringing in speakers. I can imagine all kinds of activities. The point is that the school has to have something. It must have activities that support the students. They may be the student organization, but they don’t have to be, to allow the flexibility.

Hopefully, that answers the question. I am happy to answer follow-up questions.

**Mr. Dixon:** Yes, the member has answered some of my question. I think that it is probably most useful, before I ask my next question, to go back a notch and just ask the question: Why was section 169 in the act chosen? This is about the duties of the principal, and so I am wondering why this particular area was chosen. There are several other provisions in the act that may be relevant to all schools and I am just curious why the member chose to amend section 169.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for the question. The decision was made in looking at other similar things within the act. Under this section, 169, and under (t), it talks about including the activities of the school's cultural heritage, traditions, and practices, which is certainly not the same thing, but it has some parallels in terms of incorporating activities that support students. It was decided that this section kind of made sense because it had that parallel and because it makes sure that there is a person who is responsible for making this happen within the school — who has this legal responsibility to make sure that this happened so that we could be confident that this really would happen in every school.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, is it the member's intent, then, that the nature of the activities would be at the discretion of the principal?

**Ms. Tredger:** Yes, this is a really interesting question because one of the concerns that I have heard has been: What if this becomes school-directed instead of student-directed? I think that it is really important that if students want to lead these activities, they have the freedom to do that. Ultimately, it is going to have to be sorted out in the policy stage.

What is important to me is that, if students want to lead these activities, they can, but it is not left to them as their responsibility — that they are solely responsible for making these activities happen.

I do think it's the intent that the principal ensures that happens. I hope that happens in a cooperative and collaborative way, and I hope that there is policy established to make sure that does happen in a cooperative and collaborative way.

My fear is that if we don't designate a person who is responsible for making it happen, it's too easy for it to fall through the cracks and not actually happen.

**Mr. Dixon:** Did the member ever consider 170 instead, which is, of course, the minister? As we know, one of the best ways that we have to hold the government to account is to ask questions of the minister. Of course, we can't ask questions of a principal. So, if this were to pass and the legislation were to change, there is very limited ability for us to ask individual principals what they're going to do.

So, did the member ever consider, instead of making it a duty of a principal, making it the duty of the minister to ensure that these activities are in place?

**Ms. Tredger:** I actually think that's a fair comment. It's an interesting idea. I think my concern about making it the responsibility of the minister is that it's a step removed — actually, several steps removed — from the schools themselves. I really want to put the, I guess, power in the hands of the schools to make this happen and then the enforcement in the law to make this happen.

I think it's helpful for what this is going to look like to be decided on at the school level, rather than the minister saying, "Here are the activities that each school is going to do." I think, ultimately, the minister is responsible for making sure that the *Education Act* is upheld in schools. So, I do think that this Legislature still has the power to hold the government to account on this.

**Mr. Dixon:** Again, I have a question that is relatively specific to a section, but given the broader nature of it, I'll ask in general as opposed to line by line.

In section 2, the bill reads: "... which may include, without limitation..."

I'm wondering if the member can explain the term "without limitation" and why that was chosen. I've had that highlighted to me by a few people who have reviewed the bill as being an interesting choice of words.

On one hand, I could view that as being an open-ended, encompassing phrase, but I would like if the member could explain the choice of words "without limitation" and why that was chosen.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, what that is intended to do is say that it could be a student organization, but it's not limiting the type of student organization. It might be a GSA. They might choose to call themselves something else. They might choose to frame the question differently.

It's really intended to give flexibility, because I'm imagining a GSA, but I'm so excited to see what students imagine and what teachers imagine. I want to make sure they have the flexibility, that they're not constrained to it being just a GSA or just a certain type of student organization, but that they have the freedom to make it what they want.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, just for my understanding, it sounds like the term "including, but not limited to" might be a synonym I suppose for that particular area. Is that correct? Is it meant to say that this could include these things, but it's not limited to these things?

**Ms. Tredger:** That's exactly the intent.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the member's response.

I have two other questions. Again, this is a specific question, but I'll ask it in general anyway. The coming-into-force provision is something that I noted at a briefing as being curious to me — that we would require a subsequent order-in-council from the Commissioner in Executive Council. My question was: Why was that included? Are there regulations intended to be brought in, in addition to the coming-into-force OIC? And based on subsequent conversations, I do believe that is not the case, but I do want to put on the record that I had that question.

**Ms. Tredger:** That's correct. We're not anticipating regulations. This was included because — I guess just again to create flexibility, knowing that I am not the government and that there is a certain amount of policy work to be done. We wanted to give some flexibility in the date of implementation — or the date of it coming into force — but I am open to discussion about whether that's the best way to do it.

**Mr. Dixon:** As it reads now, this bill would not — even when this bill passes the Legislature, presumably this Sitting, it wouldn't come into force right away. Does the member know when it would come into force?

**Ms. Tredger:** I would hope that it would be very soon, but no, the way it's written does not give me the power to choose that date, so I don't know.

**Mr. Dixon:** Did the member consider just removing that section? Because if that were the case, it would simply mean

that once the Legislature votes at third reading and this bill receives royal assent, the act would change and come into force immediately. Did the member consider simply not including a coming-into-force provision like this?

**Ms. Tredger:** I'm actually very happy to consider that option.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, I will conclude my comments at general debate with that. I would like to make a final note that I do feel that this type of bill would have been more appropriately brought to a committee of the Legislature to conduct proper consultation, that an all-party committee, like the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, would be well-suited to reaching out to groups that have expressed an interest — as well as other groups that, in some cases, aren't even aware that this is before the Legislature right now — to seek their input. I think that education stakeholders deserve to be consulted on changes to the *Education Act* and changes to the duty of a principal. I think that principals should have been consulted, as well, as this quite literally changes their job description.

I know that the YAEP has written a response that indicates their support of the bill, but I do wonder if individual members of the association would have liked to have had input on this bill, as it will affect their jobs.

The concerns and questions that I have raised today, I think the member has done her best to answer. While I do continue to have some concerns about the content of the bill and the consultation process, or lack thereof, that went into this, I will conclude my comments in general debate.

**Ms. Tredger:** I just wanted to add my thanks to my colleague for the thoughtful questions and the suggestions, and I appreciate that.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*?

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

*On Clause 1*

*Clause 1 agreed to*

*On Clause 2*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have a question for the Member for Whitehorse Centre — or a couple maybe — about this. It is following up on some of the conversation that we have had today about how we are consulting or engaging on changes here. My questions are going to be for the Yukon Association of Education Professionals in my role as the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission.

I will just begin by saying that I think that it is important that there be engagement. I think it shouldn't only be with where we know we get support. I think, as legislators, that it is important that we hear from all Yukoners, take their perspectives, and bring them into the mix. Of course, not everyone will always agree with the same thing. I think that is always fair to say.

I did reach out as well to the President of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. I note the letter that I think was sent to all MLAs and I believe was tabled here as well. We just finalized a new collective agreement with the YAEP, the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, and I just would like to hear the member opposite's perspective on

how they engaged with the association — the dialogue that they had back and forth.

**Ms. Tredger:** Yes, one of the reasons I was really interested in talking to educators about this is because it is important that it will work in the school. I also know that there are a lot of teachers who are trying to do this work right now with limited support, I think it's fair to say. I wanted to make sure that this bill was going to lead to more support for teachers, so that's kind of where those conversations started. It was: What would this need to include in order to be helpful to teachers who are trying to do this work?

I think that having the mandate is really important in that work, because as long as this work is seen as kind of optional or a nice thing to have but not necessary, there is not a lot of support for it to happen. When it is mandated as part of one of the activities of the school, I think that is so compelling. I think that this really helps to lend resources, effort, and time to that.

Our conversations were about what would be helpful, I guess, to teachers.

These are also conversations I had with individual teachers and administrators — so what would be helpful to them and about what they need to support the students, which is what I think teachers want to do. I think that is what our educators want to be doing — is supporting our students. This bill is meant to help them do that.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I guess what I'm trying to get at is whether the member, in her dialogue with the president of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, heard back from the president — whether there had been an opportunity to speak to other educational professionals, and if so, what feedback was heard? I appreciate the notion about support for, but what I'm just looking to hear is whether there had been an opportunity for the association to be able to dialogue with its members.

**Ms. Tredger:** I think that's a better question for the president himself. I don't really want to speak to the internal processes of the organization or what their internal dialogues have been.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll rephrase my question a little bit and just say: Did the member opposite inquire about the opportunity to — was there an attempt on my colleague's part to hear what the views were of other professionals through the president?

**Ms. Tredger:** Actually, this is the same question. I respect the authority of the president to speak on behalf of his members, and how he comes to his conclusions and how he consults with them is up to him to decide.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I wanted to just reference another piece of correspondence that we had. It was from Queer Yukon, and what I saw in the correspondence was talking about that this bill is important. There was support for the bill, or the amendment to the *Education Act*, but it was also talking about other work that needs to happen. I'm just wondering whether the member opposite has thought about those concerns.

I've heard some of the responses about her hope that this work would proceed quickly, but I'm just trying to ask a question about assessment regarding time and effort required to

achieve some of the activities or the work that is contemplated through the amendment that is proposed.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for the question. I'm actually very excited to talk about this, because it's so true that the reality of what a law ends up looking like is so shaped by policy. It's policy that breathes life into the law.

That policy will be up to this government to — that work is up to the government to do. I would be delighted — delighted — to help with that work, and I'm really happy to offer any help I can to make sure that the policy does mean this bill is implemented as intended.

I think the concerns that Queer Yukon raised, such as making sure that students aren't outed for participating in GSA, that the teachers have proper training and resources, that there is no tolerance for discrimination within these spaces — I think that's really important. I do acknowledge that this work needs to be done. I'm really optimistic that this government will undertake it and make this bill the best it can be — or make the consequences of the bill the best they can be.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm going to just make a couple of comments and then I'm going to propose an amendment to the bill.

I appreciate the answers that have come from the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I do think it's really important about asking these questions to try to understand about the questions of engagement. It's also important around not wanting to get unintended consequences. When we amend acts, as we are considering today on the floor of the Legislature, I always ask officials, as they bring material to us, about how this will play out in other ways.

I did have some conversation with the president of the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. We had some important and brief conversations about precedent and what we would be setting as precedent by using a tool like amending an act. I can appreciate from hearing the debate earlier today from the member opposite about wanting to use the tool of legislation.

The challenge, of course, is that when you amend legislation, this is the place. If you see some unintended consequences, it's back here where we need to come, so this is a rigorous thing when we set laws for the territory.

Having said that preamble, the amendment that I am proposing is on clause 2. Let me just get my draft of the bill in front of me.

*Amendment proposed*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move:

THAT Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be amended in clause 2, at page 1

(a) by replacing in the text of the new paragraph 169(w) of the *Education Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression “school year” with the expression “school year, the principal must”; and

(b) by deleting the new paragraph 169(x) of the *Education Act*, as enacted by that clause.

**Acting Chair:** The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission:

THAT Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be amended in clause 2, at page 1

(a) by replacing in the text of the new paragraph 169(w) of the *Education Act*, as enacted by that clause, the expression “school year” with the expression “school year, the principal must”; and

(b) by deleting the new paragraph 169(x) of the *Education Act*, as enacted by that clause.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, and I will be very brief. I will just explain the two things attempting to be achieved by this amendment. I will do the second part first. It is under 169(x) that it states: “designate a staff member or responsible adult...” Once we do that, then we start telling the school how to achieve this. When that happens, I think that we set a precedent under the collective agreement, and I think that we need to be careful about that. So, I think that if we are able to remove that clause and still add the emphasis under clause 169(w), that there is a requirement for this to happen — and that is what I am attempting to achieve through this amendment.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further debate on the amendment to clause 2?

**Ms. Tredger:** So, with regard to this amendment, I do find it a disappointing amendment. I think that there are things that are lost when we don't designate a staff member or a responsible adult to lead the initiatives. One of the most valuable things that I have heard about having a GSA is students knowing that there is a teacher they can go to — knowing that there is a teacher who is a champion for them who they can go to for help, who they can go to for advice, who they can go to even when that GSA maybe isn't having a thing that day — they know that is a place they can go. I can talk about my own experiences and know that I knew who the teachers who supported me were, and I knew that they were safe people. That was so valuable. There is a ton of research showing that having an adult in a kid's life who they know is supportive is really beneficial. I think that there is the potential for that to get lost when we remove that paragraph.

Another piece that I think gets lost is the language around “designate a staff member or responsible adult...”, which was chosen quite carefully, because I think that there are times when a community member is the best person to lead these sorts of organizations or activities. I really loved the idea of schools drawing on entire communities to provide this support as opposed to relying on individual teachers — with whom they may have a champion or they may not.

So, that gets lost in this amendment. I believe the intention is that there is a concern that it affects a teacher's duties and I guess they might have to get paid for that. I think there are worse things than paying teachers to support students in this way. I think that it is not a bad outcome if we have to pay teachers to support the core activities of a school to support their students.

So, yes, I find this to be a disappointing amendment. But that said, it is so important to me, based on everything I've heard from community members — it is so important to all the people I've heard from — that this bill passes — that this amendment to the *Education Act* passes.

So, even though I'm disappointed that we are now looking at what I think is a weakened version of this bill, I am willing to work with this in order to get support for the bill to move forward.

**Mr. Dixon:** One of the concerns that we had previously was the implication of this bill on the collective agreement. If the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission believes that this will address that concern, then we'll certainly support the amendment. We'll support the amendment.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further debate on the amendment to clause 2?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank both of the members opposite for their comments. I just want to say that we believe that it is entirely possible to get this — people named and in the role. As we heard earlier in debate, even a flag can make a difference. So, that's why we think that this is not meant to be limiting, but we just are worried about setting a precedent. I appreciate the Member for Whitehorse Centre's concern and even disappointment. The point that I'm trying to make is simply that this is how we don't set up unintended consequences across the collective agreement. But it is in no way meant to take away from the initiative in front of us or our encouragement for support around this initiative.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further debate on the amendment?

Shall the amendment carry?

*Amendment to Clause 2 agreed to*

*Clause 2, as amended, agreed to*

*On Clause 3*

**Ms. Tredger:** As has been pointed out earlier in this debate, it's not clear that clause 3 is entirely necessary. In particular, the amendment to clause 2 has simplified it somewhat. At this point, I don't think there is any reason to delay this bill coming into force. I would ask members to join me in defeating clause 3.

*Clause 3 negatived*

*On Title*

*Title agreed to*

**Ms. Tredger:** I move that you report Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, with amendment.

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that the Chair report Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, with amendment.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. White:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, and directed me to report the bill with amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 55(2), I request the unanimous consent of the House to proceed to third reading of Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, at this time.

### Unanimous consent re proceeding to third reading of Bill No. 304

**Speaker:** The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 55(2), requested the unanimous consent of the House to proceed to third reading of Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, at this time.

Is there unanimous consent?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Disagreed.

**Speaker:** Unanimous consent has not been granted.

### MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 378

**Clerk:** Motion No. 378, standing in the name of Ms. Clarke.

**Speaker:** It is moved by the Member for Porter Creek Centre:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation to create a refundable tax credit to subsidize the cost of certain fertility treatments provided by medical practitioners or infertility treatment clinics and for surrogacy-related medical expenses.

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

For Yukon families struggling with fertility, the idea of starting a family is complicated and difficult. Not only are infertility challenges extraordinarily stressful, but the cost of fertility treatments and surrogacy-related medical expenses are significant barriers.

One of the most common fertility treatments is in vitro fertilization, or IVF. For many people, the cost of these treatments is cost-prohibitive and essentially make it impossible for people to start a family. This is heartbreaking and it's a tragedy, and it is something that we can help address or alleviate. We can help those individuals who want to start a

family but are struggling with fertility challenges. To highlight the challenges and financial burdens of fertility treatment, I would like to share some statistics.

A single round of IVF can cost as much as \$25,000 to \$30,000 and requires a trip down to a larger city like Vancouver for as much as a week. A \$30,000 bill is challenging enough for those in very strong financial positions, but for the vast majority of families, such an expense could throw them into economic turmoil — essentially forcing families to make the impossible and heartbreaking choice of starting a family versus going into massive debt. That's just one round of IVF — \$30,000 for a single round. That's a staggering amount of money just for the hope of starting a family. I have a friend who is also a constituent and who has shared a similar story. My friend and her partner were lucky enough to be successful and now have a baby after spending thousands of dollars. They were both lucky enough to have good-paying jobs that let them get away. They used up all of their vacation leave to go to Vancouver for treatments and then spent most of their savings. She is now older and can't go through another round. It's too expensive and too late.

This is just one of the many stories I have heard. There are so many more. That is why I brought forward this motion. That is why the Yukon Party believes it is so important to help these families out. In fact, that is why the Yukon Party committed to a program like this in the healthy beginnings plank of our platform in the election last year.

No one should have to make this impossible choice. Starting a family should be an option for anyone. That is why I think we need to do more to help these families out. One way that government can help with this is by providing financial support to hopeful parents who struggle with infertility. The Government of Yukon could help Yukon families who face challenges starting a family by creating a new program to provide financial support for fertility treatments and surrogacy-related expenses and travel.

Currently, most Yukoners are required to pay the massive expenses related to fertility treatments out of pocket. A new program to help defray some of the significant cost faced by Yukoners who face fertility challenges would be an important and welcome step. It would be so important and so essential for those struggling with these challenges.

As I mentioned previously, there are significant negative impacts on the mental health of those in this situation. These mental health impacts are compounded by the significant financial cost that comes with an already stressful situation. Other jurisdictions have various supports in place, but there is very little support here in the Yukon and further delays are no longer acceptable. We can, and must, take action now. Kicking the issue down the road will be doing a disservice to those Yukoners struggling with fertility challenges.

I hope that I will get the support of my colleagues here today to push the Government of Yukon to develop a program to provide financial support to Yukoners who are unable to have babies and to help out financially those who need to access fertility treatments or surrogacy. Salamat.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I guess I was a little surprised that the Yukon Party would bring this forward as one of their first few motions and then only speak to it for a few minutes, but I am happy to respond and to speak about the importance of these issues for Yukon families and our plan to address them.

I am going to start by indicating that, in 2021, the Yukon Liberal Party produced a document called *Let's Keep Going*. It had a lot of pages — 50-plus pages — regarding the work that had been done on behalf of Yukon families and Yukon individuals here in the territory in the first mandate of this government and then ultimately a page for each of those topics. It said *Let's Keep Going* and indicated a number of platform commitments. I will read from that document for a moment on the page that is entitled: “We will keep modernizing our healthcare system and make the Yukon a healthcare service leader in Canada. A re-elected Yukon Liberal Government will...” — among other things on that page — quote: “Support Yukoners in making a reproductive care plan with physician input which includes: Subsidizing the cost of birth control. Continuing to integrate midwifery into Yukon’s healthcare system, working towards a fully-funded program by fall 2021...” And we know that has been delayed — and continuing the quote: “Subsidizing the cost of period products for those who need it. Support Yukon families by subsidizing the cost of fertility treatments and travel.”

I am happy to rise today to speak to this motion, and as I stated yesterday in the House when I was asked questions about this topic, I am very pleased that the members of the Yukon Party have been reading our Yukon Liberal Party platform for the election back in 2021. I note that the member opposite indicates that they, too, support the concept of moving to cover some costs with respect to reproductive plans for families, but I have to make reference to the motion that is here before us, because it requires a certain number of very specific things.

It urges that the Government of Yukon would “... introduce legislation to create a refundable tax credit to subsidize the cost of certain fertility treatments...” — it doesn't say which ones — “... provided by medical practitioners or infertility treatment clinics and for surrogacy-related medical expenses.” This is very specific. It talks about creating a refundable tax credit. There were some comments — although no information was provided by the member opposite — that there are different types of programs that are available across Canada. As a result, this is very specific in asking for a refundable tax credit.

Now, I think what is important to note with respect to that is that a tax credit process will not assist low-income families, should they have a lower income, because it only assists if there is enough tax payable by the individual family to reduce what is payable by the amount of the tax credit. Families will need to have enough tax payable in order to benefit. Some families just simply wouldn't have that.

I also want to note that the Yukon Party plan certainly will require — which is why I was hoping to hear more from the member opposite — that individuals have to pay out of pocket for these expenses and only receive a portion of the costs back, if they qualify, because that's the way tax credits happen.

As I stated earlier in part of my comments with respect to questioning about this particular initiative — which I am very pleased to talk about, because it is an element of the work that we have done as a government, coming here since 2016, to provide support for families who are facing challenges — all kinds of challenges — in this case, challenges starting a family — and that is a priority for our government.

Our government has committed to supporting Yukoners in creating reproductive care plans. As part of this process, we are evaluating the potential of subsidizing some of the costs of fertility treatments and related medical travel.

Mr. Speaker, it's incredibly important that the experts and the expertise of the Yukon public service be given the leeway to come forward to our leadership and to our government and ultimately to the Legislative Assembly, if need be, to give us the parameters of a program that will best suit Yukoners and that will best support Yukoners from all walks of life who might be challenged by starting a family.

Determining, as this motion does, that it is a tax credit process only or "Let's build a tax credit box and put these values in there" does not give them that leeway.

I've asked the experts at the Department of Health and Social Services how we can proceed with providing this kind of support to Yukoners, and they are working on that and will come up with a number of options. One of them might be a refundable tax credit, because we can talk — I will talk about some other jurisdictions in Canada that have done so — not the least of which is Nova Scotia, most recently, this week — but that's after a long opportunity to consider what was best in that circumstance — in the circumstance of their government, in the circumstance of their families and how they are best able to manage that.

Our government has committed to supporting Yukoners and we want to bring forward all the options in considering how we might be able to do that. As part of the process, we are evaluating all of the options. We're also looking to support Yukoners in need of purchasing or obtaining birth control and period products, because we recognize that nearly one-quarter of women struggle to afford menstrual products here in Canada. It is just absolutely unacceptable. I think I clearly said that yesterday. The opportunity to do that is, again, part of a bigger plan.

The Yukon health care insurance plan does currently provide coverage for a consultation for initial fertility testing, including certain follow-up tests, such as ultrasounds, examinations, and some types of pregnancy tests at a publicly funded facility — so, not a private facility, but publicly funded or provided by a Yukon health care professional or other health care professional, should somebody be referred. That referral might be outside of the territory.

In addition, Yukon physicians can receive remuneration for performing artificial insemination procedures such as

intrauterine insemination. That might sound like good news, but it's not the full picture because medications and any costs related to the transport or storage or preparation of sperm are not covered under our current program. So, while part of that is beneficial to families, it's not always the case and there are still some costs, which can be quite significant, that are necessary.

Fertility treatments and procedures such as in vitro fertilization are not currently insured health services under the Yukon health care insurance plan and are therefore not eligible for coverage. But this is something that we need to explore. We need to examine whether or not that should be a change — should be a change of policy.

All of the members — well, maybe some of the members of this House — heard me speak earlier about the process for adopting — figuring out which tool is the right tool to address an issue. We must delineate the issue; we must describe it; we must figure out the problem that we're trying to solve and then we must take the opportunity to determine which tool is the best one. It might be policy, it might be amendments to regulation, or it might be new legislation.

The examination of the health care insurance plan is a critical tool in determining how we should proceed to provide this kind of service to Yukon families. I want to note that the travel for a medical treatment program is not available to individuals who require an insured health service that is not available in our home community or in territory. As fertility treatments and procedures are non-insured health services currently under our current situation, then related travel is not eligible for coverage if an individual was seeking that kind of service outside of the territory. The medical travel needs to be related to the fact that they can't receive that insured health procedure here in the territory.

If a consult has been approved for initial fertility testing which is available here in the territory, medical travel will be approved to support an individual to access a consult with a fertility specialist at a publicly funded health care facility if that is outside of the territory. There are no publicly funded facilities here in the Yukon offering fertility procedures beyond artificial insemination, which is available. But following an initial fertility workup and testing within the territory, usually it is a specialist and an obstetrician-gynecologist — an OB/GYN — who will refer patients who require other fertility procedures to an out-of-territory provider for a consultation.

These are important aspects of this question. I listened carefully to the submission on this motion by the member opposite. Certainly, it is important to look at the practical issues and how Yukon families — in this case, this member's friend and their personal story. But it is also critically important that Yukoners understand the facts, and the facts are that some of these fertility plans, or portions of them, are in fact covered here in the territory, including medical travel when they are supported by a referral from a doctor who refers them to Outside services where fertility procedures are provided by an out-of-territory consult.

Fertility treatments often require a combination of medical and pharmaceutical supports. That is critically important. Legislation to deal with a tax credit may not well address the

issues of the pharmaceuticals. It might, but it would have to specifically do that, and that is not necessarily contemplated here. Fertility treatments often require a pharmaceutical aspect. Fertility medications are not currently eligible for coverage through the chronic disease and disability benefits program here in the territory because fertility is not listed as a chronic disease in the Yukon.

Again, an aspect of the current services that are provided and how we could improve on those — and there might be a myriad of opportunities for us to do that — whether it involves changing some of the provisions or the policies around pharmaceutical coverage or whether it encourages or changes some of the things that are covered under the health insurance plan.

Currently, at this time, Ontario and Québec are the only Canadian jurisdictions providing some direct coverage for in vitro fertilization, artificial insemination, intrauterine insemination, or fertility preservation, and Ontario's program does not cover the cost of any fertility medication — so, an important distinction.

Québec and Manitoba provide a fertility treatment tax credit — so, similar to what is being proposed here — on family income. I am not sure, with respect to this particular motion, whether it will be family income or individual income —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

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

*Debate on Motion No. 378 accordingly adjourned*

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*

**Written notice was given of the following motion  
April 6, 2022:**

Motion No. 385

Re: Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges consideration of a process to refer private members' bills to Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments (Dixon)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 63

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, April 7, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Thursday, April 7, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In honour of the tribute to Bob Daffe, we have a number of guests here today. I apologize in advance if I don't have a comprehensive list because there are quite a number of people here to show their love for Bob. I will do my best. We have: Kevin Daffe; Kathleen Froese; Theresa Landman; Danielle Daffe; Nathan Mole; Issac Daffe Lamothe; and Karine Genest. There are Bob's Ranger colleagues: Ranger DonaSun Novecosky; Ranger Al Parker; Ranger Fred Smith; Ranger Boyd Campbell; Ranger Mike Bellon; and Ranger John Mitchell.

I served with Mr. Parker and Mr. Bellon almost 30 years ago, so it is great to see them. Trish Loretz, Kelly McGill, Andrew Hyde, Lisa Preto, Len Janzen, Scott Burrell, Will O'Brien, Diane and Russel Tait, Hilary Calnan, Jan Klippert, Walter Brennan, Jeanne Burke, and Lawrence Brennan. I also have a few last-minute names that have been provided to me: Alison Daffe, Crystal Bartszak, Heather Burrell, Jason Basnett, Olivier Roy-Jauvin, Rodney D'Abramo, and I think that is it.

Welcome to the Assembly and thanks so much for coming today.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** I would ask all Members of the Legislative Assembly to please welcome here Carmen Komish, president of Yukon Chapter, BC and Yukon Branch, Kidney Foundation, her husband, Mark Robinson, and their son, Ryan MacLean. They are also constituents of mine in the riding of Porter Creek Centre. Also in the gallery today are Bev and Doug Thomas, and Anne Huang. Thank you for coming today — if we could welcome them, please.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some special guests here today for a ministerial statement later on in the Orders of the Day. David Morrison, chair of the board of governors of Yukon University; Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor of Yukon University; Dr. Karen Barnes, former president of Yukon University; Blake Buckle, associate vice-president, external, at Yukon University; and Michael Vernon, senior communications coordinator.

Welcome.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In remembrance of Bob Daffe

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise today to pay tribute to the memory of Bob Daffe. Bob moved to the Yukon at the age of 19 in search of adventure, and he never left.

He built a great life here. He raised his family, he established Tatshenshini Expediting — a thriving business that he was so passionate about — and he touched upon so many people in varied and diverse circles.

Bob took part and was a proud member of a number of groups, from the Junior Rangers, innumerable outdoor education programs, the Canadian Rangers, the Yukon Canoe and Kayak Club, and so many others. Always patient, always enthusiastic, and always with that contagious laughter and smile. His fluid and poetic movement on the water was inspirational to all. As a true outdoorsman, he wanted to share his passion and survival skills, and he was endlessly enthusiastic about sharing his confidence and deep appreciation of being in the wilderness. He had so much to teach.

In preparing for this tribute, I was told a short story about one of his river trips in Mexico. Mr. Speaker, we know that Bob cared deeply about rivers. They became a metaphor to the way he lived — never still, relentless, determined, and fun.

All these attributes he demonstrated in 2003 when leading a group of Canadian and French kayakers into depths of the Mexican jungle to run the Jatate River, which is situated in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. The group was unable to finish because, on day one, they were taken hostage at machete point by a group of hostile villagers. These villagers held the group in a small schoolhouse for two days. Bob, being fluent in French, English, and Spanish — I'm told that the Spanish he learned from playing tapes in a Walkman while working on vehicles as a mechanic — tirelessly translated for the various group members while negotiating the group's safe exit from that rather harrowing situation. It was nerve-racking and tense for those involved, but in the years following, Bob still managed to laugh about it, often contemplating going back just to see if the villagers would receive the group differently.

There are so many other stories, and probably each of you in the gallery today have at least one special story in mind when you think of Bob. He was a leader, a mentor, a role model, a guide, a father, a husband, and a friend. He meant so many things to so many people. Bob Daffe is truly a contemporary Yukon legend.

A real man of the water, your memory will always be a blessing. When launching our kayaks, when navigating meandering waterways — gentle or tempestuous — when climbing up with a packraft, when paddling in full force, your passion lives on in so many ways. As Bob would always say, "Life is good, life is beautiful, particularly when on the water."

Thank you so much for the legacy that you have left.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition in tribute to Bob Daffe.

It's so wonderful to see his family and so many people here for the tribute today, but there's no surprise that there are so many people. Bob was a remarkable man and great Yukoner. The life that he led can be described in so many ways: awesome, interesting, exciting. Bob was one of the most positive people I've ever known. I met Bob in the early years of his successful business, Tatshenshini Expediting — so many exciting trips running the river, especially during high water and maybe the few Saturday-night rum runs.

Bob was very skilled at anything he did. He made it easy to learn from him and you always felt safe. He was always able to fix or find a solution for the problem. Bob worked with so many groups, but I want to focus a little bit on Bob as a Canadian Ranger and the impact that he had as a teacher and a leader working with Canadian Rangers and the Junior Rangers.

For many years, close to 200 Junior Rangers from across the north would congregate in Whitehorse for training. The highlight for them was always the whitewater rafting and swiftwater rescue. Learning while having fun is what made their training exciting and memorable.

Bob was tough and his skills were an asset to his patrol and all other patrols. One incident found us at Aishihik Lake where two snowmobiles had fallen through the ice. Bob was about to load up as we were at the end of the exercise when he heard. He came running to me and said, "I have a dry suit. I'll put it on and jump in and hook the sleds up — help pull them out." It was cold. We had just gone through a spell of 40 below. Without hesitation, Bob suited up, jumped in, and I've never seen a man's eyes get so big as when he hit the water. I said, "What's the matter?" Bob put his hand in the water and said, "My zipper's open." Well, we both laughed, but we got the job done. That's the kind of guy he was. Our patrol was super impressed and very thankful.

At his celebration of life, it was just a testament to the life that he lived. All the things he loved doing, from snowmobiling to rafting and everything in between, were on display with a story that you could read. It was just low key with lots of great conversations.

I was honoured to participate in the 21-gun salute for Bob on behalf of Canadian Rangers to recognize Bob as a great ranger and just a special person who has touched so many people. I am honoured once again to stand in this Legislature and have the opportunity to further recognize a great man here today. Thank you.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to honour and celebrate a beautiful life. We have heard so much about the impact that Bob Daffe had not only on those around him, but also on the adventure tourism industry. I loved everything about Tatshenshini camp. I loved the energy of the guides, the guides in training, and everything that comes along with this lifestyle. I loved Bob's stories and his manner and sense of humour. As much as I wanted to be part of Bob's world

as a teenager and a younger person, I was, and remain, fearful of fast-moving water.

Since his passing, I've spent a lot of time thinking about the impact that Bob had on the people and the communities around me. I think that the true testament of how he lived his life is present today in the gallery — in the faces of the people he loved and respected — and it is those listening at home or reading this later on.

He will live on through the impact that he had on the lives of those who were lucky enough to find themselves in his light and how those people have taken his lessons and shared them out with the world around them. Each and every one of you is a testament to his legacy. Your jobs are so varied and your life has taken you in so many different directions, but the commonality that you share are the lessons that he taught you: to love and respect the natural world; to love and support and lift the people around you; to live authentically; to be curious; to work hard; and especially to rejoice in humour.

So, there is no better way to celebrate him than by taking the lessons he taught you and sharing them with others. His legacy will live on through your actions and the stories you share. Bob, you taught us so much — life is good.

*Applause*

### In recognition of Green Shirt Day

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to pay tribute to Green Shirt Day, which is recognized across Canada the first week of April each year. The purpose of Green Shirt Day is to encourage and inspire all Canadians to register to become organ donors. This day was created to remember and recognize all the victims and families of the devastating Humboldt Broncos bus crash that took place on April 6, 2018. In particular, it is a day to honour the legacy of Logan Boulet, a 21-year-old Broncos defenceman who died of his injuries the day after the crash.

Logan's parents, Bernadine and Toby Boulet, made the selfless decision to donate their son's organs. They did so because Logan had told them that he planned to register as an organ donor. Because he shared his plans with his family, Logan's heart, lungs, liver, both kidneys, and both corneas saved or improved the lives of six people.

This inspiring story spread quickly, and it is estimated that almost 150,000 Canadians registered to become organ donors in the weeks following the crash.

This is the largest number of Canadians registering to become organ donors in Canadian history due to one event and one person. This remarkable impact has since become known as the "Logan Boulet Effect". Some have said that this selfless act was nothing less than miraculous. The young man's legacy is a lasting reminder about how important it is for Canadians to talk to their family about their organ donation wishes.

Almost 90 percent of Canadians say that they support organ donation, but only 32 percent have actually registered their intent. This number has been increasing in recent years, but we can still do better. It is estimated that more than 4,400 Canadians are currently waiting for an organ transplant. Each year, about 250 of those people die while waiting.

Mr. Speaker, today I remind all Yukoners that they can help save lives by choosing to be an organ and tissue donor. The organs of a single donor can save as many as eight lives. A donor registration form can be found in most doctors' offices or on yukon.ca or at Yukon Motor Vehicles Services. Registered donors will have a little heart added to their driver's licence or receive a sticker for their health care card that indicates their donor status.

Most importantly, I urge Yukoners to talk to their families about their intentions. Make sure they know what you want so that they can understand, support, and respect your wishes for the future. This is crucial, as doctors will support the wishes of family at the time of death. By making your wishes known, you can help your family make this decision and save or improve the lives of fellow Canadians who are waiting for help. In doing so, you will leave your own lasting legacy and the greatest gift that there can be in the face of a tragedy.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat. I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize today, April 7, as Green Shirt Day in support of organ donation in Canada.

On April 7, 2018, Humboldt Broncos defenceman Logan Boulet passed away from injuries obtained the day before, when his team bus was involved in a fatal accident that killed 16 and injured 13 others. Logan Boulet was an organ donor. Inspired by one of his coaches, Ric Suggitt, who passed away the year before, Logan had signed up to be an organ donor. That decision saved or changed the lives of six people after his death. He donated his heart, lungs, liver, both kidneys, and both corneas.

What happened next has become known across Canada as the "Logan Boulet Effect". News began to spread of Logan's selfless act following this devastating accident that had the attention of the whole nation.

In the weeks to follow, almost 150,000 Canadians would register to become organ donors. Green Shirt Day recognizes and honours Logan and his legacy and all organ donors who have changed and saved the lives of others. It continues to serve as a yearly opportunity to raise the importance of organ donation across the country.

According to the Canadian Organ Replacement Register, the total number of organ transplant procedures in Canada has increased 42 percent between 2010 and 2019. Unfortunately, the number of people who have passed away waiting for an organ transplant has also risen. Organ donation is not something many want to think about or talk about, but we need to start having these conversations. If there is one thing that Yukoners can take away from our words today, it is the importance of having that kitchen table discussion with your family to let them know your wishes around organ donation.

Yukoners can find the registration form to be an organ donor on the government website along with information about organ donation and how to talk to your family about your wishes. Salamat po.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Green Shirt Day and Organ Donation Month.

Organ donation is a simple act that saves lives. It is an act of care and generosity to community. The process to become a donor in the Yukon is simple: As mentioned, you need to fill out and return a form, but as my colleagues have also mentioned, even though 90 percent of Canadians support the idea, far fewer are registered organ donors. There are thousands of people waiting for transplants across the country and hundreds who die every year while they wait for a transplant. Despite the fact that the process is so simple in the Yukon, we know that many people never get around to filling in and returning that form.

So, I want to take a moment to talk about a different approach for organ donation. Our Yukon system, like many provinces, is an explicit consent system, also known as "opt-in". That means that only those who have given their explicit consent by filling out the proper paperwork and returning it can be donors. An opt-out — or a presumed consent — system is widespread throughout Europe. Nova Scotia recently became the first jurisdiction in Canada to implement the opt-out system, and now they are anticipating an increase in organ donations of between 30 and 50 percent over the next five years. Think of the lives that could be saved.

I applaud everyone who has taken steps to become an organ donor. Our community applauds you — thank you — but I know that there are many more willing donors out there and that moving into an opt-out system would help so many more people in the Yukon live longer and healthier lives.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a media analysis, dated April 7, 2022, entitled "Conservative Yukon Party Leader is dangerously indecisive as he continues to confuse Yukoners with conflicting information about the Party's position on Carbon Pricing".

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have for tabling a legislative return in response to a question yesterday from the Leader of the Third Party which confirms, in fact, that I have spoken about a new walk-in medical clinic in this House on three prior occasions during this Spring Sitting.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have for tabling the Yukon University five-year strategic plan for 2022 to 2027, entitled *Becoming*.

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling 17 Hansard excerpts from October 20, 2021 to April 5, 2022 in which the minister did not reference her plans to open a public walk-in clinic when asked.

I also have for tabling a *Whitehorse Star* article entitled "McPhee rules out a YG-run medical clinic".

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to improve the organ donation program for Yukoners by reviewing potential options, including but not limited to:

- (1) better promotion;
- (2) more accessible registration;
- (3) active-offer initiatives; and
- (4) opt-out policies.

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

THAT this House do issue an order for the return of any transfer payment agreement between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Medical Association that includes funding for a recruitment officer.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation to create deemed consent on organ and tissue donation, also called opt-out legislation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide immediate support to Hidden Valley families by:

- (1) working with affected individuals to determine their unique and specific needs;
- (2) allowing staff, students, and families to access counselling at no cost to themselves; and
- (3) allowing staff, students, and families to visit the counsellor of their choice.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the substance use health emergency by:

- (1) increasing the number of beds available to Yukoners for alcohol withdrawal management;
- (2) providing housing options for patients when they are discharged from withdrawal management; and
- (3) establishing a policy requiring monthly follow-up with patients for at least one year after they have been discharged from withdrawal management.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the substance use health emergency by following BC's leading-edge overdose response plan to allow registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses to prescribe certain controlled drugs and substances, including a safe supply of opioids.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Yukon University strategic plan

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise to congratulate Yukon University on launching their five-year strategic plan for 2022 to 2027 released on Monday, April 4 with the title *Becoming*. The plan embraces the unique opportunity of becoming Canada's first university north of 60 with the vision of a thriving learning and research community leading Canada's north.

On Tuesday, leaders of the Yukon University came to this Assembly to appear as witnesses and provide an update to its new strategic plan to guide the institution's operation over the next five years. Unfortunately, they didn't have an opportunity to do so after the Yukon Party and the Yukon NDP voted against having them appear. Mr. Speaker, I will provide that update for this Assembly today.

Yukon University values integrity, quality, and a just society and relationships. This is evident in their approach and commitments. The strategic plan incorporates feedback from more than 600 Yukoners, including students, faculty and staff, Yukon First Nation governments, the business community, municipal leaders, indigenous youth and elders, community campus committees, the Yukon University Foundation, the president's advisory committee on initiatives, and the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining.

The board of governors agreed upon five commitments for determining the path forward for Yukon U, which are: building identity and nurturing culture; advancing reconciliation; developing northern expertise; developing bold thinkers and confident change leaders; and being leaders for the common good.

I look forward to our government continuing to support Yukoners with access to a local university that aims to equip learners to seize opportunities, make change, and positively impact local and global communities.

Last week, we celebrated National Indigenous Languages Day, and I would like to recognize and appreciate Yukon University for releasing its strategic plan with its title translated into Upper Tanana, Gwich'in, Han, Southern Tutchone, Northern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit, and Kaska. I think this speaks to the integrity of Yukon University's commitment to advancing reconciliation and cultivating strong relationships with Yukon First Nation people and governments.

Yukon University is quickly growing. A few short weeks ago, I rose in the Assembly to speak on the new accelerated pathway program for early childhood educators that will be offered at the university and better equip ECEs in the territory to build a stronger learning foundation for the youngest of Yukoners. From this year's developments in early learning to higher education, this truly is an exciting time for advancing quality educational experiences here in the Yukon, and I look forward to continuing to uplift Yukon University as a strong institution and leader in the north.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, we were interested to see the university's strategic plan released a few days ago. We look

forward to reviewing it thoroughly and debating the budget of the Department of Education here today.

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her statement and we congratulate the ongoing leadership we see from Yukon University with the release of their 2022 to 2027 strategic plan, *Becoming*. *Becoming* lays out a beautiful and bold plan for the transformation of what Yukon University is striving to be. Drawing strength and pride from their past, the university is ready to step confidently into the future, knowing that their true success lies in their focus on students.

The Yukon NDP celebrate this path forward when that focus is on quality, relationships, integrity, and a just society. We know and understand the hard work being done at the university, so our questions are for the government.

I appreciate that the minister has taken this opportunity to pay tribute to the university; however, ministerial statements are typically used for the government to inform Yukoners about the work that they have been doing. So, I was wondering: How much support did the government give the university in developing their new strategic plan? Can the minister outline the financial support year over year for the university, and does she believe that the funding is adequate to support the growth of this institution?

While on the topic of growth, page 7 of the strategic plan leaves out its commitments — commitments that their capacity to realize are — and I quote: "... predicated on a deep need to revitalize our critical physical and digital infrastructure." So, how is this government planning on supporting the university and revitalizing its infrastructure? Has the minister directed her department to assess the Yukon grant program that currently does not allow students to access funding support for some of the programs offered at the Yukon University?

We all know that the COVID-19 pandemic has been a trying time for all Yukoners — businesses, schools, and organizations alike — so what communication was had with the university prior to the vaccine mandate announcement last November? Did the Yukon government speak with the Yukon University leadership about their expectations on how the university should enact the mandate, and if not, why not? What supports did the Yukon government provide the university and the students who were caught in the in-between of the mandate? Did the Yukon government reach out to the university prior to the public announcement ending the vaccine mandate — again, if not, why not?

Before I wrap up, I just need to touch on one more thing. On Tuesday, the government tabled a motion to call the university to appear as a witness in this House. Appearing before the Legislative Assembly is no small feat. It requires immense behind-the-scenes prep work to ensure that witnesses have all of the information that they could possibly need to answer any possible question at the tips of their fingers. This takes a lot of staff time to prepare — time that could otherwise be spent with students or doing the hard work that is necessary to implement a strategic plan. Both opposition parties signalled to the government, in advance, that they were not in favour of calling these witnesses, and the government still chose to go

ahead and waste the precious time of the university staff just to make a point — to be able to share their post on social media.

You would think that the government has better things to do, so I will remind the minister that, this spring, her government tabled the largest budget in Yukon's history — a budget that needs scrutiny, as any budget does, but especially one that is nearly \$2 billion. Scheduling witnesses from arm's-length entities just four months after they last appeared for questions further shortens debate each time they appear. So, this begs the question: Does this government not want scrutiny on their spending?

Although we have been told that the government wants to get back to the previous schedules, those schedules were not ideal. We would suggest that witnesses appearing in the fall, not during the spring budget Sitting, makes the most sense.

So, we celebrate Yukon University's new strategic plan, and we will continue to hold the government to account under budget priorities this session. We look forward to hearing more from Yukon University in the fall.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I am so proud to present the strategic plan for Yukon University today. I know that there was some disappointment in not having that opportunity for the witnesses to come and be here earlier this week to speak to a number of the questions that were just posed by the Leader of the Third Party. I believe that it was an opportunity missed. I just want to clarify for the record that we have a number of days still in this 32-day Sitting, and all the legislation has passed this House; all of it has passed this House. We now have one bill in front of us, which is the main — the 2022-23 budget. I believe that there will be plenty of time to debate that budget.

I know that my colleague has also spoken to this a number of times in terms of bringing the schedule back on track to have these particular witnesses — they usually give testimony in the spring — back on that schedule.

I want to again congratulate Yukon University. As a hybrid university, Yukon University offers degree programs, diplomas, certificates, career and trades training, second language support, and upgrading to meet the diverse learning needs of Yukon communities. In 2021, the Government of Yukon allocated \$1.5 million in O&M and \$500,000 in capital to further support the university transition. In the 2022 budget, the Government of Yukon is continuing to allocate \$1.5 million in O&M and is requesting \$200,000 in capital to support the Yukon University transition.

We have earmarked \$10 million going forward in the five-year capital plan to support the science building project. I will make note that Yukon University, within our main budget, has \$28,913,000, and we have strategic initiatives that we have earmarked in ELC, practical nursing, and other health professions. I am looking forward to that debate, and I know that it will happen later this afternoon — the start of my debate.

I would like to again congratulate David Morrison, the chair of the board of governors, Dr. Lesley Brown, vice-chancellor and president, and your entire team and, of course, Dr. Karen Barnes for your work in bringing us to where we are today. I really appreciate all of the work that you have done. I

know that our entire team does, and we share the university's vision of becoming a thriving learning and research community leading Canada's north.

I want to reflect momentarily on the vision that Grand Chief Peter Johnston expressed many times while we were transitioning and dreaming about this moment, about what this means for Yukon First Nations, and breathing life into this institution is going to build capacity. This is how we work to make reconciliation action. This was the vision of our elders, and I can celebrate with, I hope, all members of this Legislative Assembly today in this huge achievement.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Health human resource strategy

**Mr. Cathers:** Yesterday, we called on the Minister of Health and Social Services to take the crisis facing primary care in Yukon seriously and commit to launching the development of an integrated health human resource strategy. The minister refused to make that commitment.

Earlier today, the president of the Canadian Medical Association was interviewed on CBC. She said that, while using the ER or walk-in clinics are better than nothing, they cannot replace the importance of a long-term relationship between a patient and their doctor. It's clear that a new health human resource strategy is needed for the Yukon.

Will the minister commit today to launching the development of a new health human resource strategy for the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think it's critically important that Yukoners know that the health and well-being of Yukoners is the foundation of our work to provide increased health and social services, as well as transitioning our health and social services system into an amazing leader in Canada. The *Putting People First* report did in fact lay out a map for us to do that, including the concept of polyclinics and other ways in which medical services could be transformed in their service delivery.

We look forward to that work. The words and the preamble of this question are the member opposite's — they are not mine — with respect to the commitment we have made. I answered this question yesterday and the day before, and I'm very pleased to do so again to be able to reiterate our commitment to a partnership with the Yukon Medical Association and with the Canadian Medical Association for the purposes of providing Yukoners with the best possible care.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, again, the minister paints a rosy picture, but we've seen the lack of action and a real failure to work with Yukon doctors again and again.

Another point raised by the president of the CMA in her interview with the local CBC this morning related to regulatory barriers. She noted their regulatory barriers that restrict the mobility of health professionals, and this lack of mobility is of particular concern for places like the Yukon that rely on health professionals coming in from other parts of the country, either to practice or as locums. A well-planned health human resource strategy developed in partnership with the Yukon Medical

Association and other health stakeholders could help to address these regulatory barriers.

So, again, will the minister agree to immediately launch the development of a new health human resource strategy?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm not sure whether the member opposite has read *Putting People First*, but it is a comprehensive report with respect to how we can transform all aspects of Yukon's medical services and health services delivery. We look forward to the implementation of that agreement. We have implemented many of the recommendations in that report already. We have continued to interact with our partners for the purposes of making sure that we are on the right path to increase and improve the medical system for Yukoners.

With respect to the interview that the member opposite is speaking about, Dr. Katharine Smart was in fact speaking about removing barriers for medical professionals to be able to move around the country. She was speaking about federal leadership with respect to that issue — looking forward to it with respect to some announcements, hopefully, in the federal budget.

I have met with Dr. Smart. We agree that this is a primary concern. I have also, in my former career, worked to achieve that kind of system for lawyers in this country, and I look forward to working with the medical associations to do the same.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, of course I have read that, and I have to point out that it's unfortunate that the Liberals sidelined doctors in that and treated them as minor stakeholders.

Another significant challenge that the Yukon faces is the shortage of doctors interested in entering primary care and, in particular, family medicine. We've heard from doctors who are experiencing burnout and some who are thinking of cutting back their clinical hours. Newer doctors are increasingly turning away from primary care and not taking patient practices because they are not getting enough support from government. An integrated health human resource strategy should include focusing on how to get younger doctors interested in primary care, how we can retain them, and how we can create an environment where they can care for patients without being burned out.

There is a need for immediate action, as well as long-term goals. So, will the minister finally show some leadership on this file and immediately launch the development of an integrated health human resource strategy?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm happy to rise with respect to this matter. I appreciate the position, or the point of view, of the member opposite that this is the ultimate solution — the Pandora — the opportunity for one particular organization. I'm not sure what he's suggesting, whether it be a strategy — and that would be the answer.

*Putting People First* is the strategy. It is the strategy to improve health care for Yukoners. It has been done independently. It has been done comprehensively, and it has set forward a path for us going forward.

As I said yesterday, our best resource for having young doctors or doctors move to the territory is, in fact, our current



medical practitioners and the work that they're doing and the work that we're doing with them in concert to determine how we can make the Yukon the very best place in Canada to come to open a practice for primary care.

I can also indicate that we have more doctors here in the territory per capita than anywhere else in the country. We have the numbers — I believe I have given them already, and I will leave that to those who want to read it in Hansard.

We have a great staff of medical professionals. We're trying to increase that.

**Question re: Territorial medical director**

**Mr. Cathers:** What we've seen repeatedly is a lack of action from this government and a failure to listen to Yukon doctors.

In the 2021 territorial election, the Yukon Party promised to create the position of territorial medical director within the Yukon government. We believed then, as we do now, that the position would be valuable to both government and the Yukon Medical Association in their collaborative efforts to deliver health services.

Will the minister agree to create the position of territorial medical director?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I believe this is a new question, to be clear, Mr. Speaker. I have answered this question in the past. I appreciate that the member opposite is catching up. Work is well underway to determine how a medical director can best be hired and assist our government with respect to all of the activity going forward.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, we see a lack of action from the government and a failure to listen to and work with Yukon physicians.

At the 2021 Yukon Medical Association AGM, the association passed a motion calling for the creation of a territorial medical director. In that motion, they noted that the Yukon is the only province or territory without a medical director or equivalent. They noted that the evidence is clear that top-performing health systems have physicians in administrative leadership. Their motion read that the YMA calls on the Government of Yukon to work with the YMA to create the position of Yukon territorial medical director, who would work directly with government to advance health system transformation in the territory.

Will the minister agree to this request from the YMA? If so, when?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The health and well-being of Yukoners is the foundation of the work that we are doing with respect to accepting the recommendations of *Putting People First*, as well as implementing those recommendations.

With respect to the medical director position, I am fully aware that it was a resolution at the Yukon Medical Association's annual general meeting. After that, they quickly wrote to me about it. The work was underway prior to that. I have confirmed with them that we are working to obtain an appropriate plan for the hiring and recruitment of a medical director. I have said that here. The work is underway. I look forward to that position being filled.

**Mr. Cathers:** It is nice that the minister is at least paying lip service to this request, but we have seen this government repeatedly commit to things, like midwifery, and then take years to actually take action.

One of the most notable concerns about the plans the Liberals have for changing the health care system has been the lack of proper engagement with physicians. In August 2020, the YMA expressed surprise and disappointment that the Liberal government failed to consult properly with them in making the decision. In a statement, the president of the YMA said — and I quote: “The doctors of Yukon are very concerned about the announcement to accept all 76 recommendations contained in the report without properly consulting first with the YMA.”

If we had a territorial medical director, perhaps the government might not have skipped consulting the medical community. So, going forward, if they wish to address the challenges facing the health care system, they would be negligent to continue to ignore the voices of physicians and need to take action now to create this position. Will the minister agree to set a timeline for establishing this position?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** There is actually only one thing being ignored here, which is my answer to this question.

The medical director position is well underway. I think I have said that, and I have said it clearly. I am not sure why the member opposite is bringing up things that were said by the Yukon Medical Association a couple of years ago. Certainly, it is critical that we work with our partners and continue to build trust in those relationships. That is the work that is being done, and that is the work that will continue to be done.

I also note that some documents were tabled today about something I might have said back in the fall. Apparently, the opposition seems stuck on the idea that nobody can evolve or change their mind or change their thinking or determine an opportunity to respond to the needs and the wishes of Yukoners, which is what we do every day.

**Question re: Food security**

**Ms. Tredger:** Anyone who has been to the grocery store to buy even the most basic of foods is very aware of the rising cost of food, whether it's fresh produce, meat, or staples — everything is going up. We can talk about the impacts of the pandemic, interruptions in the supply chain, and rapidly rising fuel costs, but that doesn't help the senior on a fixed income, the individuals and families relying on social assistance, or the people struggling to put food on the table. If you don't know where your next meal is coming from, that becomes your only focus.

When will this government raise the social assistance rates to address the rising costs of food in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that there is an assumption here in the question that social assistance and seniors are always connected, and I think that does a disservice to Yukoners.

We must, and absolutely do, respond to Yukoners in all walks of life. Seniors are often on a fixed income and are therefore particularly affected by the inflationary cost of living here in the territory and frankly across Canada. As a result, we have worked with seniors' groups and continue to do so. We

have introduced a rent subsidy that happens to be primarily to the benefit of seniors and we will continue to work to address seniors.

With respect to the social assistance rates, again, I think that I have — I know I have answered this question several times, but I am happy to remind Yukoners that we have one of the highest sets of rates in the country and that, in the current situation with respect to inflation and the issues involving the cost of living in the territory, we must always be vigilant and make sure that we are reviewing those for the purposes of making sure that Yukoners are well cared for.

**Ms. Tredger:** The Whitehorse Food Bank is working hard to help individuals and families of all kinds and not just in Whitehorse. They now are also distributing food to Mayo, Carmacks, Haines Junction, and Watson Lake. On average, the Whitehorse Food Bank is distributing emergency food to between 1,700 and 1,900 recipients a month. That is enough food for three days and only accessible once a month.

Every year, these numbers continue to rise. In 2021, an estimated 740,000 meals were distributed through the Yukon. Let me repeat that: 740,000 meals. Why is this government letting so many people go without basic necessities in this territory?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It's a completely different question, which I'm happy to address. I also am well aware of the services of the Whitehorse Food Bank. My family has been involved with the food bank for many, many years. We are — our government remains committed to helping Yukoners who need support. We know that the rate of inflation is impacting services for Yukoners across the territory, including those who are recipients of the food bank.

That said, I certainly would like to take the opportunity to make sure we thank the volunteers — primarily volunteers, board members, staff members — at the Whitehorse Food Bank. They expanded the work that they do to communities during COVID-19 and continue to do so. It is a remarkable effort on their part. It is a remarkable effort of the volunteers, the board members, and the staff members on providing services for Yukoners who are in need.

We recognize that individual Yukoners can be struggling to pay for housing, or groceries, or transportation, or a number of things, and the Department of Health and Social Services does support individuals with food security and I'm proud of the work that they do.

**Ms. Tredger:** We're talking about food insecurity and we're talking about the gap in a territory as rich as this and trying to figure out how we can have so many Yukoners facing food insecurity.

When we talk about these numbers, we're talking about children; we're talking about seniors who worked all their life and can barely afford milk or meat on their pension; we're talking about people with disabilities; we're talking about families; we're talking about people who are working full time and still can't make ends meet. The *Putting People First* report recommends the government design and implement a pilot guaranteed annual income program, but every time we've asked about it, we've had no answers. Will the government

implement the recommendation of their own report, or will they continue to leave people behind?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The members opposite want to talk about the budget; let's talk about the budget.

The budget of 2022-23 has significant entries in that budget — line items that make life more affordable for Yukoners. It has been a driving force with respect to the development of that document.

We've made historic investments in creating the Yukon's first-ever universal affordable childcare program, which serves families by providing up to \$700 per month per child, making life more affordable. We have cut the small business tax rate to zero percent, saving Yukon businesses millions of dollars. We have raised the minimum wage. We have doubled the per diem for medical travel and made it available on the first day. We are still paying the price for the Yukon Party's inaction on housing.

The good news for Yukoners is that our Liberal government is making historic investments in housing. You heard that from the minister responsible. Together with our partners, we have supported hundreds of new homes in Whitehorse that will be complete in the coming months. We have massively increased lot development. We have brought people together to increase housing options.

There is strong growth for Yukon's economy and that's certainly creating some challenges. We're working with our partners to address those challenges because that is our responsibility and job.

#### **Question re: Waste-water testing for COVID-19**

**Ms. McLeod:** With changes to who is eligible to be tested for COVID-19, many jurisdictions across Canada have turned to testing waste water to monitor the amount of COVID in their communities.

A February 15, 2021 CBC indicates that waste water was being sampled for COVID-19 in Whitehorse by the Yukon government. At the time, the government refused to provide details on the results of that testing.

Can the Minister of Health and Social Services update us on the results of the waste-water testing from last year?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Yukon is, at this point in time, only one of two jurisdictions in Canada that is not tracking COVID-19 through waste-water sampling. I have heard that there have been conversations about this. We are focused on the strain on our health care systems, and we have currently — by all accounts, including the acting chief medical officer of health's — a fantastic system to trace outbreaks and how the virus moves through our communities. We note that, perhaps, as the member opposite did, the Northwest Territories has used waste-water testing successfully, but we have not relied on that for our testing. It's not something that is recommended by our chief medical officer of health.

All members of this Legislative Assembly will know that we have relied on the science, followed the science, and worked closely with the acting chief medical officer of health and, before that, with the chief medical officer of health to determine how to best do surveillance.

I don't understand that this recommendation is changing anytime soon. Should the advice of the acting chief medical officer of health change, we will certainly take that into account.

**Ms. McLeod:** According to the documentation that the CBC received last year, testing of the waste water in Whitehorse was being done to get an idea of how much of the population has the virus over time, because not everyone who gets the coronavirus necessarily finds out. This kind of testing could potentially signal undetected cases.

This brings me to a January 7, 2022 CBC article entitled: "Why testing sewage for COVID-19 could be more useful than ever". That article indicates that, because traditional testing regimes have been overwhelmed, resulting in advice to reduce the scope of those who are supposed to get tested, this may offer a solution to tracking the amount of COVID-19 in a community. Despite this, the government ended testing of waste water — why?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am pretty sure I just said this, but I'm happy to say it again. It's important for Yukoners to know that the advice that we have from the acting chief medical officer of health is that this has not been a tool needed here in the territory with respect to determining surveillance of COVID-19. I think that this is the core of this question. It seems to be about this particular area of testing, but the underlying impact of the question is: How do we know what is happening with COVID-19 in our community? We have an amazing communicable disease team, we have an amazing acting chief medical officer of health team, and we have had contact tracing in the early days of COVID here in the territory that was second to none.

We know, as we heard yesterday in relation to the update with respect to COVID-19, that there is community spread. We know that vaccines are the best protection for Yukoners against the spread of COVID-19 and against serious illness. We urge everyone to get their vaccines. We announced only yesterday, after being told the day before that a fourth shot of the booster was going to be available, and we have committed to that booster being available. Appointments will start on April 12, next week.

**Ms. McLeod:** Jurisdictions across the country have turned to the testing of waste water to track the amount of COVID in their communities. The Yukon government is not currently doing this — of course, the minister has said this. The unfortunate thing is that this means that the government has a less accurate picture of the prevalence of COVID within the community.

Why is the minister not following the lead of other jurisdictions?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I guess the members opposite didn't pay attention to the press conference we did yesterday where our medical team advised not to be using this particular method because of the impeccable job that the chief medical officer of health office and the Department of Health and Social Services has been doing in being able to trace COVID-19 throughout the last two years.

I guess I am not surprised that, once again, the Yukon Party does not want us to follow our own medical advice.

#### **Question re: Secure medical unit**

**Mr. Hassard:** Staff at the hospital have been raising red flags regarding safety to this Liberal government for almost three years. This is one of the reasons that we need a secure medical unit at the hospital. On March 7, 2019, the Premier stated in his budget speech — and I quote: "This budget also provides \$1 million for a larger secure medical unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital..." The 2019-20 budget documents go on to state that this is for planning. However, on November 3, 2020, the former Minister of Health and Social Services told media that the Liberals had actually delayed that \$1 million by a year.

Now the government states that \$5.7 million was spent on it last year.

So, can the Deputy Premier tell us what this \$5.7 million was for, and has construction started?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am happy to be on my feet again for the purposes of responding to questions about Yukon's health care system.

By investing in the territory's health care system, our government is increasing access to medical services, while reducing wait times and the need for out-of-territory medical travel. A total of \$88 million will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to continue providing Yukoners with the best possible health care services. We have, once again, increased the Hospital Corporation's operation and maintenance budget, as we have in each of the last five years.

In addition to expanding services, we are also enhancing our health care facilities to ensure that they meet the needs of all Yukoners. \$10.8 million is in this year's budget for the completion of a new short-stay psychiatric unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

This is but one of the responses that we have with respect to the substance use health emergency, as it will provide services to Yukoners — that have not been available to date — in a place that is welcoming and caring for them.

**Mr. Hassard:** Maybe next time the minister is on her feet, she could actually answer a question.

On April 11, 2020, the former Minister of Health said that the current secure medical unit — quote: "... does not meet current client and patient safety standards." The Liberals have been aware that their delays and inaction to building a new secure medical unit have put people at risk. Planning was supposed to be completed in 2019, and rather than treat this urgently, the Liberals delayed this project.

As stated in the Premier's Budget Address in 2019, he claimed that \$1 million would be spent on this project in that year. He was later contradicted by the former minister. This year's budget has \$10.8 million. Combined with the money last year, this brings the total amount spent on this facility to \$16.5 million.

So, can the Deputy Premier tell us if this will be the total cost of the new secure medical unit?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate that the member opposite thinks that this is somewhat of a clever question. The concept of COVID-19 — a world pandemic — requires us to recognize that capital projects have been off-schedule. Capital projects have been sometimes off-budget. We all know — I think anybody who has read a recent paper knows — that capital projects for every government and for every private enterprise have come in at higher than necessary.

What I can say to Yukoners is that enhancing our health care facilities to ensure they meet the needs of all Yukoners is critical. \$10.8 million is in this year's budget for the completion of a new short-stay psychiatric unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital. I truly hope that this place — as I know it is being designed to do — will be a safe place for patients with mental health diagnoses to receive medical care, and it is critical that we proceed with completing this project so that just one of the parts of the implementation of *Putting People First* will be realized to the benefit of Yukoners.

This is not about bricks and mortar; it's about caring for Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** I'm certainly not trying to be clever. I'm just looking for accurate information for Yukoners.

Just five months ago, I asked the Deputy Premier what was the total estimated cost for the planning and construction of the new secure medical unit. In response, she stated that it was \$15.7 million. So, I would just like to confirm if this project has gone overbudget by almost \$1 million since the minister provided that last update just five months ago.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise again to note the support that this government has provided to the Whitehorse General Hospital, because investing in our Yukon Territory health care system is critical. Our government is increasing access to those medical services and increasing the services at the Whitehorse General Hospital for the purposes of achieving just one part of the care that Yukoners receive.

I have great hopes that the \$10.8 million in this year's budget will be for the completion and is designated for the completion of the new short-stay psychiatric unit. I look forward to that being completed this year so that we can offer a safe place for patients with mental health diagnoses. It's critical that they receive compassionate care in a safe place that has been long awaited by that community.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

### Motion re appearance of witnesses

#### Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 7, 2022, Mike Pemberton, chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Justin Ferbey, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, Lesley Cabott, chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, and Andrew Hall, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 7, 2022, Mike Pemberton, chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Justin Ferbey, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, Lesley Cabott, chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, and Andrew Hall, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions relating to the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Is there any debate?

**Mr. Cathers:** I will be very brief. I would just note for the record that we had indicated, as had the Third Party, that our priority is budget debate. We had encouraged the Government House Leader not to bring forward this motion to call witnesses for this instance or for Yukon University earlier. It is unfortunate that, in addition to not being cooperative with members of the Official Opposition and the Third Party, government has lined up these witnesses. We certainly will be voting against this motion.

As the Leader of the Third Party noted earlier, certainly with the instance earlier this week, witnesses were lined up, the government knew that the Official Opposition and the Third Party were not supportive of using the House's time in that way and, despite that, those witnesses were forced to prepare by government for that appearance, which didn't end up happening.

We will be voting against this motion in the interest of focusing our limited time on debating the budget.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate that my colleague from Lake Laberge likes to repeat me, I am able to speak for myself.

We had a briefing with the Yukon Energy Corporation two months ago that was almost two hours long — both opposition parties. The Yukon Energy Corporation appeared here as witnesses four months ago. At this point in time, we would like to concentrate on the budget and we look forward to the opportunity of speaking with them when more time has passed.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to say a few things about this motion. I thank the members opposite for indicating that they are not in support of having the witnesses here. I am going to share for Yukoners a little bit about how we got to this place.

In 2017 in our first Sitting here, we brought in the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation, and we have every year. Yes, last year with a shortened Sitting in the spring, we moved that corporation to come here in the fall — that is correct — but once a year, we have had the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation come. On the first day of this Sitting at the House Leaders' meeting — or maybe it was even the day before the first day of this Sitting; I think it was March 2 — I indicated at House Leaders' to all parties that our intention was to bring the Yukon University, the Yukon Development Corporation, and the Yukon Energy Corporation here as witnesses this session. I didn't hear anything back, actually.

Last week, late in the week, I came to give a heads-up to the opposition parties that we had arranged for those witnesses to come here. I heard from both parties that they didn't have a lot of questions and that they weren't sure they would want those witnesses here. I said okay.

To the corporations and the university, they did do a lot of work in preparation to come here. They always do — that's correct — because it's an important process to allow for that transparency, that accountability, and that opportunity for the opposition to ask questions. Today, for example, the Yukon Development Corporation has a budget of roughly \$43 million, but that's not going to be debated today and questions won't be asked about it because the members opposite are saying that they want time to discuss the budget.

Well, there is a budget for the Yukon Development Corporation. I will happily rise to debate the budget in Committee of the Whole for the Yukon Development Corporation, but I think it really does a service to Yukoners to allow the opposition the opportunity to ask questions of the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation directly — and the university, for that matter.

Now, I appreciate that the opposition members don't wish to ask questions today — that's fine — but what that will mean is that the corporation will be a year and a half before they are back here. That's a long time — a long time when we're in a climate emergency. Just yesterday, we were in debate around this, through a ministerial statement, talking about the importance of this. I heard members opposite make lots of statements about diesel generators and the Yukon Energy Corporation, and today they don't wish to have the Yukon Energy Corporation here in order to ask those questions directly. No problem — I think it's unfortunate for Yukoners.

By the way, when the members opposite say that they informed me, I was informed this morning by the Official Opposition — the Yukon Party — that they did not have questions and would vote against bringing in the witnesses. I was not informed at House Leaders'; I was informed subsequently. What I did when I had my meeting with the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development

Corporation — my regular meeting with them this morning — I said to them: "Look, the opposition parties may not wish to have you in as witnesses." They were surprised. I said to them that I will not know until we get to about 2:00 p.m. because that's when we will hold the vote. As much as it's true that the members opposite gave me some indication that this wasn't their preference for witnesses, I have also heard notices of motions for having witnesses here.

So, how do you square that against: "We want time for budget debate"? Frankly, today I thought that there would be an opportunity because the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation are spending money on behalf of Yukoners, some of which — the Yukon Development Corporation — is directly in our budget, which gives us the opportunity for the members opposite to ask questions directly — no problem.

I will take my seat. I appreciate that we have a difference of opinion about witnesses here in the Legislature. I look forward to budget debate, and I will happily answer questions on the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation. I am disappointed that I don't have those witnesses, but I disagree with members opposite. We started working to line up these people — the corporations — from the beginning of March, and today, here we are on April 7, and the work to get them here has been ongoing. I would like to thank them for their work for Yukoners.

**Deputy Chair:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Count.

### Count

**Deputy Chair:** A count has been called.

### Bells

**Deputy Chair:** All members in favour of the motion, please rise.

*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** All members opposed to the motion, please rise.

*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** The results are seven yea, eight nay.

*Committee of the Whole Motion No. 7 negatived*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

### Recess

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

**Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**Department of Education**

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm happy to rise in the House today to speak about the Department of Education's 2022-23 main budget. I would like to welcome my officials, Nicole Morgan, Deputy Minister of Education, and Andrea McIntyre, director of Finance. Welcome, and thank you very much for coming today.

I will be keeping my comments fairly short today. I gave a lengthy reply to the budget when it was first tabled. I'll just go over some highlights of our budget that we're presenting.

Over the past year, we have continued to face challenges brought on by the pandemic, especially as we weathered the waves of the Delta and Omicron variants. These waves certainly have had an effect on Yukon families and caregivers. I would like to acknowledge all of the hard work that went into keeping our schools and early learning and childcare centres open and available for learners. Despite these challenges, we have also made exciting and important progress on a number of initiatives in Education.

Yukoners, our staff, students, and families have, yet again, demonstrated incredible resilience. We are remaining focused on ensuring that our education system, at all levels, provides positive outcomes for students. This budget will allow us to achieve a number of educational priorities, including ensuring that our school curriculum reflects the diverse needs of Yukoners, including First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being; responding to the review of inclusive and special education to improve our educational programs and services; enhancing Yukon's early learning and childcare programs; responding to rising school and childcare enrolment numbers, as our territory's population increases and Yukoners grow their families; and continuing to work on several capital projects to ensure our schools meet the needs of the communities they serve.

The health and safety of our students and staff remain our top priority. In the 2022-23 budget, the department has a total budget request of \$272,072,000. Of this, \$234,538,000 is requested for operation and maintenance. This represents a \$20,668,000 increase over last year's budget, primarily for early learning and childcare programming and the collective agreement increases. The remaining \$37,534,000 is for critical capital projects. This represents an increase of \$12,761,000 from the 2021-22 capital budget.

The success of our initiatives relies on having the right people. I am so pleased to have so many dedicated educators and public servants in the Department of Education. I know that this has been a challenging year professionally and personally for many. When I say this, I am speaking of our dedicated staff in the schools, in central administration, and the partners we work with. You bring value each and every day, and you are

absolutely making a difference in the lives of children. Piece by piece, together, we are changing our educational system. This is hard work, but it is exciting and rewarding, and I know that we are doing the right work.

Thank you again for all of your dedication, and thank you, Deputy Chair, for the opportunity to speak to Education's 2022-23 main budget in these opening comments. I am looking forward to the debate today in Committee of the Whole.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you very much to the minister for her opening remarks, as well as for the officials who are joining us today. I will forgo the normal introductory comments and jump right into the material, given the tight time that we have.

I would like to begin with Hidden Valley school. We have heard from a number of parents and teachers in the school community who have raised concerns about the availability of counsellor supports for affected students of the scandal, or incidents, that have occurred at that school. In particular, we've heard that, while some students have been able to access support for counselling through Jordan's Principle, others who are not eligible for Jordan's Principle support have struggled to find access to the necessary counselling to deal with the incidents that have occurred there.

So, I would like to begin by asking the minister if she can explain the role of the Department of Education in ensuring those students have access to the counselling that was promised by the minister and what steps the department has taken to ensure that those students do indeed have access to that counselling.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I've said many times, of course, that there's nothing more important than the well-being, safety, and protection of students when they're in our care. I remain absolutely committed and I know that our department does. We're focused on taking needed steps to, of course, rebuild the trust and provide the best targeted support to the school community.

In terms of additional support for families, supports have and continue to be available for families and staff, including on-demand support coordinated via the school community consultant.

Supports have included but are not limited to — and here are some examples of supports. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services facilitated six parent-support evening sessions with a clinical counsellor and an outreach worker. This was held off-site to best accommodate the requests and privacy of families. The child, youth, and family treatment team has been attending the school to monitor the needs of staff, students, and families — providing service to parents and families — and delivered sessions on resilience and social and emotional skills for grade 5, 6, and 7 students.

Referrals to other supports and services are being facilitated, as needed, such as through Family and Children's Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, and Victim Services. Some examples of this are: child and family rapid-access counselling, as well as long-term, individual, and group counselling support for children and their families and assistance with how to talk to children about abuse and how to support children's personal safety.

Supports have been, and will continue to be, provided to staff as well, including presentations on services and supports available to them and crisis counselling services through LifeWorks and information on the broader employee and family assistance program.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's listing of the information there, but what we were hearing is that students who were affected by this fairly horrific incident aren't being able to access the counselling that they need. We have heard that some students have been able to access funding support for Jordan's Principle, but that doesn't apply to all students.

So, my question, I guess, is simple: What should students who are not eligible for Jordan's Principle do when faced with the high cost of private counselling and wait times for that counselling of up to nine months?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that I have been clear already today in terms of the supports that are available. The supports have been, and continue to be, available to families and staff including on-demand support coordinated via the school community consultant. Her name is Brenda Jenner. Her phone number is 867-332-7015. I would just encourage the members opposite, if they are aware of families — and if there is the perception that they are not receiving the services or if they have asked for additional supports — and if the member has information, please provide that to me. I will definitely bring that forward to the Department of Education.

I think that I have been very clear already today in terms of the supports that are available to families and students. This remains one of my highest priorities. I definitely am working also to work alongside families in terms of the work that we are doing on the action plan. I heard families say that they wish to have a voice and actions that will be undertaken in response to the reviews and the investigations; therefore, I am establishing a parent committee to inform the work of the Government of Yukon as well. The first meeting of this group will be taking place on April 11 with parents who express interest in joining this committee to set the groundwork on how we will work together, including undertaking school-level actions to support healing and restorative activities in concert with the school administration and school council.

We are committed to walking side by side on this path with parents, no matter how long it takes.

**Mr. Dixon:** Perhaps I will be a little more direct: Will the Government of Yukon and the Department of Education cover the costs of counselling for students affected by the incidents at Hidden Valley school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I want to, of course, ensure that the member opposite understands that we are committed to the safety and well-being of our students and know that the matters that happened, particularly at Hidden Valley, have had impacts on children. I do not want to move away from the fact that the children are at the heart of this discussion, as I stated in the fall and through this Sitting as well. A tremendous amount of work has gone on in terms of really defining and figuring out what happened.

As I've stated, there are a number of actions over and above what we normally do within a school that have been

provided. I've already gone through those examples. Referrals to other supports and services are definitely being facilitated as needed on a case-by-case basis. I've given the contact information of our school community consultant who can be contacted to look at the needs that are being expressed.

In terms of the Jordan's Principle, Jordan's Principle is a federal government initiative that aims to ensure that First Nation children can access public services in an equitable way and in a way that reflects their cultural needs. The federal government provides funding through Jordan's Principle to support programs for First Nation children who need support to access services available or additional services that are not offered through regular government funding processes. The Department of Education continues to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations and Yukon First Nation Education Directorate on ways that Jordan's Principle can support the needs of Yukon First Nation students. There are a number of programs that they can access — and provide extra support to — such as food programs, access to specialized assessments, and provision of technology to support learning and counselling supports. I'll end that part there.

In terms of our budget this year, we have allocated — within this budget, there is \$400,000 identified for additional mental health supports. That is a new ask that's over and above the amount that we had last year. We know, of course, that this is important additional funds. We requested \$400,000 in mental health supports for this year's budget in recognition of the increased mental health and wellness needs for students. Meeting the mental health needs of students will require flexibility in the approach. We will continue to work with school councils, First Nation governments, and partners to determine how best to coordinate support services, provide additional training, student outreach and awareness, and peer counselling.

I will note, as well, that we are asking for an allocation of another \$150,000 to go toward student assessments this year.

**Mr. Dixon:** There is some interesting information there from the Minister of Education, but it's not at all what I asked. I asked a question specifically about students at Hidden Valley who are currently seeking counselling. Their parents are currently paying out of pocket for that counselling.

The question is very simple: Will the department cover the costs of the counselling that these students are seeking as a result of their exposure to the traumatic events that occurred at that school?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** It's very difficult to, without all of the information — so, I will go back to my previous answer in terms of those families who are — what I'm hearing here today is that this is information that I do not have at my fingertips, in terms of what the member opposite is specifically asking about families who may be out of pocket for counselling services. I really do recommend that those families speak to the community consultant, Brenda Jenner. We can then look at the services that are available to Yukoners, and we can work on a case-by-case basis. That is how we have been working all through this and with other situations in other schools.

We certainly encourage families to speak to the school community consultant to provide that additional information to us so that we can properly respond.

**Mr. Dixon:** Is the consultant authorized to provide funding for counselling for these students?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I encourage families to speak to our school community consultant. I want to just be clear that all Yukoners have access to counselling — all Yukoners have access to counselling. We have a number of services that are available to all Yukoners.

Private counselling is a choice. Without all of the information to look at each individual case — it's very difficult to answer specific questions without all of the information in front of me. I recommend, again, that the individuals and families speak to the school community consultant, and we can then better assess the situation.

**Mr. Dixon:** Again, the minister did not answer my question. I asked: Does that school community consultant have the authority to provide funding to cover the cost of counselling? There are students at Hidden Valley who are currently having counselling. They are paying out of pocket currently. The minister has committed previously to ensuring that these kids are taken care of and that the counselling will be provided.

So, my question is simple. The minister has said that these families should contact the consultant. Is the consultant authorized to provide funding to cover these costs?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, in terms of the community consultant, our consultant can bring forward their concerns to those who can make the appropriate decisions in a timely manner, based on family needs, and that is absolutely our commitment to meet the needs of families. The community consultant will certainly bring forward any concerns that family members have in terms of out-of-pocket costs. If we have all of the information, we can certainly make informed decisions.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, the minister has answered that no, the school community consultant is not authorized to provide the funding and that they can simply forward on the request to the people who do make the decisions. I would note that the minister is in the position to direct her department to make money available for students who are seeking counselling and make that money available to those students.

So, will the minister make money available for students seeking counselling at Hidden Valley, and where do those families go to make that request of the minister?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I want to be clear: No family will be left without support. If there's information that the member opposite has that will help a family seek support that they need, then I recommend that the member provides that to the Department of Education through myself or the deputy minister.

You're asking me questions that are really difficult to answer in terms of what the need is. I will again say that no child or family will be left without support. I recommend again that the families — through the MLA here or through our school community consultant — provide us the information and that we can have all of the information that we need — it will

be done in a timely manner. The member opposite makes it sound like it would go into some abyss; it would not do that; we would not do that. We would make a quick informed decision about the needs of our children and families.

I recommend that the member opposite provide the information to us so that we can help families, if there are families who are in need.

**Mr. Dixon:** How much money is available to these families to pay for this counselling?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, there is a lot of discussion on this side of the House in terms of our many ministers standing to inform this answer because it is an important one. We are absolutely committed to the mental health and wellness of Yukoners. We have financial resources and human resources throughout our entire government that all play a role here. In terms of support for children and families, there will be no children or families left unsupported.

If the member opposite wishes, I can bring back a legislative return with all of the mental health resources that are throughout our entire government.

I wasn't able to listen to the release of the federal budget today, but I do note that \$100 million in support was announced today in the federal budget. There is still a tremendous amount of work to identify, of course, what that looks like for us going forward, but you can rest assured that mental health and wellness is a high priority for our government, and it's a priority for me in all of our schools. I know that Hidden Valley has been impacted in a different way. I remain committed to those families and children.

**Mr. Dixon:** My question is very specific. It is about the Hidden Valley school and the budget for supports for those students who were affected by the traumatic events there. What I am asking is: What is the budget specifically for mental health supports for students specifically at Hidden Valley school as a result of the traumatic events that happened there?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I will say that no child or family will be left without support. I have to again explain to the member opposite that the Department of Education works in partnership with departments across government that hold different responsibilities for different budgets and for different services that are part of the services that can, and will, be provided to any child or family in need of services.

Those departments that hold the majority of these types of budgets are Health and Social Services and Justice, and we continue to work in partnership with those departments.

I will offer to bring back a legislative return to the member opposite that lays out the services and the budget allocations throughout government and will show the commitment from our government to mental health and wellness for students and families.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, my question was specifically: What was the budget within the Department of Education for supports for students at Hidden Valley school to provide the kind of care that the minister has promised?

I appreciate that the government has a broad commitment to mental health across the territory, but my question is



specifically from parents and teachers who have raised this question with me.

How much money is available for these kids to seek counselling, as they are right now and paying out of pocket? Where can we see the amount of money that is actually available in the minister's budget for the commitment that she made?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, the member opposite has asked the same question several times. I will continue to say that no child or family will be left without support. I encourage the member opposite to please provide information to me or to the Department of Education or through the school community consultant so that we can have the information that is needed to help this family or families, as he has described today, to access the supports that they require. I will say a hundred times over that we will not leave any child or family without support.

We can potentially, I guess, do this for a while, but I just want Yukoners to know that we take the issues that have happened at Hidden Valley very seriously. We remain committed to the changes that are required throughout our government. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the mental health and well-being of Yukoners. I can assure the member opposite that the needs of children and families will remain at the centre, and I encourage him to provide us with the information.

**Mr. Dixon:** This is budget debate. I asked a very specific budget question about the money allocated for this particular issue, and the minister was unable to answer. I asked several times, so we can let the record show that.

But the minister is correct that we do have to move on. There are other issues that I need to address, but I will certainly provide the transcripts of this discussion to those affected and let them judge the minister's answers on their own.

I will have to move on, though. I will ask the minister now about Jack Hulland. What is the current status of the Grove Street program? I know that the students who had been in that program, I believe, have all been moved out of Jack Hulland. Where have they been moved to? Will there be students in Grove Street coming back to Jack Hulland next year, and what other information can the minister tell me about the current status of the Grove Street program?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** In terms of where things are at with the Grove Street program, new intakes into the Grove Street program have been placed on hold. As part of the review of inclusive and special education, all shared resource programs in the Yukon, including the PASS program and Grove Street, will be examined to ensure that they are best meeting the needs of students. Those programs may look different going forward, but the Grove Street program intakes have been on hold and will remain on hold.

**Mr. Dixon:** How many students started the school year at Jack Hulland and the Grove Street program?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We are talking about a very small number of children. I want to just be cautious about the confidentiality of the students, and I will say less than five.

**Mr. Dixon:** I believe we talked in the Legislature about it being four, and I don't think that we are breaching

confidentiality by saying that. My understanding is that this is down to zero. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We do not have any children in the Grove Street program. All children who transitioned from Grove Street are being supported in different environments and under specific supports for their individual needs.

**Mr. Dixon:** Will the hold on new entrants to the Grove Street program continue until next year? That is my first question. The second question is: Does that mean that there will be no Grove Street program students at Jack Hulland next school year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The intake for Grove Street is suspended indefinitely. Until we have the review and the work that's being done on inclusive and special education and the review of the shared resource programs, we will not be making any — we'll be waiting for that process to complete in order to inform the next steps going forward on this program and the other shared resource programs.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, I infer from that response that, no, the Grove Street program will not be in operation next year.

The minister has said that program is under review. Can the minister explain the nature of the program review that is being undertaken on Grove Street?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think there are a couple of things here, in terms of the review of the programs that we're speaking about today, that fit in inclusive and special education. In terms of the shared resource programs, we have a couple of things happening. Of course, we have — in the inclusive and special education that I have spoken about, a lot of times here we have a number of communities of inquiry that are underway. One of them that really is very specific to this, updating the inclusive and special education policies — but clearly one of the foundational pieces that we expect to have coming through the community of inquiry very soon is the co-constructing of definitions of inclusive and special education. This will build a new foundation for inclusive education in the territory.

We also have a meta-analysis of all of the reports and anything that has been written and research around the shared resource programs that are under review now, which will inform the next steps going forward.

Again, we want to make sure that we are having alignment with the inclusive and special education review that has been done and the further work that we are doing now in these communities of inquiry to make sure that our resources are going to be deployed in the right way and that the services needed by our students are meeting their needs.

I think that is the underlying intention of taking the time to ensure that we are getting it right and that we are not just making quick decisions that are uninformed. We want to make sure that our partners are part of this, and that is what the communities of inquiry are doing now.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that there is a lot of review going on with regard to special and inclusive education. I appreciate that there is a meta-analysis going on and that there are many communities of inquiry, but my question is specifically: Is the Grove Street program specifically being reviewed?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, it is. Actually, I meant to speak about it when I got back up on my feet the last time, to just make a correction. One of the questions previously was: Will the program be re-initiated or will there be children in Grove Street next year? The member opposite made a statement on my behalf in terms of saying that I had said no. I actually said that we are taking the time to review the shared resource programs and that the Grove Street intake is fully on hold now as that work happens. I am hoping, of course, that what we are steering toward is having a tremendous amount of work done by the next school year, and we will make those determinations through that process. My commitment is always to work with our partners to make sure that we are moving along together in this work around the implementation of the findings of the communities of inquiry and that we are working in partnership.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you. At the start of that answer, the minister said that, yes, there is a review of the Grove Street program. Will that review include consultation with the Jack Hulland school community?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I definitely have had a number of opportunities — last year and this year — to meet with a number of folks from the Jack Hulland school community. I have met with the school council, I have met with the teachers, and I have met with the parents on a number of occasions. I am very committed to doing this work with the Jack Hulland school community. I know that there is a project underway now around the Jack Hulland handbook and the policies that will come out of that around inclusion and safety. I am definitely very committed to working with the school community and doing that in a collaborative way that holds value for everyone who is involved in the work that we're doing around the reviews for the school and how it will impact their community. I remain committed to that.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can I take that as a yes?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes.

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

The Department of Education has launched a review or an investigation at Jack Hulland Elementary School, which involves the hiring of a lawyer to do a review. I would like to ask about the status of that review. Who is the lawyer that they have hired? My understanding was that there was a slight delay due to that lawyer getting sick. Other than that, can the minister give us a timeline of that investigation and when it will be complete? Also, what specifically is that lawyer looking at?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, we are undertaking a review with the Jack Hulland school. Mitha Law Group was engaged to conduct the employer's fact-finding investigation using copies — of course, we had to have duplicate copies of a number of documents and workplace risk assessments because we've had to disclose to the RCMP all of these records. The law group is working with duplicates. Workplace risk assessments and other reports involving the use of holds and isolation rooms over the last five years are being reviewed by this law group.

Workplace risk assessments are required to be completed and submitted to the Student Support Services unit when students become elevated or holds are used.

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

I'll read another question that has been submitted to me. Jack Hulland has an extremely high enrolment due to the impacts of Whistle Bend's growth, and there have been a number of serious incidents over the past two years that could have been better managed if the department had appropriately allocated the necessary resources to the school given the current capacity issues. Will the department commit to allocating additional staff and resources at Jack Hulland for the 2022-23 school year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I just would like to ask a clarifying question — a question for clarity. I'm just wondering if the member opposite is asking about the increase in — is the question about increased enrolment, or is it about workplace risk assessments?

**Mr. Dixon:** The question was: Will the department commit to allocating additional staff and resources for Jack Hulland in the 2022-23 school year? Will there be additional teachers or EAs at the school next year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I will just say that all of our schools in the territory are staffed based on enrolment. Educational assistants and other support staff are based on needs. What we do — and I'm sure the member opposite is aware of this — is that we take the projection around this time of the year, and the school makes best attempts to tell us what the enrolment will be, and then we verify that.

September 30 is the date when we reassess the enrolment, and also in between that time, there is a lot of work that happens between the department and all the individual schools to determine — they may know by then or through that time between the beginning of the school year and September 30, they already know of increases, and so, those adjustments start to happen. Then the educational assistants and other resources are determined by need. Those vary from school to school. Jack Hulland certainly is a school of our many schools that we support and staff, and we will definitely work with the administration within the school and the school council and use those proper avenues to determine the need in Jack Hulland.

**Mr. Dixon:** Unfortunately, for those in the Jack Hulland school community who are listening, I will have to move on, just given where I am at in terms of time.

So, I will move to the plans for the new school in Whitehorse. Obviously, this has come up in Question Period, in the media, and elsewhere. The Minister of Highways and Public Works told the media very clearly that the decision about which school to replace rests with the Minister of Education, and so I would like to ask the Minister of Education which school will be replaced in Whitehorse.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have had an opportunity to speak about this throughout this Sitting already. Our government's commitment is to replace an aging school in Whitehorse. We have \$200,000 in our capital budget that has been identified for preliminary construction and initial design for an existing, aging Whitehorse replacement school.

Conversations with our school communities is definitely part of our process. A final decision has not been made yet. It's

still within our internal process, which is the Cabinet process that is underway now.

**Mr. Dixon:** When will a decision be made?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, we have made a commitment in our five-year capital plan to replace an aging Whitehorse school. This decision is within Cabinet right now. I am not able to give a specific timeline of when this decision will be communicated. When I have that information, I will be sure to inform the public and our partners first, of course, that we are ready to make that announcement.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can the minister clarify what she just said? She said that the decision is before Cabinet right now. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, to date, I don't believe that there has been specific consultation with school councils. I know that at least the École Whitehorse Elementary School Council has been seeking information for some time about enrolment trends, et cetera. If the decision is currently before Cabinet, can we assume then that the decision will be communicated to the school councils after it is made?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I certainly have had a number of discussions with school councils across the territory. Every single one has included a discussion around infrastructure and need. We make capital planning decisions based on current information and on facility assessments, and we recognize, of course, that there are number of aging school facilities in the City of Whitehorse and some throughout the territory as well. We continue conversations that include all of our school communities. My commitment is to continue to have those discussions.

I would note that there are a number of Cabinet types of committees that we have. We have the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning. We have regular Cabinet. We have Management Board. We have the Cabinet Committee on Legislation. So, there are a number of Cabinet committees that we work with that have different types of roles that help us to move projects along. I can tell you that the decision around next steps in this process is currently before the Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister would be presenting the document as the sponsoring minister to that Cabinet committee. Does that document include a recommendation — a recommended school from the minister?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I know that the member opposite, at one time, sat in Cabinet and knows very well that the content of Cabinet documents is confidential — and for good reason.

I will reiterate, since the member opposite has said that there are a number of folks listening to these debates, that our commitment is to replace an elementary school in Whitehorse and that we've allocated dollars through our five-year capital plan for that. I think that this is the most important information.

We will continue working with our school communities. I have not had an opportunity to work closely with the member opposite, but I certainly know that what Yukoners know about me is that I always work in a collaborative way, and I work in

partnership and bring everyone into the room who I can bring into the room. I will continue doing my work in that way.

This is a Committee of the Whole debate that has a lot of edge to it today, and I recognize it and I feel it. I know that the member opposite is trying to get me to potentially make announcements on the floor of the Legislature in Committee of the Whole, and I will not do that.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. White:** It's a pleasure today to be joining the minister and her officials in the capacity of having this conversation around the 2022-23 budget. There have been questions asked already today, and some might touch back, and then there will be others. I think that we will weave our way through the educational world today.

The first question I want to start with is actually around specifically the budget allocation for the specialized teacher for autistic supports for schools. If the minister could just start by kind of walking me through what that means, and then I will ask additional questions.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. I will start framing it out a little bit. In 2019, the auditor's audit and the final report and review of inclusive and special education told us that we have to rethink how we are supporting students and delivering timely, effective supports for their learning needs.

There is a growing need for specialized programming support to students on the autism spectrum across the territory. The Department of Education is piloting an itinerant teacher for autism, based from the Student Support Services unit. We are continuing with efforts to recruit a qualified candidate for this position right now. We have run the competition a couple of times.

The itinerant teacher for autism will assist staff in developing, implementing, documenting, and evaluating strategies outlined in students' programming plans to support success in both inclusive and individualized program settings. This teacher for autism will also be responsible for determining the direct needs of Yukon educators for further professional development in the area of support for students on the autism spectrum.

I can continue to build on that, but that is basically — it is new. It is something that is being piloted right now — and, I think, a really important and valued resource.

Maybe I will just stop right there and see which questions you have further around this.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

My preference is always to have short exchanges just so that I don't forget where we are or what I might have missed. If the minister is open to those kinds of exchanges, I would appreciate that.

I appreciate that the position has been put out multiple times, looking for the right candidate, but I also know that one school specifically is really hopeful for having that teacher — which would be Hidden Valley. So, if we continue to try to hire for that position and we don't get the right applicant, what is the status for autistic kids at Hidden Valley who are waiting for that professional to come to help assist in their day-to-day learning?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** This is an important pilot project. We are very committed to ensuring that we find the right skillset — the pilot project — and that it does not take away from other specialized supports that are offered. We intend to have this position, at least initially, work out of Hidden Valley Elementary School — or other schools — from the Student Support Services unit.

I think that evaluation criteria will be established, and we'll check in — once we have someone in place, of course — at the six-month point and then evaluate at one year. Many of our students who are on IEPs are also, if the need is there, assigned an EA — educational assistant — and/or other supports that are identified in the individual education plan. We'll continue to work with the school council around this, but that is really what our hope is — that we'll determine that with the school community, with the school council, in terms of embedding that position, at least initially, at Hidden Valley Elementary School.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. Is there intention of allocating funding for a classroom at that school as well? One of the concerns that has been highlighted by parents is that they would like to see a small inclusive classroom, one that's more specifically designed for autistic kids, as opposed to — they used the comparison of Grove Street. So, is there an intention of making sure that funding is available to get proper classroom space for that program?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question; it is a good question. It is exactly the analysis that we hope will come from the autism specialist in terms of making those types of recommendations that will help children who are on the autism spectrum thrive. That is really what the intent is — and that we would take that and work with other school communities to apply that.

I just want to — sometimes I wonder about what folks know about the supports that are in place now. I mean, this is an additional, over and above — and a pilot that we think has a lot of promise and will be trying something new — and working, of course, with our partners. That is something that I didn't say — working with Autism Yukon and working with other partners to make sure that we have that whole view on it, but the positive intervention coach works with the students right now. That is something that is happening now, and we have 11 children on the autism spectrum at Hidden Valley alone.

Once we have those recommendations — if there are infrastructure needs or those types of needs in our schools —

we will work with our school councils. I know that we have a number of schools that are coming on — and the First Nation School Board. Those will all be things that they can determine, as well, within their school infrastructure. I know that we are going to probably have that and a number of other recommendations coming from the specialist.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

Just knowing that the minister said that the job posting has been posted for a while but there haven't been suitable applicants, can the minister let me know a bit about what the department is looking for in this specialized teacher?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** One of the things that I do want to point out — and I can return with the full job posting because we have posted it twice, and now it is posted until it is filled. We have some confidence that we will be able to find the right candidate.

In terms of the special skills that we are looking for, we are looking for someone with a really specific and strong background in special education — very specialized in terms of an individual who can teach the teachers as well. That is very important — a specialty in facilitating professional learning, behavioural planning, applied behavioural analysis, strategies for developing communications, programming experience, working in team-based environments, and data collection and evaluation. We really want to have somebody with a skillset that can bring us the analysis and strong recommendations and be able to work with us on how to work with all of our school communities, so it would be dynamic.

I do want to say that this pilot project came out of work that we did directly with parents and the school community. I definitely hold my hands up to all of those who have thought through this and were able to put forward a viable option for us to pilot.

We posted it right away, last fall, and just haven't been able to find the right candidate, but we feel confident now that there is interest and that we'll be able to fill it with this current posting.

I can return, if you like, with the actual job posting. That is easy. I can bring it back in a legislative return.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I am capable of looking for it too.

I guess, mostly, the reason I wanted the minister to talk about the specialized needs was just to get a better idea, on the floor here and in the record, about what we're looking for.

I think there are lots of families — in my experience, when we talk about disability, the fit is often more important than whatever experience comes. Some people are naturals when it comes to doing the work that's required. By that, I mean the support, the coaching, the education — those aspects.

So, sometimes, if you are looking for the data analysis more than a person's ability to work with the kids we're talking about, then — I hope we don't miss that opportunity because it's focused on that. I just want to say that I hope the person we find is the one who is best suited to work with the kids who are intended for this program — understanding that sometimes all of those boxes might not be checked, but the ones that are

checked are with really big colourful stars and big check marks, as opposed to small check marks across the board.

I was really lucky in my early years in this position. I was not the Education critic from 2011 into 2016.

Actually, it was Jim Tredger, and Jim had a long history as an educator in the territory, including as a principal. One of the real assets that I learned from Jim in his time here was just about the different tools available to families as they navigated the education system. A really big one that he was a big proponent for was the Education Appeal Tribunal. His reason for highlighting and holding up that one is — I am just reading from the website: “The Appeal Tribunal functions as a board independently of the government. It may hear appeals arising from departmental, school or school council decisions. This includes decisions such as those affecting special needs students, suspensions, student records and locally developed courses of study. The Appeal Tribunal hears appeals from parents and students who wish to go beyond the Department of Education to resolve a dispute. In determining the outcome of an appeal, the Appeal Tribunal considers the educational interests of the child, the impact on all other students and any other relevant factors.”

The reason why Jim held this one up is that, if a person went through the Department of Education to try to get the supports and services that they needed for a student and it wasn't going anywhere, this was the ultimate — this was where you would go. He walked a lot of people through this process. The reason I have any knowledge about the Education Appeal Tribunal is just because of Jim.

One of my concerns is that, if I look at current appointments, currently the position of the chair has expired. It expired on March 13 of this year. My concern with that is that, knowing that someone has put in an appeal to the Education Appeal Tribunal, what they have heard back is that there is currently no chair, and without a chair, it can't go forward. The way that this tribunal works, as the minister knows, is that it is a ministerial appointment. So, there is an appointment process — they are appointed by the minister. When does the minister intend to appoint a chair to the Education Appeal Tribunal?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I absolutely agree. The Education Appeal Tribunal plays a critical role in giving parents the ability to appeal education decisions, such as suspensions or individualized education plans that they may disagree with and other matters as well, as the member has pointed out. I think that it is an important tool.

The chair of the tribunal also declared a conflict with the current appeal before the tribunal and then had indicated that she would not be seeking reassignment at the end of the appointment. We have worked hard to advertise. That advertisement has closed. We have a number of great candidates who have come forward, and we will be making those appointments very soon.

Also, we now have a member who has agreed to take on the chair role. So, I am really happy about that. It has been a worrisome aspect for me. I have been concerned and not wanting to hold up any matters for families. We definitely have spent — the team has worked hard — in Education and here in

our office — to make sure that we have a full slate of members on this tribunal and chair.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

Also, from one of my colleagues — one of her favourite expressions was: “Justice delayed is justice denied.” So, the reason why I wanted to ask about that chair position is because, until someone is able to fulfill that, if they feel that is the way they need to go, knowing that it is not — it wasn't peopled — meant that they were being denied — it was being delayed.

Another concern that was highlighted is that the secretary registrar is an arm's-length position that is contracted, in my understanding, through the Department of Education. So, has that expired contract either been renewed or has another one been issued?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I do not have this particular detailed information with me today, so I will bring back a return to the Legislature.

Just going back a little bit, in terms of the *Education Act*, I wanted to say one thing — and I missed this, in terms of the last question. It has been identified that the *Education Act* doesn't allow for the appointment of an interim chair when a conflict has been declared. We are looking at options to address this, moving forward. I think that it is a key and critical point. Although I can't talk, of course, about details of any matters that are before the tribunal — for privacy and confidentiality — I just want to flag that as an area that we are looking at right now, but I'll bring that information back around the registrar.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that answer from the minister. It's also just to highlight that — again, I am just going to go back to one of Lois Moorcroft's favourite quotes, which is: “Justice delayed is justice denied.” So, once that process gets started — I was looking for a timeline on the website, but there isn't one. My hope is that it's not in perpetuity — that once it starts, we know that the process starts and it's clearly defined.

I do thank the minister for getting back to me and making sure that there is a registrar or secretary who is able to support the good work of that board.

Today, in response to the ministerial statement that you gave, I did ask the question about the Yukon grant and whether or not that program is being assessed or has been looked at. The reason why — I have had lots of conversations in this House with the previous Minister of Education. I come from a trades background, and not only do I come from a trades background, but I went through a private institution. I went to a school that cost close to \$10,000 in four months, but I left that school and worked in the industry from that point forward. I was able to access a couple of achievement awards — if I calculated it, it would probably work out to \$750 — and a very small portion of my Yukon grant money. For the rest of it, I worked full time when I went to school.

The Yukon grant program is incredible. It's set up to facilitate a person's ability to access post-secondary education, but what it's not set up for, I'm going to say, is for education as it currently stands or maybe even the job world as it currently stands.

So, one of the problems that I've highlighted here before is that the Yukon grant program doesn't recognize education programs per se.

One of the things that I've championed here is that, if a Yukon student has access to this program — and it's a finite amount of funding, and it clearly defines what you are able to do and how long you're able to access it for — then why is the Yukon government limiting people's ability? If someone wants to be a commercial pilot and they are willing to go all in and they are willing to do the \$80,000 to \$100,000 worth of education to get there, being able to access \$25,000 from the Yukon grant is a big deal because then you are taking on less debt.

Yes, it's not traditional. No, it's not going to take four years to do. No, it's not going to be on a semester basis. No, it's not going to be divided into that. But if our ultimate goal is making sure that we have productive humans on the other side, I might challenge that becoming a commercial pilot is as valuable, if not more valuable, than a degree in political science.

I had a friend who had a degree in political science and he worked at McDonald's after. So, that's the joke. He'll understand — Dominic will understand the joke.

So, has the department undertaken an assessment of the Yukon grant and the requirements for students to access it?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Important questions regarding adult learners — and I know that we just made some shifts in terms of certain programs moving over to Economic Development, but the ones that we retained at the Department of Education are specifically for the areas that you are asking about today. Currently, we have a few ways in which we support adult learners. The Department of Education supports adult learners through the student financial assistance, including the Canada student loan and Yukon grant. I think that is the line right there. We have to follow the Canada student loan — on the Yukon grant. Then we also have the Yukon bursaries, which have all kinds of individual criteria.

The Yukon apprenticeship and Working Up — in terms of Yukon apprenticeship, this year alone, we have 139 apprentices funded through that program. That includes funding for their needs when they are in educational programs and are not earning funds. That's definitely an important support that we provide.

Then we have the Working Up program, which provides broad support for individuals to advance toward their labour market goals. We have 40 individuals funded to date in 2021-22. This is where we have the most flexibility to support adult learners. We also have the summer career placement and student training employment programs where we create work experience opportunities for students. We have 132 positions created through both of those programs.

In terms of flexibility — oh, this is where I was going to go. The total amount that we retained under the apprenticeship training and student financial assistance is \$3,876,044. So, that is for the O&M to deliver the programs. We definitely remain committed, and I am sure that you may have had questions — or will have questions — for the Minister of Economic Development on the other two areas that have been shifted over

to Economic Development. I like the examples you gave around your friend who is in political science and the comparison to trades.

My son is just graduating this year from political science, and my older son is a tradesperson, an electrician, so I get that. There is that difference, for sure, but I think that these programs that we now have and how we have re-worked them to best disburse the funding for students and to support them wherever they are going to be successful in the labour market — I believe that we have some balance here in terms of academic and trades. We know that trades and other training to move into the labour market is incredibly important and valuable. We agree on that front, in terms of your build-up to the question around this particular funding.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that, and I appreciate her using her sons as examples. I know which one will be giving the loans and which one will be needing the loans, just based on my own experience.

So, when I was talking about the Yukon grant, I wasn't specifically talking about adult learners. I was actually just talking about high school graduates, so I reference flight school. The reason for this is that a number of years ago — and I would have used these examples at the time. There is the Canadian Aviation College, for example, out BC way, which is a nine-month program. So, a nine-month program and you get your commercial pilot's licence at the end. You know, it has a list of the criteria. It has a list of the classes and the teaching methods, and the tuition fee is \$42,900 before taxes. It talks about other fees for just about \$1,400. But the thing is, the way Yukon's education funding exists, even though the Yukon grant — when it talks about the grant — it says: "Students can receive up to 170 weeks of funding over their lifetime. You must continue to meet eligibility requirements."

It uses an example. It says: "If you study from September to April inclusive, your school year is 34 weeks long. The calculation is 34 weeks x \$145 per week = \$4,930."

So, that's great for people who are attending an academic post-secondary institution, but it, for example, doesn't work with pilot school, which is nine months long in a row, and it doesn't meet the requirements laid out under the Yukon grant, despite the fact that, at the end of it, you are employable; you will get a job in that industry.

Today, I mentioned that there are programs through the Yukon University that don't qualify. For example, at the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining, underground mining operations don't qualify for financial support in this way — not for full coverage. It talks about the admissions requirements. It talks about the graduation requirements. The tuition cost is \$4,400, plus technology fees. So, all in, that program is \$4,720.

The thing is, this is a program that is 100 percent training students for employment, so much so that it does a two-weeks-in, two-weeks-out program structure to get people ready for what to expect when you work a cycle at an operating mine. Which, I have to say, if no one has done two weeks in, two weeks — or rotations like that, there is a reason — that's fantastic — there is a reason to get someone used to that because, as a person who used to work in the mines, two weeks

on, two weeks off almost felt like a vacation, but the three in and one out was definitely harder.

So, there are programs at Yukon University that don't meet the requirements for the Yukon grant funding. So, we have Yukon kids who, for example, want to work in mine remediation or environmental monitoring, for example. Those programs don't work under this definition.

So, the question I continue to ask is: When is the Department of Education going to look at that? Because it even says — when you go into the Yukon grant, it does say that you can — it lets you know that you can combine it with, for example — it says that students may receive the Yukon grant along with other student financial assistance, but again, you must meet those requirements.

So, if we use me as an example, when I went to culinary school, I got a very minimal amount for the Yukon grant because of how short the program was. It didn't come remotely close to covering the cost. I accessed student loans and I worked full time.

I don't wish that on anybody. Maybe it was character-building, but I can tell you that it was not a pleasant time. I certainly didn't live the college experience with that, but my point is that education has changed. I think that, at this point, my expectation is that we are looking to not only support academic programs but also non-academic programs.

I am just asking if there is an intention within the Department of Education to review the Yukon grant to make sure that it is accessible to more students, even including if someone goes into a program where they access the full 170-week funding that they are entitled to — I would imagine that people understand that, once you have accessed it, it's gone. Even if you do it for four years, you know, once you access it, it's gone. Is there an intention to review that program?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question and the clarity.

In terms of when a high school student is leaving high school, they are considered an adult learner from that point forward. The two programs that I talked — well, three — but the two specifically that are specific to what you're talking about here — asking about today — the Yukon apprenticeship and particularly the Working Up program — this is a new program that provides the greatest flexibility. The example that you just gave in terms of that sort of mining training that's not an accredited program is something that could be supported through this type of — or this particular program.

So, we've already — we have looked at it. In terms of the Yukon grant, it does have to align with the Canada student loan criteria. That's a discussion we can potentially bring up to Canada and have that discussion at that level to look at what, if any, changes can be made there in terms of the — and that is definitely something that I can have discussions with my colleague, the Minister of Economic Development, on as we move forward, because we are working closely together on this new shift that we've made in terms of building our strategy going forward. That's something we can talk about, whether that's something that we want to bring up to Canada to have that discussion around the Yukon grant and how we can

potentially make shifts to look at the future of our workforce — labour market needs and goals.

Again, if you know of folks who are struggling with funding in any programs that are shorter term or not those full degree programs — or long term — please have them reach out to the Department of Education — in this particular program, Working Up — and they can have a discussion with folks there on what their options are and how we can support them.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that clarification. So, I guess that, as soon as we graduate, we are all adult learners, which I do appreciate.

Just on the website, I can't actually find the Working Up application — when it talks about applying for financial supports for students — and so possibly it is just because I haven't looked for it on the website before, but I do not see it as I am scrolling through. I will just ask the minister to point it out to me at some point, and I would appreciate that.

Another topic that I have discussed previously with the previous minister — and I am going to bring it again — is about the student eligibility. I appreciate that often we think that young people are dependent on their parents and live with their parents, but that is not the case. One very specific case that I will talk about — and the appeal did happen — is a young person who lived on their own after they graduated from high school. Their parent left the territory. The young person stayed here, and the young person maintained residency, paid taxes, had a health care card and driver's licence, and applied for the Yukon grant ahead of school, like they were supposed to, before they left the territory, and it was denied because their parent had left the territory. But this young person was not being supported by their parent. They were independent. They needed that financial support to be able to attend school.

So, when we look at eligibility, it says things like — well, first of all, it assumes that a student is a dependant, and it says where to apply as a dependent student. Even as an independent student, it does say that you should apply in the jurisdiction where you have lived in the past 12 months in row, but I do know that there have been problems with that. So, if the minister can just help me understand.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, dependent students, under the Yukon grant, are students who are pursuing post-secondary education within four years of leaving high school and have been in the labour force full time for two 12-month periods or more, have never been married or in a common-law relationship, or have never been a single parent with legal custody and financial responsibility for supporting a child.

Dependent students apply for funding in the territory or province where their family has most recently maintained a family home. If a dependent student's parents are separated or divorced, the student is required to apply in the province or territory of the parent with whom the student normally lives. If a dependent student does not live with their parent, they should apply for funding in the province or territory of residence of the parent who financial supports them.

In Yukon, and I think everywhere else, there is an appeal process. We do have a Student Financial Assistance Committee

that can hear appeals very quickly and make very timely decisions based on the circumstances.

Again, all of the structure of the Yukon grant is based on the Canada loans program. That's why it is so specific and it does speak to the province and territory aspect of it.

I recognize though that there are those times when circumstances happen that are not planned for or there are changes. We have definitely had different circumstances during COVID-19 where people have not been able to travel back home, back to the territory, and so they couldn't meet that requirement of having been in the Yukon for a period of time because of the restrictions. Those are the types of situations that the Student Financial Assistance Committee hears rather quickly and can turn around a decision on them to make sure that students are supported where they're at.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

What is the typical timeline for an appeal process for the Yukon grant?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** It depends on what the issue is. We do try to resolve them at the department level quickly, depending on what the issue is. If it is something that cannot be resolved, it will be moved to the Student Financial Assistance Committee. They meet on a monthly basis, but if there was something that was urgent, I think that we would be able to bring the committee together rather quickly. This is a very committed group of folks who definitely are committed to the work that they do in this committee and know the importance of it — and I think that they know the pressures that students have and the desperation that can happen in a moment, being a student. We have all been there, I think, where you are depending on something, and if it's not there, then it causes hardship. That is why we have this committee that can resolve matters rather quickly.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. It is good to know that the committee meets monthly and can hear those appeals.

I know that I was contacted last year by a student whose grant was very late in being disbursed — so much so that they had quite a lot of penalties, because they had to put everything on their credit card because they are not able to access financial resources from, for example, families or friends, and so they had to cover that themselves. When that happens, when it's no mistake from the student and that disbursement is much later than generally happens, what is a student's recourse? What actions can they take?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I know that we did have to make some changes to the administration of the Yukon grant as a response to the pandemic. Training Programs worked with Finance to implement a direct deposit system. There were some delays with the addition of direct deposits. Students applying for the Yukon grant in person or by distance due to COVID-19 are now required to provide confirmation of full-time post-secondary enrolment just prior to each funding disbursement. So, that did cause some — and we're not aware of huge delays, but I really would encourage that student to talk to Training Programs and work with them to resolve those extra fees.

The other thing that happened as a result of the pandemic and the need to move into remote learning — we did provide all students on the Yukon grant an additional \$500 for technical support in response to the extra needs that students had during this time.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

I did, under the yukon.ca website, put in the search for Working Up and I did find it. Is that program under the Department of Education?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, it is.

**Ms. White:** I guess, then, that part of the next question would be: Why isn't that in the funding? When you are under the Department of Education and you are seeking funding assistance, this program doesn't come up. This is actually under "Employment and Work Programs" with other such things such as "Apply on a job", "Employment standards", "Ethics, behaviour and culture", "Find a government job", "Find a volunteer opportunity", and it goes on like that.

So, when the minister was saying that this was a program that could work for people, one of my concerns is that, when it talks about eligibility, it says — and I quote: "You cannot be 'self-sufficient' in the labour market. This means you cannot get and keep employment that meets your: basic needs; and the needs of your dependents. A case manager will assist you to develop an application that shows this."

So, someone who wants to be an underground miner and who wants to take a program from the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining up at the university, it doesn't mean that they can't get a job and they can't meet their basic needs. They just want a different job, which isn't covered under other funding streams. So, I guess my concern is that if Working Up is one of those avenues, but it says that the way you have to qualify is that you cannot get and keep employment that meets your basic needs, can the minister help me understand how, for a person who is employable but wants to change career paths — for example, wants to be an underground miner, an environmental monitor, or maybe wants to be a commercial pilot — this program would support them?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question and for identifying that in the way that you did. In discussion with the department — I mean, we are in a transitional period right now and updating the comms profile around this particular program. I think that the key thing to note is that it is about improving employability. That gives the most flexibility in this in that the intent is to meet the needs of the person or individual seeking enhanced training to move into something different or enhance their employability. I think that this is the key piece of it. That is what brings that flexibility to this particular program. We are definitely working on updating the comms profile. It is part of this new shift and move into the labour market — really meeting our labour market goals and helping people advance where they want to and need to.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. So, is that an indication that the description of this program will change in the future?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Yes, that is correct. It will be updated to have a focus on learners. This is part of the transition



that is happening now. It did come into effect on April 1. That work is happening right now in terms of that — updating the comms profile and ensuring that it's clear and focused on the training needs and improving employability of Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. I'm a bit mortified to admit that I didn't know that program existed, and I spend a lot of time trying to help people access funding for education purposes. This might be one where the wizards in the IT department can have multiple headings in multiple locations. Again, it isn't listed under "Financial supports for students". I'm sure that I'm not the only one who didn't know about it, and I do appreciate the minister walking us through what that's about and what that's for. I do appreciate that.

Deputy Chair, I probably have about — well, I don't want to exaggerate, but many more questions to go. I do appreciate that the time is 5:23 p.m. right now, so instead of us leaving on a cliffhanger of a question to come back to, I move that you report progress.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:24 p.m.*

### The following document was filed April 7, 2022:

35-1-64

*Becoming — Strategic Plan 2022-2027 — Yukon University (McLean)*





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 64

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, April 11, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, April 11, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** The Chair will make a statement regarding a trend that the Chair has observed regarding the use of the rubric “Tabling Returns and Documents”. During Tabling Returns and Documents on Thursday, April 7, 2022, the Minister of Health and Social Services tabled a legislative return that was nominally in response to an oral question asked by the Leader of the Third Party the preceding day. In fact, the legislative return was intended to repudiate the preamble to the oral question that had been delivered by the Leader of the Third Party. The attachment to the legislative return was composed entirely of quotes by the minister as excerpted from Hansard.

The same day during “Tabling Returns and Documents”, the Leader of the Third Party tabled pages from Hansard from a range of dates to draw attention to quotes by the Minister of Health and Social Services.

Other members have also stood under the rubric “Tabling Returns and Documents” to table Hansard excerpts this Sitting. Hansard is already within the public record of the Assembly and, as such, it is not necessary to table Hansard excerpts or pages of Hansard. The Clerks do not hold documents that are photocopies or excerpts of Hansard in the records of the Assembly as the complete Hansard already exists.

With respect to the use by the Minister of Health and Social Services of the legislative return that provided Hansard quotes by way of a response, this is an inappropriate use of a legislative return. This document will not be entered into the Assembly’s working papers, and I am returning it to the member. Legislative returns should be used to answer questions by members, not to correct another member’s record as perceived by a minister.

As well, on March 31, 2022, the Chair delivered a statement regarding the description that can be provided when tabling a document under the rubric “Tabling Returns and Documents”. As mentioned in that statement: “The rubric of tabling returns and documents in the Daily Routine is not an opportunity for debate or for members to make statements. Members should restrict their description of documents to be tabled to the item’s date, title of the document or article, or a brief description if the document does not have a title.

“Descriptions should not constitute commentary or comparisons. If members wish to make members’ statements, then members should change the Standing Orders accordingly.”

However, in the sitting days following this statement, the Chair has observed that the Minister of Community Services tabled documents that meet the letter but not the spirit of the Speaker’s statement. This includes the minister tabling on

April 5 and April 7 newly created materials with titles designed specifically to form a narrative. This practice ignores the spirit of the Speaker’s statement and should stop. These documents are not going to form part of the working papers of the Assembly.

As I have advised members previously, and will use this opportunity to strongly advise members again, if members would like to deliver members’ statements, provisions for which exist in most other Canadian legislative assemblies, then members should add a provision for this rubric to the rules.

Thank you for your attention.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** For the tribute to National Wildlife Week, we have a number of guests in the gallery. From the Department of Environment, we have Christine Cleghorn, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Environmental Sustainability, and Kevin Johnstone, the manager of field operations for the south region.

As well, from CPAWS we have Candace Dow, who is the community outreach coordinator, and Maegan Elliott, who is the conservation coordinator — if we could welcome those individuals to the gallery.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would ask my colleagues to help welcome a number of special guests who are attending for the ministerial statement later on the Order Paper.

I apologize if I have missed anyone. I know there were lots of folks coming in at the last moment. These students are from the Wood Street school:

Lahela Reid, Jesse Amos, Teagan Ewing, Heidi Vallier, Bria Hindson, Amelie Guilbeault, Em Baker, Keiran Cowie, and Menna Zanger. Welcome. I’m happy that you are here today.

*Applause*

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of National Wildlife Week**

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise today to pay tribute to National Wildlife Week. National Wildlife Week is an annual celebration of the natural world and the plants and animals that live in it. It is an occasion to raise awareness of the need for environmental conservation and actions that we can take as stewards of this land. Together as Yukoners, it is important to recognize and appreciate the environment where we are fortunate to live.

Each year, National Wildlife Week gives us an opportunity to celebrate the Yukon environment and the wildlife with which we share this land. Yukon is home to 74 mammal species, 36 fish species, 239 bird species, four amphibians, more than

1,700 types of plants, 551 lichen species, 440 fungi species, and over 6,500 invertebrate species — insects, spiders, and the like.

We are fortunate to derive many foods, services, and recreational and cultural practices from the biodiversity around us. With spring comes bears, waking from hibernation. Although we must remain bear-aware year-round, spring is one of the most common times that bears are looking for food and a good time to check your property for attractants. Put away your bird feeder, clean up and contain any recycling or garbage, and turn on your electric fencing around your livestock.

Foxes are another wildlife common to Yukoners, and kits are often seen in the spring. We must remember not to feed foxes or any wildlife. Foxes are opportunists and they will take food if it is offered, but they are perfectly capable of finding their own food and do not need our help. There is a cost to feeding wildlife — a cost to the animal, a cost to the ecosystem, and, if you are caught by a conservation officer, a cost to you as well.

In April, we are lucky enough to see thousands of swans, ducks, and geese rest and feed on M'Clintock Bay, a stopover on their long migration to northern nesting grounds. The Celebration of Swans month-long spring celebration is our kickoff to a full year of wildlife viewing programs that aim to provide free, informative, and interesting events. This includes our wildlife discovery series in the summer and winter and our BioBlitz event that will be held in Beaver Creek this year. These programs offer the chance to get up close as stewards of the land and the wildlife that we protect. By doing this, we foster recognition and support for sustainable conservation practices so that future generations can enjoy these experiences.

I would like to recognize the many people and organizations involved in making these initiatives possible — events that continually support, protect, and bring awareness about Yukon's biodiversity. Conserving and protecting wildlife and their habitat not only saves animals and beautiful natural spaces for us to enjoy, it also saves our future.

I encourage everyone to take some time to get outside and take advantage of the great wildlife viewing in our territory. Let's use National Wildlife Week as a reminder to do what we can to conserve and protect the wildlife that makes Yukon so special.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April 10 to 16 as National Wildlife Week here in Canada. This week was created in 1974 by the National Wildlife Federation with the goal of raising awareness about the importance of wildlife and wildlife conservation across the country.

The Yukon is home to a thriving and diverse population of wildlife. Our wildlife is a large part of the appeal of the Yukon, part of what makes our home unique, natural, and beautiful. Animals are a living part of our mountain ranges, valleys, lakes, and streams. They play a major role in maintaining a balanced ecosystem and also as an important source of food for many of us throughout the territory. However, the future of our wildlife relies heavily on human management and on the work of those

committed to actively protect and enhance or balance their populations. We live in their backyard and continue to work to ensure that human-animal conflict is kept to a minimum. There are a number of Yukon organizations dedicated to conservation efforts here in the Yukon and to advocating public awareness around ethical and responsible harvesting practices.

Their efforts help to ensure that our native Yukon species continue to thrive. So, our thanks to Yukon First Nations, the Department of Environment, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, our renewable resources councils, and our hunters and trappers who are front-line stewards on the land. We would also like to recognize organizations like the Yukon Wild Sheep Foundation, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, Yukon Trappers Association, Yukon Outfitters Association, Yukon Wildlife Preserve, the Yukon Conservation Society, CPAWS, Ducks Unlimited, and our local bird clubs — they are awesome — and many others for the pivotal roles that they play in wildlife conservation in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, as legislators in this House, we need to ensure that wildlife policy and management practices are implemented based on the best science available and demonstrate the constructive roles that all of the organizations I was discussing play in the management of wildlife.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise to pay tribute to the incredible wildlife of the Yukon. Sixty years ago, Rachel Carson wrote *Silent Spring*, a book that catalyzed a movement demanding action to protect birds. When I first read it more than 40 years after it was first written, I was struck by how familiar it felt. Even though its specific concern, DDT use, had been addressed, the impending disaster of wildlife lost felt just as relevant.

We're now at the 60-year anniversary of this book and still not much has changed. While there have been many individual victories in wildlife conservation, we are still facing disaster. We are still struggling with a broken relationship with wildlife and our mutual home.

There are many ways of thinking about wildlife: as a resource, as critical components of healthy ecosystems, and as our relations. How we frame our relationship with wildlife impacts the way in which we approach our decisions around wildlife. It's our responsibility to make sure that we make room at the table for many ways of thinking and knowing. It is also our responsibility to make sure that our relationship with wildlife continues on for future generations.

Wildlife populations in the Yukon are under threat from everything from habitat degradation to change in climate. Protecting them will require swift action on many fronts. It will require legislation such as laws protecting species at risk and important habitats like wetlands. It will require changes to policy for everything from hunting regulations to climate action. It will require systemic changes to prioritize a sustainable relationship with wildlife and the world that is home to us all. All of this will require bold leadership.

There are many people in the Yukon doing that work to build a sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship with wildlife. My colleagues have named many of them. I won't go through them again, but thank you so much to all of them. Your work is so appreciated.

If anyone is looking for a fun and safe way to engage more with wildlife, I would recommend the McIntyre Creek wildlife camera. You can see its footage on CPAWS' social media and join in the guessing games and wildlife trivia. I truly believe that a healthy relationship with wildlife starts with curiosity and respect, and the wildlife cam fosters both.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a *CBC News* article dated January 24, 2014 entitled "Yukon cancels \$13M affordable housing program".

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling *The Globe and Mail* article entitled "On mental-health care for the working class, Canada is failing — and Canadians are being failed".

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

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to table information about the government's plan for opening a walk-in clinic, including the following:

- (1) estimated costs of operating the clinic;
- (2) details showing the extent to which this facility will result in increased services to patients by local doctors; and
- (3) estimates indicating the expected reduction in physician services at family practices and the emergency room resulting from a reallocation of existing resources.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to appoint a chair of the Education Appeal Tribunal and ensure that a contract is issued promptly for a secretary/registrar of the Education Appeal Tribunal.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to inform this House when species at risk legislation will be introduced.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to call witnesses to appear before the Legislative Assembly outside of sitting days and in coordination with opposition parties.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Wood Street Centre dress code

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today to acknowledge the students who brought forward their concerns about the dress code for the music, art and drama program at Wood Street school. I was able to meet directly with these students a few weeks ago, and I want to hold them up today for their courage.

These students found their voices and used them to speak their truth, not only for themselves, but on behalf of their peers. They used their voices to come together to express their concerns, raising an important issue to our attention.

Today, I'm pleased to say that the school now has a new co-created dress code. The students, principal, and superintendent worked together to ensure that this new dress code reflects the program goals and upholds the dignity of students and staff. The new dress code shows that Wood Street school administration is listening to student voices and including their perspectives in an updated inclusive dress code.

I'm also happy to share that the new dress code uses gender-neutral language. Gender-neutral language matters. It helps people feel safe expressing who they are and promotes a larger social change that will better our communities and promote gender inclusivity and equality.

Thank you to these students who have set an example for others across the territory. It is important that we continue to show up, stand up, and speak up. It is young leaders today who are pushing governments and leaders around the world to challenge societal norms. This action is making our community stronger, more inclusive, and accepting and safe for everyone, regardless of their gender, sexuality, race, religion, or the way they look or dress. Leaders today have a responsibility to hold up the perspectives of youth and ensure that they have a seat at the table, because the decisions we make today will impact these generations the most.

I'm bringing this issue to all of our attention today because I want to ensure that we are building up students across the territory. As citizens of democracy, we need to hear one another. We have heard these students and we have worked with them to make the changes needed to ensure that their voices are reflected in the school dress code. It is imperative that we continue to promote school environments where our students feel safe, comfortable, heard, and respected.

Thank you again to the Wood Street school students for raising this issue and working collaboratively with the school administration to solve it.

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the students of the Wood Street school for bringing this important issue forward. They certainly participated in the democratic process by voicing their concern to the decision-

makers. They also held a very public rally that got the attention of a lot of people, including the decision-makers. I am pleased to see that those decision-makers listened. As we just heard from the minister, the department worked with students to come up with a solution. That solution is an updated and inclusive dress code.

However, as we know, the department is in charge of many other schools across the territory that are facing the same issue. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us if the dress code policy at other schools across the territory will be updated because, while this may have been brought to our recent attention by the students of the Wood Street school, it has certainly started a conversation across the territory. We thank those students for starting this conversation. This is what democracy is all about and the core of the work that we do as MLAs: listening to your constituents about issues important to them and taking action to find a potential solution.

**Ms. White:** The first time I learned of the Wood Street dress code and the effect that it was having on students was on March 2 when I read the following statement from students to their teachers — and I quote: “We believe that MAD should be a place where we can be ourselves, be comfortable expressing ourselves, be safe, and kick-ass in a non-hurtful and non-judgemental environment.

“We believe that the dress code is humiliating and shaming us. We also feel that this dress code is sexualizing us and reinforcing the gender binary and is a form of sexualized and gendered harassment.

“Things we would like to address: the existence of the oppressive and sexist dress code; the humiliation of students through the subjective and inconsistent enforcement of the oppressive and sexist dress code; the shaming of our development of biological sex characteristics that are beyond our individual control that is a result of the dress code being enforced; we do not feel safe in the classroom/school because of the dress code and the way that you choose to enforce it in this space; the enforcement of the dress code outside of school hours.

“We respectfully request the following: That our teachers cease and desist in enforcing the dress code, and that they issue an apology to us for shaming, humiliating, and sexualizing us in our place of learning; That as our teachers, you seek training respecting gender, sex, healthy body image, body dysmorphia and shame, consent, sexual harassment, and sexualized violence — and the impact of these on holistic health; An immediate revocation of the dress codes — formal and informal at MAD.

“We urge you to consider that your daily practice of enforcing the dress code enforces unhealthy relationships with our bodies — in addition to the pressure of social and other media.

“Enforcement of the dress code that is based on sexism and heteronormative gender stereotypes impacts our safety and in turn our learning in this space and others. We cannot learn when we are not safe...”

The question I ask, Mr. Speaker, is: How did we get here? I thought that we were long past policing each other's bodies, but I guess I was wrong. While I'm sure that school dress codes aren't written with the intention of humiliating, degrading, or sexualizing students, that's what can happen.

What followed was a flurry of activity from the students and their support team, a letter to the minister, a protest, and a petition. The protest outside this building on March 7 saw students holding signs that read things like: “Stop sexualizing teenagers' bodies” or “My education is more important than what I wear” or “I can dress myself”.

The minister did respond to the letter that she received, thanking the caregivers for outlining their serious concerns — and I quote: “All students and staff have a right to be safe, feel welcome and respected at school, and to learn in an environment that is free from any form of discrimination or sexism. Students have clearly outlined that the current dress code is not upholding these values.”

But the students had asked for more than just addressing the dress code. Can the minister tell us what supports and training have been supplied by the Department of Education to the staff and the administration at the Wood Street school respecting gender identity, sexual harassment, sexualized violence, and the others as requested by the students?

When students initially brought forward their complaints, they felt bullied and intimidated. What steps were taken to ensure that students were able to provide feedback, safe from retaliation? What steps are being taken by the Department of Education to repair this relationship?

It has almost been a month since the March break, so I went in search of the new dress code that the minister references. It wasn't anywhere on the Wood Street school website. Where are students supposed to find these new guidelines that respect them, their bodies, and their autonomy? Could she please table a copy of that dress code and let the community know where they will be able to find it online? Does the Department of Education or the Women and Gender Equity Directorate review school policies, including dress codes, to ensure that they use gender-neutral language and uphold the dignity of students? If not, why not? When can we expect a review of these policies across the territory?

I note that I went in search in dress codes from Yukon schools, and many schools don't have them posted publicly, which disempowers students and evades fair criticism. Clearly communicating expectations with students and their caregivers is important. We agree that gender-neutral language and the upholding of the dignity of students is critical.

So, our final question of the minister is: How does the Department of Education ensure that students aren't being shamed, humiliated, or sexualized —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I thank my colleagues from the two opposition parties for providing comments and feedback. I think that it's a really important part of what we're doing here today to help our students see themselves in their House — this is your House. That is what I definitely expressed to them when



I went and met with them a few weeks ago. Good questions — thank you very much for posing those.

In terms of conversations, conversations are definitely ongoing around training for staff. A lot of work will land within the inclusive and special education review and the work that's happening there right now. There are a number of working groups that are working to identify new definitions and new policies. I can confirm, of course, that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate worked on this dress code with the department and with the administration, and there's definitely room for a lot more conversations. I expect the Women and Gender Equity Directorate to be involved, particularly in definitions as we go forward.

In terms of other schools, I certainly have had discussions with other schools previously and know that this work is underway. It is important that we address all of our dress codes and policies in our schools to ensure that they are absolutely taking into consideration inclusivity and helping students to feel safe.

Good discussions started with the staff to address these concerns and how the dress code issues were raised and are being raised with students. The new dress code was completed just on April 1, so we'll work toward getting a copy of that for the members here. It is important that Yukon is an inclusive, welcoming, and accepting place. Our schools must absolutely ensure that students feel respected and safe. This is our number one priority at all times.

I am so impressed and grateful to the students of the music, art and drama program at Wood Street and fellow community members for bringing this issue forward. We know from other jurisdictions that outdated dress codes can be problematic and cause harm. We know that outdated dress codes have the potential to target certain students.

I understand that the school administration and teachers really took the students' concerns very seriously, and the Department of Education takes them seriously too.

I was moved by my conversation when I met with the students at Wood Street school. Listening to the group was profound, and it helped inform some of the final content in the new dress code. At that meeting, I was able to talk to them about my own experiences with dress codes. We had a good conversation about that, so I always welcome those opportunities to speak to our young Yukoners and to help prepare them for leadership roles. They showed leadership by coming forward in the way that they did.

The new dress code not only adopts gender-neutral language — which is key to supporting our larger efforts here in the Yukon — it indicates a gender and diversity lens on all decision-making.

Again, I thank the students for coming here today and for exercising their voices.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Whistle Bend school

**Mr. Kent:** On November 21, 2019, the former Minister of Highways and Public Works stated in the Legislative Assembly that the budget for the new Whistle Bend school was \$32 million. In July 2021, the school had gone significantly overbudget and was now estimated to cost \$43 million. So, in less than two years, the budget of this project had skyrocketed.

However, the Official Opposition has now obtained the confidential briefing note that indicates the school has gone overbudget once again. The briefing note states — and I quote: “The total capital requirement for the project is \$52.8 million.”

Can the minister tell us why the project is now almost \$21-million overbudget?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I am glad to speak today about the leading-edge school in the dynamic and very quickly growing neighbourhood of Whistle Bend, where this Yukon Liberal Party government is building the first elementary school in the Yukon in 25 years. This school will be state of the art. It will have lots of environmental attributes that will make it incredibly energy efficient. We will reduce greenhouse gases by having the students who currently reside in the dynamic and growing neighbourhood of Whistle Bend being able to, hopefully, largely walk to school, bike to school, kicksled to school, or however they wish to get to school not involving a motor vehicle. So, this is a great news story, and we look forward to this project proceeding in a timely fashion.

**Mr. Kent:** While we appreciate that overview from the minister, the question was about the budget for the school. There was absolutely no answer to the question that I asked, so I will ask again.

As we have indicated, the government stated on November 21, 2019 that the budget for the Whistle Bend school was \$32 million. However, a confidential briefing note dated November 22, 2021 — almost exactly two years later — indicates that the project has gone overbudget by \$21 million. That is 65-percent overbudget in two years due to Liberal mismanagement.

Can the minister tell us how much of these cost overruns are due to the First Nation procurement policy?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The member opposite will know that, pursuant to ATIPP decisions that have been made in the course of the last year or two, the briefing binders that are provided for the members of the Liberal government to be prepared for Question Period and other debate are not, in fact, confidential.

In any event — I am going to answer the question.

The design/build contract was awarded to Ketza Construction Corporation for \$42.8 million. This cost reflects increased costs for building materials like lumber and steel as a consequence of the unjust, unlawful, and barbaric invasion by Russia into Ukraine.

The design/build contract was a value-driven procurement. Value-driven procurements look beyond the price to make sure that the project brings as much value as possible to the community and the territory. In this case, the winning bidder earned points for their schedule, training plans, subcontracting plans, northern experience, and First Nation participation.

To the best of my knowledge, as of today, this project is on that budget and on time.

**Mr. Kent:** We find it interesting that the minister is blaming the war in Ukraine for this project going overbudget, because the confidential briefing note that we have obtained indicating the \$21-million cost overruns is actually dated November 22, 2021, three months before the war started.

So, according to this newly obtained briefing note, the Whistle Bend school is a whopping \$21-million overbudget — \$21 million in just two years. That was even before the supply chain interruptions caused by the war.

So, it's clear the Liberals have mismanaged this project's budget and are taking taxpayers for a ride. Back in August 2019, the school was supposed to have completed construction in June 2023; however, this note says that it will only be completed sometime during the 2023-24 school year.

So, \$21-million overbudget and late — can the minister tell us why the project is so late and why it has gone \$21-million overbudget?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As I stated probably two weeks ago, I'm not going to take lessons from the former Yukon Party government on how to build schools, when to build schools, or how to build schools on time. I would take lessons from the members opposite on how to build small schools or small schools that are too small to replace the F.H. Collins structure.

We know that the member opposite — the hard-working Member for Copperbelt South — was integral in the planning and ultimately the implementation of the plan — the delayed plan — to build the middle school that is now the new F.H. Collins that will require serious consideration for expansion in the near future as, when it was built, it was at maximum capacity instantly.

So, interesting concerns from members opposite — but, as I said, I'm not taking lessons from the prior Yukon Party government on how and when to build schools.

### Question re: Highways projects

**Mr. Hassard:** The list of broken Liberal promises is long and storied. The very first one that they broke was around procurement. In 2016, the Liberal platform promised to tender projects for seasonally dependent Yukon Government-funded construction projects no later than March each year. Of course, we know that they have now completely failed to meet this commitment for six construction seasons in a row. For this year's construction season, we know that there are lots of projects yet to be tendered. For example, the Freegold Road phase 2 project agreement that was assigned last fall was supposed to replace three bridges on that road, yet they are not tendered.

So, can the minister tell us when they will go to tender?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will attempt to answer the first part of the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's question and perhaps return to Freegold in a subsequent response.

The Yukon government plans and issues tenders as early as possible to help vendors prepare for upcoming work. This includes forecasting and tendering projects earlier so that businesses can take full advantage of Yukon's short, intense

building season. It also includes staggering closing dates to make it easier for contractors to bid on a number of tenders and to encourage price stability.

Public procurements are vital to local businesses, and the Yukon government remains committed to the continuous improvement of our procurement processes. When planning and tendering projects, we are giving contractors the best opportunities to perform the work at the right time. So far in the 2022-23 construction season, we have tendered 28 projects worth more than \$52 million, and an additional \$232 million worth of projects are forecasted to be tendered for this upcoming construction season. Of those, we expect \$184 million worth of projects to be tendered in the near future.

**Mr. Hassard:** I will remind the minister that today is April 11, so "early" has come and gone. As I said in my first question, in 2016, the Liberals promised to tender all seasonally dependent construction projects no later than March of each year. As I said earlier as well, this marks the sixth year of the Liberals breaking that promise. The Nahanni Range Road phase 1 project includes two bridge replacements. Construction of these bridges is scheduled to take place in 2022; however, once again, there are no tenders out for these seasonally dependent construction contracts.

Can the minister tell us how late the Liberals are going to be on getting these tenders out?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Government gives businesses advance notice of upcoming projects by posting our planned procurement to the Yukon Bids and Tenders website and by sharing information through our five-year capital plan.

When planning the timing of our tenders, we recognize that not all projects are seasonally dependent. We take into account factors such as project type and location, market availability, and the ability of industry to meet government demand within the planned project schedules. We intentionally stagger closing dates of public tenders to make it easier for contractors to bid on more than one tender and to encourage prices to remain stable.

For this summer and for the fiscal year 2022-23, this Yukon Liberal government has planned to get over \$530 million in capital projects out the door. I grant you that it is an ambitious project — much more ambitious than the prior Yukon Party government was ever able to get out the door. There is exciting work to be done on the north Klondike Highway as part of the national trade corridors fund, which includes bridge replacement and road reconstruction at Crooked Creek. There is exciting work at the beginning of a really significant airport renovation at the Whitehorse airport.

**Mr. Hassard:** Again, I will remind the minister that I am talking about seasonally dependent contracts, and there is again no answer on the Freegold Road or Nahanni Range Road projects. So, we know that the Liberals are quite dubious when it comes to promises and procurement. We are now on year six of them failing to get these contracts out on time, so here is another one.

For the Robert Campbell Highway between Ross River and Faro, the government scheduled construction work to begin on that this summer, yet, Mr. Speaker, there is no tender out —

so, once again, just false hope and false promises from the Liberals. So, can the minister tell us: When will the Robert Campbell Highway reconstruction between Faro and Ross River go out to tender?

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

In April 2020, the project agreement for this component of the Robert Campbell Highway was signed with the Ross River Dena Council. The road rehabilitation project runs from kilometre 354.9 to kilometre 414.4 and has an estimated capital construction cost of \$55 million. Right-of-way clearing contracts have been awarded for this component of the Robert Campbell Highway. This was a direct-award contract to a Ross River Dena Council citizen-owned company.

The Yukon government will continue to work with the Ross River Dena Council to implement the project agreement. Members opposite will know that there has been a change in leadership in Ross River, and I do look forward, in the near future, to speaking to Chief Loblaw and trying to push this matter forward, but, of course, these projects have to occur in a manner that is satisfactory and beneficial to our partners with the Ross River Dena Council.

#### **Question re: Support services for Hidden Valley Elementary School victims of abuse**

**Ms. White:** It has been more than nine months since the abuses at Hidden Valley became public, and the government is still leaving children, families, and staff behind. Last week, a Hidden Valley parent reached out to me. One of their many concerns is that families are being offered one-size-fits-all solutions for support. The government is telling them that this is what they have for them, and if they are not happy, they are out of luck. For the families that don't fit in the government's box, they are stuck paying out of pocket and waiting for up to nine months for counselling services that they or their children desperately need.

What is this government doing to identify the unique needs of Hidden Valley staff and students, and what is being done to ensure that they are able to access the supports that they need?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I am happy to stand and speak about Yukoners and especially our youngest Yukoners — our children — who are in our schools. There is nothing more important than the well-being, safety, and protection of our students, and support for families. I believe I did have some opportunity in Committee of the Whole to speak about this — and specifically the question that has been raised here today.

In terms of supports for families, we remain absolutely committed to providing what is needed for families. Supports have and continue to be available to families and staff, including on-demand support coordinated via the school community consultant. This is what I focused on in Committee of the Whole — really encouraging students to speak to the school community consultant and to let us know what information they have so that we can better address the issues that they have in terms of private counselling.

**Ms. White:** Last week, the minister continued to repeat the name and the phone number of the community school consultant in the debate, but she never did tell us what power this position is given to fix the situation. So, the government is persisting in failing these children. Counselling is a long and difficult process, especially in the case of child abuse. The child needs to be comfortable with the counselling process, and that looks different for everyone. For some, it will be play therapy; for others, it may be group therapy; and some children won't be comfortable with a specific counsellor for various reasons. No one can say what the right form of therapy could be because it is entirely dependent on the affected person. A one-size approach is not what is needed here.

Will the government allow families and staff at Hidden Valley to choose the type of counselling services that they need and cover the cost?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** The reason that I'm talking about the school community consultant is that this is a very key individual in terms of communicating with the department to let us know the information we need to help to make decisions and help to meet the needs of our families.

Other supports — and I'll just go through this quickly — that have been provided at Hidden Valley have included, but are not limited to — and here are some examples. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services facilitated a six-session parent-support evening session with a clinical counsellor and outreach worker. This was held off-site to best accommodate the request and privacy of families. The child, youth and family treatment team has been attending the school to monitor the needs of staff, students and families, providing services to parents and families, and has delivered sessions on resilience and on social-emotional skills for grade 5, 6 and 7 students. Referrals to other supports and services are being facilitated as needed, such as through Family and Children's Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, and Victim Services. So, there is a lot of work happening with families. I encourage the member to bring forward the information specifically to the department.

**Ms. White:** Despite the minister's assurances, this isn't what's being seen on the ground. We're receiving messages saying — and I quote: "... there are no wraparound supports or services as described in the multiple letters and empty promises that were sent by the Department of Education."

Again, these are victims of a crime committed by an employee of the Department of Education. One would think that the least the government could do is ensure that no one is left paying out of pocket, and that's even if they can afford to.

So, I'm going to ask the question again: Will the government allow families and staff at Hidden Valley to choose the type of counselling services that they need, and will government commit to covering all costs to counselling services for the Hidden Valley families and staff in whatever forms it may take?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I believe that, in Committee of the Whole, I was very clear that our goal is to support children and families. If we have all of the information that I am hearing that the members opposite have — I heard it from the Leader of the

Yukon Party, and I'm hearing it today from the Leader of the New Democratic Party — please provide that information to us so that we can properly support families.

Again, folks can make their own choices. We do have a number of supports, as I've gone through some of those today, that are available. There's also child and family rapid-access counselling. I take note that families have a choice to seek out private counselling. We need to have the information in order to assist families to ensure that they have the resources to cover the costs of those services. So, please, I encourage the members opposite to provide the Department of Education with the information so that we can support our families and children. My commitment is to not leave any child or family unsupported.

#### **Question re: Mental health services**

**Ms. White:** Yukon journalist Lori Fox recently wrote a damning article about this territory's failures in mental health care — and I quote: "... the wait to see a psychiatrist if you don't pay for a private clinic... was laughable; a friend who also suffers from complex mental-health issues once referred to getting an appointment with one as 'winning the crazy person lottery.'"

People are left to wait for months until they reach a crisis point — and I quote again: "I was on wait-list after wait-list. I got worse and worse. Which is how I would up in the emergency room..."

So, will the minister fix this never-ending wait-list and hire a psychiatrist and registered psychiatric nurses to work at the soon-to-be-opened public walk-in clinic?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The community-based mental health services are a priority for our government. With the creation of the mental wellness hubs, there is now a network of mental wellness support workers, counsellors, and mental health nurses providing services and care for Yukoners, particularly in Yukon communities where there has been a record of absolutely no services. Staffing across the mental wellness hubs is an ongoing process, and we are meeting operational needs and delivering important and necessary services to Yukoners.

We are, of course, attempting to expand those services to Yukoners. We have money in this year's budget to hire nurse practitioners who will be an important piece of front-line medical services for Yukoners.

**Ms. White:** Despite the long list of words, what I didn't get was an answer. Is the minister planning on hiring a psychiatrist and psychiatric nurses for the soon-to-opened walk-in clinic?

As it seems to be the norm nowadays in the Yukon, people who need care are being referred to private care, and if they can't pay for it, then they have no choice but to wait. After years of piecing together what few services were available to them, Lori reached a crisis point because, believe it or not, having one or two short counselling appointments through a non-profit is often not enough.

People who need help are being failed by the government, and if they are not lucky enough to have benefits, they're even worse off.

When will the minister invest in wraparound, free mental health services, including psychiatry, to be offered to every Yukoner who needs it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. The question leads me to thinking about *Putting People First*, which, of course, is focused on wraparound services for Yukoners. *Putting People First* is the report — the road map ahead for Yukon in providing wraparound services, as noted in the question, to Yukoners.

To ensure a bright future for the territory, we must continue to invest in sustainable, people-centred health and social services and a system that improves outcomes for all Yukoners. As our government continues to implement the recommendations of *Putting People First*, the Yukon's health care system is being transformed into a national leader. It does focus — and I'm sure that members opposite have read the report — on a format and a process of polyclinics that will, in future, provide wraparound services.

Of course, we're in the process of transitioning. We must provide improved services to Yukoners. Until we get to that — I'm certainly not suggesting that it will happen overnight. It is a road map, but we are working along this path to improve services for Yukoners at every turn.

**Ms. White:** I'm highlighting issues that are happening right now.

So, continuing the story — Lori had to wait for hours at the ER, only to be sent home with no follow-up care multiple times. It got worse and worse with no one to check up on them. Not once was Lori admitted to get the help that they needed despite trying. Eventually, Lori reached a breaking point. They suffered from a dissociative episode and were treated with police brutality instead of health care. The RCMP showed up in their backyard, and because Lori had a stick in their hand, the police shot them with a rubber bullet. After being failed at every single level of the medical system, Lori was criminalized for needing help. Government failures like this are killing people. It nearly killed Lori.

So, when will this government allow mental health workers to respond to mental health crises instead of sending the RCMP to arrest and charge people?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I certainly am not going to respond to an individual person's experience, although I certainly appreciate it and receive it with compassion and the concern with which it was reported. No individual should have this service or the experiences that have been noted in that story, but the focus for our government is to provide mental health services across the Yukon medical system. We have improved services in Yukon communities.

Is it to the level at which we hope it will be? No, we have not yet implemented all of the journey of *Putting People First*. It will be a journey. There is no end to this road.

We will continue to work to improve and utilize mental health nurses in the most effective and efficient ways possible. We can indicate that there are extensive funds in the budget this

year to increase the services of the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services unit at the Department of Health and Social Services. We have continued to focus on providing the service that Yukoners need.

**Question re: Cannabis retail sales**

**Mr. Dixon:** It has now been three and a half years since recreational cannabis was legalized for adult use in Canada. Across the country, this new industry has thrived and has quickly grown to become a major source of employment and economic activity. Despite the success seen in just about every other part of the country, businesses in the Yukon's cannabis sector have struggled. Several operators in this sector have recently highlighted the challenges that they have faced in local media. They say that unnecessary government regulation and red tape are holding the industry back.

The Yukon Party has been pointing out concerns with the Liberals' approach to growing government and competing with this industry since the start, and now we are seeing the results.

Will the Liberal government reconsider their approach to cannabis and start getting out of the way of business in this sector?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, it is important to touch on the fact that this is the perspective of the member opposite in his preamble. What we have seen here are growing sales by the private sector. The commitments made by my colleague in the beginning of this process included that we would listen to Yukoners. That's the first thing that we did. Yukoners defined what government structure they wanted to see. They wanted to see a level of government responsibility within that. They wanted to see a responsible approach to this program. That is what we did. We then opened the first store and, within a year, we made a commitment that this store would be put in the hands of the private sector. That was done, to the day, as committed to.

Our overall retail sales in the Yukon now are continuing to see growth. This is, again, from the private sector. Sales growth is an indication that we are displacing the illicit market, which people wanted to see. Remember that, three and a half years ago, 100 percent of this was black market.

Again, we are not going to change it, because we have a successful model. Retailers' sales continue to grow in 2021. Cannabis sales through the corporation to licensees increased by more than \$2.5 million in 2019-20. Explain to me how that is — that's not lining up with the preamble from the member opposite.

I will wait for question two.

**Mr. Dixon:** I would direct the minister to the comments from industry representatives over the past number of weeks. We have heard from the largest cannabis retailer who says that they are struggling. We have heard from a cannabis retailer in a community that has shut down because of government regulation.

So, it is not just me raising this; it is the industry itself that is raising these very serious concerns. Around the country, the cannabis industry is growing and thriving, creating jobs and economic activity; however, here in the Yukon, we are hearing

directly from businesses in this sector that are being stifled by a perfect storm of burdensome regulation, red tape, and inefficient government pricing structures.

Despite the concerns raised by the Yukon Party when cannabis legislation was first introduced, the Liberals have chosen a model that puts the government right in the middle of the private sector. No one should be surprised that this hasn't worked well for the private sector.

Will the Liberal government get out of the way of business and give the private sector the tools that they need to compete with and displace the black market and let this emerging private sector of our economy start to grow and thrive?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that the first thing we should do is take a quick walk down memory lane and remember that when we stood in this House to legalize cannabis, everybody who is sitting in that party voted against it. Let's remember that. It's a big move to vote against actually having this industry in place and now being cheerleaders and champions of it. It's good to hear the change. We're used to the 180. It's good to see it.

But beyond that, I think the other key thing is — I listened to the radio this morning, and I am glad we did. The rural retailer talked about the fact that there is still a stigma attached to going into these stores. That's what, I think, they talked about — the store in Carmacks. Yes, there was more — I think we should share what's going on — to that story.

The second is that the member opposite said "the largest cannabis retailer". I don't provide information publicly about who is the biggest cannabis retailer. I guess there is information that the member opposite has — the biggest in the sense of square footage and staff or the biggest on retail? We don't provide that, so I would like to know how that information has gotten into the hands of the member opposite.

I will continue on. We have early indication that the 2021 fiscal year continued to see sales growth at an increase of approximately 17 percent. Again, they talk about getting out of the way. We just reduced the wholesale price. We just lowered the price for the private sector. So, again, we are selling more. There's growth every year. We did what we said, and it is not consistent with the way those questions are being tabled today. I look forward to question three.

**Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, it's clear that what we're hearing from businesses — they are struggling with this model, and it is the model that was brought forward by this Liberal government and that this party voted against and did not support. We wanted to see more freedom, not less.

Despite the great opportunity that the legalization of cannabis presented for the private sector, the industry is being bogged down by a complex regulatory environment — red tape, rules that don't make sense — and there is also the inefficient product markup and burdensome tax policies.

Not only does this hinder the ability of these businesses to grow and thrive, but Liberal policies have been helping to keep the black market alive and well. The solution is simple: The government needs to get out of the way and fully privatize cannabis.

Will the Liberal government reconsider their inefficient, big-government model and start cutting red tape, lowering fees and taxes, and give this industry, which has so much potential, the tools it needs to create jobs, contribute to our economy, and displace the black market?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'll just go through that one more time. We've seen growth every year in the private sector in this industry. We've seen multiple stores open. I've listened to the private sector, and I appreciate the fact that the member opposite is echoing what was heard from some of the private sector. I hear that. I know that there has been some frustration in the time it has moved to get e-commerce in place. But again, we committed in the fall to have it in May. I stand by that commitment.

Again, when we look at our online sales — for the corporation, those were only 0.2 percent — 0.2 percent of total cannabis sales when it was being run online. Now, do I think that the private sector could do better? Absolutely, I do. Do I think that they will market better? Absolutely, I do. But at the same time, we're seeing growth, we're sticking to what we did, and we're getting out of the way. We're seeing an industry grow and we're removing black market revenue. That's what we said we were going to do, and that's what we're doing.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

## Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

### Department of Environment

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I am proud to stand before you as the Minister of the Department of Environment. I would like to welcome to the Assembly Deputy Minister Manon Moreau, who is to my immediate right, and to her right is Jeston Innes, the director of Finance. I have some preliminary comments and then look forward to the debate in Committee of the Whole for the Department of Environment.

The work done in this department is essential to a healthy, sustainable, and prosperous future through environmental stewardship and effective management of our natural resources. The support we provide is not just for future generations of Yukoners, but for the fish of our waters, the wildlife and their habitat, the air, and the climate. We support, maintain, and monitor so much of the world around us all year-round.

Right now, our staff at the Water Resources branch have ramped up their flood monitoring as the snow melts. Our parks crews are clearing campgrounds for the upcoming camping season. Our biologists are gearing up for another field season. Our compliance and inspections staff are available to help ensure that our home heating fuel tank hasn't buckled under the weight of the snow. Our conservation officers are keeping a close eye on bears coming out of winter hibernation. We are a department of people doing the work to keep you safe, healthy, and happy. Let me tell you about how much all of it costs.

The 2022-23 main estimates for the Department of Environment capital and operation and maintenance budget is approximately \$51.9 million. It is 1.2 percent more than the previous estimate. The operation and maintenance budget is approximately \$47.9 million, which is an increase of approximately \$93,000 over the 2021-22 estimate. The capital estimate is approximately \$4 million, an increase of about one-half million dollars from the 2021-22 estimate. We expect to collect approximately \$4.9 million in revenues. This includes about \$3.7 million of recoveries from the Government of Canada.

Unlike last year, we have capital recoveries to the tune of \$1.2 million. Let me dig into how that money is spent and what that means for Yukoners and our environment.

The importance of *Our Clean Future* is obvious in this budget. It is one of the main drivers of change, year over year, with another \$548,000 in operation and maintenance allocated to new initiatives. We are in year 2 of implementation and we continue to build on our work.

Why are we doing this? Because we know that these actions must occur now. Yukon's climate is changing faster than many other places. Wildlife and plant species are popping up where they never have before. Water levels are low in some places and flooding elsewhere. Climate emergencies have been

declared across the territory and the country. It's late, but it's not too late.

Together, we can adapt to the impacts of climate change, reduce our emissions, and establish what the future of Yukon might look like. That's why we are putting money into initiatives like extended producer responsibility that is budgeted at \$131,000 for fiscal 2022-23. It is a mouthful, but it has the ability to transform the way we think about who is responsible for waste. It shifts that responsibility from municipalities, governments, and taxpayers to producers and consumers of products and packaging. We are targeting packaging, printed paper, household hazardous waste, and automotive waste such as oil and antifreeze.

As part of *Our Clean Future*, we are committed to implementing extended producer responsibility by 2025. This will help increase waste diversion to 40 percent by 2030. We look forward to bringing this framework to Yukoners later this year for public engagement.

We are also looking forward to reaching the public online even more with an *Our Clean Future* commitment that we are funding this year: an upgraded *Our Clean Future* website. The cost for this project is approximately \$100,000. You can already find our OCF commitments online at [yukon.ca/our-clean-future](http://yukon.ca/our-clean-future). This new version aims to have content feeding it all the time from an internal database. It will help share more knowledge about climate risks and impact, build community resilience, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Work is already underway with software development happening this spring.

There was also a smart-growth review. This \$30,000 commitment is to develop detailed guidelines by 2025 that can be used by the Government of Yukon and partners to develop walkable, bike-friendly, and transit-oriented communities.

Work on *Our Clean Future* and climate change doesn't stop with the Government of Yukon. There is \$150,000 in the budget to dig further into climate change research and modeling. We are partnering with the Yukon University to undertake and develop further research for us. We are also contracting Navius Research to undertake modeling and projections related to the 45-percent emission reduction target. The most recent model has just been completed. We are working with them and the Yukon Climate Leadership Council to provide analysis on specific policy actions to get us to our goals.

Between the Yukon Climate Leadership Council and the Youth Panel on Climate Change, we are getting more information and innovative solutions. While there is no new money in the budget for these leadership groups, we do continue to support them. The Youth Panel on Climate Change has completed its first year, providing government with a comprehensive set of recommendations. The second-year group of young climate leaders has now been selected and we look forward to learning from and with them soon.

We need to harness the passion and ideas of our young people to ensure we can mitigate and adapt to the changes that are already happening. This will continue to happen and will continue to happen if we don't take swift action now.

As mentioned, climate change has impacted nearly every stage of the water cycle. In just the last few years, we have seen waterways change course due to low levels and we have seen record flooding. Climate change alters precipitation, evaporation, surface water, snowpack, groundwater, recharge, and demand.

The work we are doing to monitor water in the Yukon is essential to understanding what changes we are undergoing, but also to figure out how to adapt. As part of *Our Clean Future*, our Water Resources branch is leading work related to climate change as part this \$224,000 increase in the budget. We are adapting existing surface and groundwater monitoring networks to track water quality and quantity trends for climate change.

We are developing flood maps for flood-prone communities. This will help plan for development but also emergency response by improving the understanding of potential impacts from floods. Flood mapping can incorporate climate change projections as the risk and likelihood of floods shifts with changing temperatures, precipitation, and extreme weather. We will also expand monitoring networks and improve our monitoring tools. This should help generate reliable flood forecasts in order to communicate and respond to high-water events. It includes stream flow and ice break-up models.

We will also analyze flood risk along critical transportation corridors. Many Yukon communities have only one reasonable transportation corridor. If that link is cut off, it cuts Yukoners off from food, goods, safety, and security.

We will continue to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to plan and maintain our roads for climate change effectively. Through the federal government's climate change preparedness in the north program, we are using \$296,000 to take on projects that help the Government of Yukon adapt to the impacts of climate change. Some of these projects include: undertaking climate change risk assessments, mapping permafrost along the Dempster Highway and around Whitehorse, identifying best practices for food security in a changing climate, understanding how climate change threatens human health, and tracking the impacts of a warming climate on wildlife and their habitats.

This is a diverse department which has a lot of different areas of responsibility and I certainly have longer opening comments here, but perhaps for now I will leave it at that, and I will invite questions from the member opposite.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I welcome the staff who are here today — thank you for coming — and those in the offices and on the phones who are providing information as needed for the minister.

I don't have any opening remarks. I just want to get directly into some of the questions. We do have a lot of questions and I am sure that the Third Party does also. I want to start with a few outfitting questions here.

The minister announced in Question Period that the department is reviewing the policy for the establishment of outfitter quotas. According to the minister, this was based on a

legal review that the department has done on the policy. Did the minister direct that a legal review of the policy be done, or was this something that the department generated on its own?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Outfitting, of course, is a valued industry in the Yukon that benefits communities through employment opportunities, purchase of goods and services, and in many cases, the donated supply of fresh meat. As I indicated previously in the spring session, the Department of Environment intends to review and modernize the 25-year-old guidelines to establish outfitter quotas currently used to establish moose, caribou, and sheep quotas. The intent of modernizing the quota is to align the industry with the wildlife values of Yukoners, bring the process into conformity with the Yukon *Wildlife Act*, and provide a consistent, transparent approach to quota allocation for big game outfitters.

Once we initiate this review process, we intend to seek input — and have been seeking input — from First Nations and Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, renewable resources councils, the outfitting industry, and the public. The outfitters will continue to operate during this review and we welcome an open dialogue as we move forward.

During the state of intention to review the outfitting quotas and modernize the quota process with the various stakeholders, legal advice was sought by the department, largely prior to my mandate as the Minister of Environment, but subsequent to that, I have been briefed by both my department and the justice council that's engaged in this review and have been provided the opinion primarily with respect to whether multi-year quotas were allowable.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Who conducted the legal review that found that this policy is inconsistent with the *Wildlife Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** That review has taken place through the Yukon Department of Justice natural resources group.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Can we see that legal opinion? Will the minister table it in the House and share it with us and with the public?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The member opposite will know that it is not necessarily common practice, during the course of receiving advice from the Department of Justice, to release legal opinions. I can go away and seek advice as to if parts of the legal opinion are releasable, but for now, that's my answer. It's not common for those legal opinions to be released, but I'm certain that there was a canvas of relevant law from across Canada and a cross-jurisdictional scan. If there are elements of that cross-jurisdictional scan which are releasable, I will take that under advisement and get back to the member.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I am still having a hard time here. Can the minister explain this legal opinion? I am asking on behalf of the outfitters and lots of other Yukoners. He went out there and got a legal opinion, and we want to just understand what it says in that legal opinion that effected this change.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** During these last two years of COVID, I am advised that in the first year of the last two years, most of the communication was in the nature of Zoom or in writing with the outfitter liaison committee. Most recently, within the last year, those meetings have been in person, and during the course of those meetings, the nature and substance

of the legal opinion has been communicated at those various meetings. So, that communication has been taking place with the outfitter liaison committee.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, which provision in the act is this consistent with?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** At present, the assignment of multi-year quotas and over-quotas is deemed to not be consistent with section 54(5) of the *Wildlife Act*, which states that operating certificates are to be issued annually.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, what is the plan now, for the meantime, while this policy is then going to be reviewed?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Since November 1, 2021 — the department will implement an interim process to establish outfitter quotas. Outfitters who have never had a moose or caribou quota — this is dated information, because this has now occurred — will be assigned one for the 2022-23 season — after quota meetings — as per the outfitter quota meeting procedures.

Outfitters who had a quota previously will see their previous quota extended one year at a time with similar conditions unless there is a conservation issue. Multi-year and over-the-harvest quotas will not be offered as they do not conform to the *Wildlife Act*. The grizzly bear allocation process will remain the same for the 2022-23 season. Goat, sheep, and bison quotas, where applicable, will also remain the same.

Although the department, based on not being consistent with section 54(5) of the *Wildlife Act* — notwithstanding, the department is exploring how we can continue to provide certainty from year to year with the outfitting industry and still be in alignment with the *Wildlife Act*. The department is optimistic that we will find a solution. In the interim, the industry has been told by the department that, unless there is a conservation concern, their quotas will remain stable.

**Mr. Istchenko:** When will the outfitter be notified of their annual quota?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The quotas have been assigned as of April 1 and are available for pickup at Burns Road. I am advised by my officials that some of the notifications have been picked up and some have not yet been picked up.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The outfitting industry is a business. They need to know what product they have to sell. The minister just discussed April 1. People book many years in advance, so I want to go back to this again. I am having a hard time understanding the minister. He said April 1, but I wonder when they would know their annual quota for the following year. Has every outfitter been notified for this year? How will it work in the following years? When will they be notified about next year's quota?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will repeat my previous response and add a little bit. The Department of Environment will make best efforts to continue to provide certainty from year to year with the outfitting industry while still striving to be in alignment with the relevant section of the *Wildlife Act*. The Department of Environment is optimistic that they will find a solution and, in the interim, the industry has been told by the department that, unless there is a conservation concern, their quotas will remain stable. The answer to the Member for



Kluane's direct question is that the assignment will technically occur on April 1, 2023, but meetings will occur between now and April 1, 2023. If this policy being that, all things being equal, the quotas will be stable, my officials would alert any of the 22 concessions if there were conservation concerns between April 1, 2022 and April 1, 2023 in order that they be alerted.

I certainly am cognizant of the fact that these are businesses where the outfitting business is one where plans are made over the course of multiple years. These are significant experiences for the guests and hunters that these outfitters host in their concessions. I completely understand that.

I can also advise — and the member opposite will be aware of this — that during the incredibly challenging global pandemic, both the Department of Environment and the Department of Economic Development and other Yukon government departments engaged in fairly significant actions in order to support outfitters, including providing for alternate isolation availability. I'm not disputing today on the floor that the first year — and certainly the first season — wasn't a challenge for outfitters. The Yukon government listened to outfitters and they were eligible for economic supports. They were eligible for alternate isolation plans for their guests.

With respect to the four concessions of the 22 that had not had outfitter quotas, they were advised that they would be receiving quotas this year, but those quotas could have been imposed at this same time in 2021. Out of recognition of the hardships that had been borne by not just outfitters, but by many Yukon businesses, that decision was deferred. But the Department of Environment was clear that, as of April 1, 2022, all of the 22 concessions were going to have a quota.

**Mr. Istchenko:** If there's a concern with certain species, like the minister said, when will you alert the outfitter and let him know that things are going to change?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** These concerns are most likely to arise at regional resources council meetings or Fish and Wildlife Management Board meetings during the course of the year.

If the department is alerted to the possibilities that there are conservation pressures in a certain concession, the outfitter will be notified right away.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, will this apply to all species?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Yes. The response is yes — for any species that are currently on a quota.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the minister mentioned earlier a policy that is being reviewed. What sort of consultation is planned for this policy review with the outfitters?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Establishing outfitter quotas is a complex process that requires balancing the rights, interests, and concerns of Yukon First Nations, renewable resources councils, and outfitters. The concerns expressed by those involved in the outfitter quota process point to the growing need for a consistent approach to wildlife harvest allocation to guide the sustainable harvest of Yukon's wildlife and to provide certainty to all those involved. Although multi-year and over harvest quotas will not be offered during the interim period, we are working on determining if and how this could conform with the *Wildlife Act*.

Department officials met with the outfitter liaison committee and several outfitters on October 26, 2021 and on February 16, 2022 to discuss a range of topics including the review of the quota allocation process and the development of new harvest allocation guidance more broadly.

To answer specifically to the member opposite's question about the timeline and process for developing a new approach to the wildlife harvest allocation, I can advise that we are currently in the early planning stages and therefore do not have specifics at this time to share. However, we can confirm that the intention is to work with First Nation governments, renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, outfitters — those represented by the Yukon Outfitters Association and those who are not — and the public once we initiate a process for developing the new approach.

So, that is occurring. As indicated, these are in the early stages but, once again, just to somewhat repeat myself, generally speaking, the allocation in the 22 concessions has remained reasonably consistent over the course of the last number of years. There is certainly challenging and complex work to do, but we also recognize that it is important for business planning that the Department of Environment will provide as much certainty as we possibly can going forward during the course of these multi-party discussions.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, when it comes to the outfitting industry, like many other industries — say, the Yukon Contractors Association. Not every contractor is a member of the Contractors Association or our local chamber of commerce, and not all businesses are members of that organization, and not every tourism operator is a member of TIAY, and that also goes with the Yukon Outfitters Association. I would just hope that all outfitting concessions would be consulted on this. They all have different areas and different issues.

I want to move on a little bit to the new *Lands Act*. I just want to know how the outfitters are being considered in the development of this new *Lands Act*.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I have been advised, with respect to amendments to the *Lands Act*, that Energy, Mines and Resources is the lead on that. That engagement is commencing, and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources anticipates that there will be a "what we heard" document in the relatively near future and certainly is open to engaging and consulting broadly. So, I would certainly ask the member opposite, or perhaps one of his colleagues, to ask the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide some additional details as to where that consultation is at.

**Mr. Istchenko:** My colleague will discuss that with the minister in charge.

I want to switch a little bit over to wildlife management now. Over the past few weeks, we have asked a number of questions about decisions that the minister has made about restricting hunting in a number of areas. One of the general concerns that the hunting community has — I listened to it all weekend, actually, hanging out with some friends — is that, when the minister introduces new restrictions on licensed

hunting, they are essentially becoming permanent. They are essentially becoming permanent; as soon as they put these — they become permanent forever.

So, how does the department review previous decisions in light of new information or data, and does it ever consider undoing previously imposed restrictions?

I will give a good example. For instance, there are some areas where the department has recommended moving from PHA to open or from a limited number of PHAs to a higher number. The question is: Does the department ever consider undoing previously imposed restrictions?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We share this territory with an incredible array of wildlife species. Yukoners understand that a healthy environment with resilient wildlife populations is directly connected to healthy communities.

The Department of Environment strives to make sure our stewardship of these species and our interactions with them are responsible, sustainable, and informed by scientific, local, and traditional knowledge. Biologists and technicians study wildlife, monitor trends, and investigate habitat requirements and patterns of use. This work informs decisions on harvest management, land use planning, development assessment processes, and various permitting and licensing needs.

Some studies focus on how human activities influence wildlife so that we can develop strategies to lessen our impact on nature. Other studies seek to determine the size of a population, which helps us better understand how many animals may be available for sustainable harvest, while still leaving enough mature animals to replenish populations.

Together, we can make sure the Yukon's wildlife remains healthy and resilient now and for future generations.

The Department of Environment biologists and technicians are dedicated to development programs that monitor many Yukon species, particularly species of conservation concern and those that are harvested. We monitor species like bison, caribou, and moose through harvest data and population information. In some instances, such as for bears, we collect hair samples for DNA analysis, from which the results are used, along with harvest information, to estimate population size. We determine habitat use for species like wolf, elk, bison, and caribou by examining the location data sent from deployed GPS radio collars. We also use remote camera data to determine what types of habitat a species occupies.

Many of these projects are collaborative efforts with financial, field, and logistical support. This support is provided by our management partners, including Yukon First Nation governments, the Inuvialuit, neighbouring governments, industry boards and councils, and renewable resources councils, as well as the hunters, trappers, outfitters, and citizens who are out on the land. The Department of Environment collects and analyzes this data to help identify management goals, set priorities for future research efforts, and ultimately support evidence-based decision-making.

We collaborate with university researchers to employ cutting-edge techniques to analyze biological samples and data. For example, we have partnered with Dalhousie University to develop a new technique to census Arctic grayling using

genetics. We also developed new and innovative survey techniques to improve the accuracy of our population estimates. For example, we have developed moose survey techniques that quantitatively use local and traditional knowledge to sample low-density populations optimally.

We have joined with the universities of Alberta, Toronto, Trent, Colorado, Queen's, and McGill to investigate the effect of climate change on the ecology of Yukon's fish and wildlife, and we are developing a new Yukon deer program to learn more about Yukon deer populations and to consider future management options.

This summer pilot study will use remote cameras to learn about deer population movements in the Takhini Valley and Hot Springs Road agricultural areas. Future work may involve collaring deer to estimate abundance in the area and to work with hunters and our animal health unit to learn more about deer health across the entire territory.

With respect to the Member for Kluane's specific question as to whether certain management and conservation decisions are always permanent or whether the Department of Environment or other interested stakeholders do reviews — I have received three examples of reviews.

For example, in January, August, and December of 2020, the Department of Environment opened limited harvests on the Fortymile caribou after 25 years of collaborative recovery efforts with our partners in the Yukon and Alaska. We also reviewed and revised the sheep management regime this year, based on feedback. As well, the Department of Environment resurveyed Faro this year in order to determine the impact of the threshold hunt. I am certainly sympathetic to a concern that, once conservation measures are put in place, it is a point of no return, but I can certainly come back to the member opposite and hopefully be in a position to provide more examples of where data-driven decisions are made so that opportunities can be provided in various geographic areas in the Yukon, based on — we hope — the success of conservation measures.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I guess, for the minister, that is great information. It is information that I totally know and I totally understand. I worked with it in my previous role as a minister. But also sitting on the resources council and growing up in the Yukon, it just seems that nothing ever gets opened back up once it is closed. When it comes to the Fortymile caribou, that was a decision made jointly with both Alaska and the Yukon. It's good that it opened up, but that's because there was actually a management plan, and part of that is so that we can hunt our traditional foods that we enjoy.

When the department eliminates or restricts licensed hunting on a particular population — and I have been through this process many times — in a particular region, does it develop a recovery plan? If so, what consultation goes into the development of such a plan?

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

**Deputy Chair:** Order, please. One moment, please.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have no issue with the member opposite asking a follow-up question.

**Mr. Istchenko:** With the recovery plan and the consultation that goes into the development of such a plan, does

the department have specific population objectives they need to meet in order for them to consider whether to restrict or open up hunting? If so, is there data? Like, where can a guy find the published data when the regulation change passes, and it is what level that animal needs to come to where we can open hunting back up communicated publicly?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Department of Environment employs adaptive measures to manage wildlife more responsively. Adaptive management is a system that uses on-the-land monitoring and harvest information to inform and adjust our actions and impacts on wildlife as needed. It provides the flexibility to promptly alter the harvest regime in response to changing hunting pressures on wildlife population numbers.

Our shared priorities for the next steps include increased public education and the launch of at least one more community-driven wolf harvest program.

But the answer to the members opposite's question — firstly, with respect to population decline and the review of that, it varies, obviously, by species in location. If that number is in decline, the department will work with partners using science and database guidelines. I am also advised that fairly specific information is shared with regional resources councils and co-management bodies and stakeholders. Those numbers are generally available when those discussions on conservation versus abundance are discussed in arriving at some agreed-upon numbers.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, let's move to a specific example. This might make it a bit easier here.

When the government announced the changes to the hunting opportunities for the Finlayson herd, the minister of the day announced that there would be what the minister called a "collective management plan". Let's start there.

Can the minister tell us what the collective management plan was intended to look like? What work has been done on it?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** So, it is certainly the intention on the Department of Environment to have a management plan with respect to the Finlayson caribou herd, and the member opposite is correct in indicating that this involves reaching out to both the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation. Those discussions have started, but candidly, we are still in the early days of discussion with respect to that. So, notwithstanding that the prior Minister of Environment indicated that it was her goal to have a herd management plan in place, I can reinforce that it is still our goal for that to occur, but it does require the discussions with the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation to bear fruit so that we can work on a combined plan of data collection and wildlife surveys. The member opposite will, of course, know that the Ross River Dena Council has fairly publicly expressed concerns about the caribou populations in their traditional territory, or their asserted territory, and the potential overharvest.

So, yes, we are committed to having a herd management plan for the Finlayson caribou herd. We do want to support — we have been supporting — both the Liard First Nation and the Ross River Dena Council in providing capacity.

I certainly will endeavour to do whatever I can to move these discussions forward, recognizing that this is a file of importance.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It doesn't look like there's a plan yet or a plan in place, but they are working on it. It's good to see that they are working with First Nations on it.

What are some of the measures that the government is discussing with the First Nations that they can put in place to help recover the herd?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Specifically with respect to the Finlayson herd, as the member opposite indicated, there have been no licensed hunting opportunities that have been available for the Finlayson herd since 2018. That, of course, would be one measure where at least the prospect of that would provide the opportunity for the herd to rebound.

As well, it's important for the department to have fruitful discussions with the new leadership at the Ross River Dena Council — Chief Loblaw and his new council. We look forward to those discussions occurring in the late spring and in the summer so that we can have an idea, hopefully, with respect to the subsistence harvest trends in the area.

On a more practical level, I'm advised that there was a survey conducted in the area toward the end of February and that those results should be available within the next 60 to 90 days.

So, certainly, I will stay on top of this file. I look forward to visiting the community of Ross River this summer to discuss both this matter and other environment-related matters as I will also with the Liard First Nation in the Watson Lake area as well.

The Member for Kluane will know — no licensed hunting opportunities since 2018 and now a survey that has been conducted quite recently. I'll stay on top of it and keep the member apprised as to the developments.

**Mr. Istchenko:** What I had asked was — the minister's meeting with the First Nations to discuss this issue for the Finlayson herd — when the department and the minister meet with the First Nations, they must have some idea of how they can help the herd recover. What are some of those ideas that they're bringing to the First Nations and their discussions?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As I said in my previous response, I think it is incredibly important for the comprehensive management planning process to engage. We would have an idea of what the First Nation governments' perspectives were in the Ross River area or in the Watson Lake area, but obviously, we are talking about Ross River with respect to the Finlayson caribou herd.

The member opposite also asked me a question a while ago about measures that might be adopted to increase herd size. I will certainly get back to him with any other responses from the wildlife biologists at the Department of Environment, but one of the discussions that we had, probably two weeks ago, was about a similar question that was asked. My response, as I recall, was whether there may be — I don't think there is. It's not our policy with respect to having predator control, but of course, from a policy perspective, one could consider liberalizing bag limits for wolves or any other animals that were

considered to be predators that could impact on the size of the herd.

One note I have here is about maternal penning, which of course, I would seek guidance as to what maternal penning is. I can imagine what maternal penning is, but the prohibition by licensed hunters is now four years old, so I will be interested to see what the numbers are once we receive those in the next 30 or 60 days and whether there will be some opportunities. Maybe there will; maybe there won't, but we will be guided by the data that we receive shortly.

We can also make better efforts, Deputy Chair, to support trappers in the area. Like I said, I guess we will have some data shortly, and we will know, generally speaking, what the health of the Finlayson caribou herd is and whether there is support for the proposition that some sort of limited permit or threshold hunt be authorized in that area within the next few years.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, another example of what we have been talking about here is the South Canol area, where the government recently imposed new hunting restrictions for moose. I would like the minister to explain why the recommendations from the Fish and Wildlife Management Board were not accepted.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** This response is similar to the response I provided a few weeks ago with respect to the South Canol. This is deemed to be another area where the sustainability of moose is in crisis. The Ross River Dena Council has asked for licensed harvest restrictions in this area for many years, and we received a letter from the Chief of the Teslin Tlingit Council indicating that establishing permit areas for licensed hunters would help address their concerns in the area.

We note, of course, that the proposal was not recommended to proceed, as proposed by the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board; however, the decision to vary the board's recommendation to go forward with this regulation change was approved as our evidence was decided upon, because the evidence we had showed that the immediate regulation of harvest was necessary to ensure a sustainable moose population in the area.

A survey that was conducted in 2013 indicated that to have a sustainable harvest, a total of 15 bulls for both licensed and First Nation hunters could be harvested in any one season. From 2017 to 2021, licensed harvest alone averaged 15 bulls, not including First Nations' harvest. While licensed harvest had been relatively consistent for many years, the estimated total harvest numbers indicate that it is at a level that is far above that which is sustainable for this moose population, and licensed hunters are taking a disproportionate amount of the sustainable harvest.

I can also advise the member opposite that, with respect to wildlife surveys, the — so, in my view, that provided support for the proposition that limits or conservation measures ought to be imposed on the South Canol, and I would certainly err on the side of conservation when those concerns are raised.

For greater certainty, as well as to receive additional data — which we will share once we receive it — under the planned wildlife surveys for 2022-23, three areas have been designated

for moose surveys. One is the Nisutlin River-Quiet Lake, and the second is the Nordenskiöld River area, and the third is the South Canol.

Those survey numbers will provide support for the proposition as to the — that we've engaged in these conservation measures, or it may provide data for support for the proposition that there could be enhanced opportunities provided in the South Canol.

So, we had a prior survey's indication that too many bulls were being taken, and it was the view of the department and the Ross River Dena Council that conservation measures were required for this year. But, as I indicated, this government has committed to additional surveys in this fiscal year, so we will have data going forward quite shortly.

**Mr. Istchenko:** It's not lost on many that the decision was made on data from 2013. Restrictions were imposed, and now they're out surveying to see how things are. What happened to science and data?

So, the board also told the minister that taking this action would simply push the pressure into other areas. How does the minister respond to that point raised by the board?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** It's kind of a two-pronged question. The first, I suppose, is that if I receive the information based on the fact that the department has the benefit of something like 70 moose surveys that have been conducted in recent decades — and then there are discussions with First Nation governments and with regional resources councils, hunters, and trappers — then at some point, you make a decision based on the data. I take the member's point that you will never have all the surveys that you need that are as up to date as you want them to be, but the anecdotal observations — no, they weren't anecdotal; they knew in the South Canol how many bulls were taken.

The bottom line is that, of course, the population of the Yukon is increasing. A lot of our relatively recent arrivals to the territory have adopted a hunting lifestyle. They want to partake of the abundance of not just moose, but caribou, bear, and sheep, if they are skilled. Over the course of now 30 or 40 years, it was fairly predictable that areas that were relatively easily accessible by Yukon roads would be under pressure from a conservation perspective. That is borne out by the maps that I have seen. In totality, there likely is an abundance of moose in the territory, but it is not surprising, when you look at the predicted heat maps of moose abundance in the territory, that they are not as abundant as they were in areas that are relatively easily accessible from the Robert Campbell Highway, the South Canol, and the Klondike Highway.

To the member opposite's question, based on science and the best information available, you have to adopt conservation measures in the areas where you receive guidance. So, you can't sort of say: "Well, I'm not going to..." — based on a preceding aerial survey or prior surveys or the cumulative 1970s surveys that have been conducted with respect to moose management — then say: "Because I have concerns that if conservative measures exist in South Canol or Sifton-Miners or in the Mayo moose management unit, I am not going to do that because that is going to put pressure on other areas." That is not consistent really with science. It is not consistent with what has

been happening in the Yukon over the course of the last 25 or 30 years.

The Department of Environment employs adaptive measures to manage wildlife more responsibly. Adaptive management is a system that uses on-the-land monitoring and harvest information to inform and adjust our actions and impacts on wildlife as needed. It provides the flexibility to promptly alter the harvest regime in response to changing hunting pressures on wildlife population numbers. We also collaborate with the association on public education and community outreach activities like family fishing events.

It is a modern approach that enables sustainable wildlife uses over the long term. It is responsive to the needs of Yukoners and the needs of wildlife. It helps us to be nimble and flexible in a changing environment to ensure sustainable hunting opportunities now and in the future. One effective and collaborative adaptive management process is harvest- or herd-specific management planning. Once a plan is in place, our adaptive management regulations allow the changes to be enacted as necessary.

In 2019, we released the final conservation plan for grizzly bears in the Yukon and are now working to implement that plan. We have also done an implementation review of the 2012 *Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan*. The implementation review included input gathered during 27 meetings with First Nation governments, boards, councils, and stakeholders. The review highlighted the continued respect and appreciation for wolves and Yukon's ecology.

Our shared priorities for the next step include increasing public education and launching at least one more community-driven wolf harvest program by 2023 and increased awareness of the First Nation liaison position within the Conservation Officer Services branch.

We are working with our partners on the Yukon bison technical team to review and update the 2012 bison management plan for the Aishihik herd. The Aishihik bison herd is a popular source of wild meat for many Yukoners. We continue to manage this herd with our partners while contributing to the national recovery efforts of this iconic species.

The harvest management approach for bison in the Yukon has relied upon adaptive management to adjust harvests as needed and to meet the needs of Yukoners, all while ensuring the sustainability of the herd. This adaptive management approach includes adjusting where, when, and how many bison are harvested each year. We conducted a bison hunter effort survey in the fall of 2021, and results were released in January 2022.

We are also working with our international partners in Alaska to review the management plan for the Chisana caribou herd. We are working with several governments, including six Southern Lakes First Nations, to create a management plan for the Southern Lakes caribou herd. All this work requires the collaboration of governments, engaging communities and the public, and thorough research to ensure the best plans for our future.

So, in summary, we're guided by adaptive management, and we have certainly been fortunate to have a lot of pre-existing data. This government has committed to a fairly aggressive and quite well-funded aerial survey program in order to buttress our decisions. But, just to loop back, if support for the proposition and a strong argument has been made that there are conservation concerns, then conservation concerns have to be addressed in the areas of concern. As far as providing opportunities in other areas, certainly there are challenges, but that's part of the adaptive process.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Can the minister explain the new regulations in relation to the limitation of hunting of roadside bears, and are there any plans to expand that at all?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As the member opposite has indicated, the roadside hunting of grizzly bears is now prohibited south of Whitehorse on select roadways. This change was proposed by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council and supported by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and also with input from impacted Yukon citizens. This prohibition is in effect 100 metres from either side of the centre line on select roadways. Maps detailing this ban are available on yukon.ca. As per the conservation plan for grizzly bears in the Yukon, a local community may request the minister to prohibit roadside hunting of grizzly bears on other roadways in the Yukon, but the specific answer to your final question is that there are no immediate plans to have any further roadside hunting prohibitions of grizzly bears anywhere else in the near future.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that.

So, elk — I'm sure everyone is well-read and well-learned on this from listening to landowners and hunters and everything else. The elk-agriculture conflict — it's still an issue for many landowners north of Whitehorse, and the fencing and wildlife compensation — that was just intended to be an interim measure to this issue.

So, what work is being done with the agriculture and hunting communities to deal with this issue?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Once again, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources may have something to add to this conversation in debate when his department is discussed at a later date, but I will provide what I have, as far as the updated information from my department's perspective.

The Government of Yukon continues to mitigate the concerns raised by some members of the agricultural community about the Takhini Valley elk population and its impact on crops and farm infrastructure. We are completing a two-year pilot project to manage elk conflict through increased funding for fencing, getting more hunters on the land in key areas, and reducing the herd through harvesting. We are evaluating the results of this pilot project, and we will be discussing outcomes and next steps with affected landowners, farmers, interest groups, and First Nations. Measures, such as the elk-agriculture conflict hunt, aim to condition elk to stay away from conflict areas.

The 2016 elk management plan prioritized addressing conflicts between elk and agriculture. Addressing these conflicts remains our priority. The Department of Environment

conducted a minimum count survey of the herd in December 2021 and actually observed more elk than in March 2021. Although useful as a snapshot, the survey technique does not provide accurate population estimates on trends.

In the coming year, radio collars will be placed on some of the elk to help us understand the extent of their range and how they use it throughout the year. A new deputy ministers working group — made up of government, the agriculture sector, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, and First Nation representatives — will review existing data and identify options to mitigate concerns with the elk-agriculture conflict. This work will review the existing zones in the permit hunt area.

So, yes, our department, in concert with Energy, Mines and Resources, believes that the radio collar process will provide a more accurate number of elk. Also, I can receive guidance then as to what the actual range of the Takhini Valley elk population is — for instance, how far out of the so-called “Takhini buffer zone” they are ranging.

The technical working group, with representatives from Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources, was formed in September 2021. The group is currently completing an assessment of the two-year elk pilot project and will develop elk management options based on their findings. The development of options will also be informed by a planned public survey. Targeted engagement is to be conducted during the summer and fall of 2022. Work from this group will inform decisions at the select committee level.

There are obviously conflicting objectives that are a challenge to reconcile, but in broad brush strokes, Yukoners have been clear on the desire to ensure the Takhini and Braeburn elk herds remain healthy and self-sustaining, but the presence of elk on the landscape provides many Yukoners with opportunities to view and learn how elk behave in their natural environment and to harvest elk. That’s a contradistinction with the goals and aspirations of the Yukon Agricultural Association.

With respect to a statistical analysis, our Conservation Officer Services branch received the following complaints by fiscal year. In 2019-20, there were three complaints related to elk conflict. In 2020-21, there were four complaints related to elk conflict. In 2021-22, there was one complaint related to elk conflict — recognizing that this may not be entirely consistent with the level of concern that may actually exist, but those are the numbers that we have received from Conservation Officer Services branch.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**Mr. Istchenko:** We had left off with elk. I just have another couple of questions. I just want to know if the department has the most recent population count for both the Takhini and Braeburn herds. How did they count them and what was the cost for this count?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** First, with respect to the budget for fiscal 2021-22, \$38,630 was budgeted for the Takhini Valley and Braeburn area. For this upcoming year, \$40,000 is budgeted for the Takhini Valley and Braeburn area as well, but also includes support for the working group and the collaring project. The most recent numbers that started the process of considering whether one should do the collaring to come up with more accurate numbers are: 134 animals in March 2021; 247 in December 2021; and then, curiously, 152 animals in 2022 — so, quite recently.

Although useful as a discrete snapshot of the number of elk in a precise area at a specific time, the minimum count survey technique does not provide accurate estimates of overall population size and cannot be used to identify population trends, as indicated by the fluctuation that occurred from March 2021 to December 2021 and then to the spring of 2022.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that answer.

I want to switch gears to the most favourite part of summer for many Yukoners: campgrounds.

There is work to be done at our campgrounds this year. When I went to the budget briefing, we talked a little bit about it. Many need maintenance, and there are a number of upgrades that should be taking place.

Can the minister answer which campgrounds are getting upgrades to the sites, and will there be infill happening or additional sites added to existing campgrounds? Are there tender opportunities for local businesses, and for which campgrounds?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The capital estimate for parks and campground infrastructure is \$1,089,000 and it consists of \$40,000 in personnel for general repairs to campground infrastructure by Parks. The \$597,000, as the member opposite has indicated, is for construction contracts for campground infrastructure and infill, and subject to any late-breaking information that I might be receiving, which I will provide to the member opposite — I will also endeavour to get him some more information for the breakdown of the \$597,000. I can provide greater detail in a return to the member, but the budget is \$292,000 for the category of Parks expanding existing infrastructure total, including campground infills — \$67,500. Tombstone backcountry trail development is \$50,000. Developing recreation destination — capital expenses to plan and establish a new frontcountry trail at Tombstone Park and green park operations — when I did a tour of some of the campsites last August and September, I believe that there is a push to have what is called “ground tube” garbage cans, which are more efficient and basically greener infrastructure. The

ongoing planning for the campgrounds within two hours of Whitehorse is budgeted at \$51,511.

For this year, it's design work, YESAB applications, and there's also a \$300,000 matter — a budget item for park playground safety — and a matter that has been delayed somewhat by virtue of — probably likely — COVID, but we have boat launch and dock replacement. The capital estimate for replacement of boat launches and docks is \$1.551 million for the cost of upgrades or replacements at 11 locations, including Aishihik Lake, Ethel Lake, Frenchman Lake, Lake Laberge, Nunatuk, Otter Falls, Quiet Lake south, Quiet Lake north, Tagish bridge, Teslin 10-mile, and Twin Lakes. That will be a great initiative for our boating enthusiasts.

That's an ambitious schedule, but hopefully it goes to enhance the camping experience for Yukoners, for other Canadians, and for our international travellers. What I have just broken down may not have a sufficient degree of specificity, but I can certainly provide that at a future date. So, Deputy Chair, that's substantially the information I have with respect to the upgrades.

In relation to the question the Member for Kluane asked about the tendering of contracts, we will just wait to see whether we have any up-to-date information on the tendering of the contracts.

With respect to boat launch procurement, two tenders have been awarded for this year, and those include sites at Tagish, Otter Falls, Aishihik, Ethel Lake, Nunatuk Lake, Frenchman Lake, and Twin Lakes.

Those are my responses that I have so far.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I thank the minister for that. I just have one more question, and then I'll turn the floor over.

My last question is about the newly proposed 150 campgrounds — or campground — so, within two hours of Whitehorse. It seems to be, in the minister's response, taking a little bit of a different direction when I asked him at Question Period. I understand that there is no final decision being made, but the minister did just mention that they were doing YESA stuff, so they must have some locations.

I'm just curious; are we still looking at one large 150-stall campground? Are we looking at multiple campgrounds to make up the 150? Have they actually picked locations?

I'm just wondering who will run these campgrounds. Will it still be run with the Department of Environment? Maybe it will be a private sector campground or maybe First Nations running that. Thank you, and I want to thank the staff who are here today supporting the minister. I'll leave it at that.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for that question from the member opposite and for his questions this afternoon in Committee of the Whole for the Department of Environment. I have a bit of background here, and then I think I can provide an answer to the question.

Just briefly, six Yukon First Nations, whose traditional territories are within two hours' drive of Whitehorse, were invited to discuss possible campground locations and partnership opportunities with the Yukon Parks branch. We are working with First Nations to identify a location that would

meet the requirement for the new campground laid out in the *Yukon Parks Strategy*.

Yukoners will have an opportunity to provide feedback on the new campground after a final location has been selected in consultation with impacted First Nations. To get to the construction phase, the Department of Environment will also have to complete the necessary planning and design work. The new campground will provide economic opportunities for First Nations and the private sector. There will be opportunities to bid on tenders for campground design, construction, and ongoing operations.

As I indicated previously in the Assembly, the location has not been identified. Ideally, it would be a single 150 camping sites location that would be identified; however, in the consultations so far, there has been a growing realization that this could have a fairly significantly large impact, and it could be quite a large project. As I had indicated previously, there is at least the beginning of a discussion to consider smaller pieces of this project, but that has not yet been confirmed either.

The final question was who would run these new campsites. It could depend on discussions with the impacted First Nations. There is at least a possibility of a large site, or if there were a few discrete sites, there could be either First Nation management or co-management, in the spirit of reconciliation and economic opportunity.

It's exciting, but it is a challenging file. I would certainly send a shout-out to the great staff at Parks in the Department of Environment, as they work through this file. I would also give a shout-out to the Parks staff, as they get ready for the spring-summer-fall 2022 camping season. I know that Yukoners love this time of year where they are counting down the days to around April 30, May 1, April 29 and that the diligent Parks staff are probably putting some of their snowblowers on overdrive to open the early sites, given the snow load this year.

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, as the Chair would like to take part in the debate on the Department of Environment.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

**Acting Chair (Ms. White):** Order, please.

Is there any further general debate on the Department of Environment?

**Ms. Tredger:** I would like to start by thanking the officials for coming today and thank you for the briefing that we had. It was very helpful. I may re-ask some of the same questions to have them on the record. I am just looking forward to the conversation today.

I wanted to start with the minister's mandate letter. The mandate letter says, "Begin the process of creating McIntyre Creek Park, working with the City of Whitehorse, affected First Nations, Yukon University and local stakeholders." I would like to ask for a progress update on that.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. We have initiated discussions with the City

of Whitehorse, and we will be following up with the affected Yukon First Nations, Yukon University, and local stakeholders toward the creation of McIntyre Creek park. The McIntyre Creek area supports a diversity of habitats important to wildlife, including wetlands. It is also known to be an important cultural area for both the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Yukon University recognizes the importance of the area to support field-based learning and research.

We acknowledge and respect this scenario with several concurrent planning processes already underway. This includes the development of the City of Whitehorse's new official community plan, Whitehorse 2040, the development of Yukon University's campus master plan, and the Lu Zil Män Fish Lake local area plan.

We will continue to work with affected parties to discuss the park's development and ways to ensure the environmental protection of McIntyre Creek moving forward.

I can advise that I have had, and I continue to have, quite regular meetings with the Mayor of Whitehorse and she confirms that the path forward with respect to McIntyre Creek, as far as the City of Whitehorse is concerned, is in fact the confirmation of the OCP, the official community plan. I will not speak for mayor and council, but my sense is that mayor and council are supportive of moving forward in a general sense, but they are not in a position to commit to a defined path forward, pending the review of the OCP. I understand that the first reading of the OCP is likely to be in May this year.

Certainly, we will continue the meetings, and we will also begin or re-engage with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün. The member opposite will know this, but the land set aside in the City of Whitehorse for a potentially more protected McIntyre Creek Park set aside, I suppose — 80 percent, or maybe more, of McIntyre Creek Park is west of the top of Copper Ridge. So, the top of Copper Ridge and it is further west — so, 80 percent is up in that area. The area, of course, of the greatest degree of complexity is between Porter Creek and so-called "Porter Creek D", the now-university and out to the Alaska Highway, the Kopper King, and into the connector to Whitehorse. That is on the map that I have in my office. It is a pretty small portion, but I think that there is the recognition that we will likely be speaking of the entire so-called "land mass", but the breakdown is probably 20 percent in that area of complexity. I am not saying that the other area is not going to become complex, but the maximum complexity is in that 20-percent area. It is certainly exciting, and I speak with my officials on it at every meeting that we have, and it is brought up with the City of Whitehorse at every meeting that I have there as well. So, I'm cautiously optimistic, but I know that there are something like 16, 17, or 18 stakeholders and interested groups. There will be a lot of input and opinions that will have to be considered.

From my perspective — I recognize that it's in my mandate letter and I do want to push on this — it aligns with the government's objectives to set more land aside but also to support so-called "urban national parks". The federal government just confirmed the first urban national park in

Canada. It's in the Rouge Valley in Scarborough, so in the east end of Toronto.

The north isn't specifically part of that policy or Minister Guilbeault's mandate, but we're pretty confident that the federal government will still be interested in finding some way to support First Nation municipal discussions, territorial government discussions, and other stakeholders because I think Minister Guilbeault's mandate letter directs him to seek other opportunities for urban parks.

Like I said, I think parks in Yellowknife, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit probably do not classify, but that doesn't mean that there wouldn't be support for the proposition.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, I understand that the conversations with the city are underway. Is there a timeline for the conversations with the affected First Nations and other stakeholders? I'll leave it there.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I would say that there are active discussions occurring between the Department of Environment officials and the City of Whitehorse already. Also, at the officials levels, the beginning of discussions have occurred with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Once the first reading of the OCP occurs in May, I have committed the Department of Environment to bring the parties together and begin in earnest the possibility of forging forward on the development of a management plan. Realistically, it would be in the early to mid summer.

**Ms. Tredger:** I entirely appreciate that answer, and I am looking forward to hearing how that goes. That is exciting news.

I would like to turn to the Youth Panel on Climate Change, which the minister mentioned in his opening remarks. I believe the quote was that he looks forward to learning from them. That is very exciting. I am also looking forward to that. However, the mandate for the current panel has been changed such that they are no longer able to make recommendations. I am wondering if the minister can speak to why that change was made and what and how he is hoping to learn from them.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We are excited to welcome the second cohort of the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change. We launched the call for applications in December 2021. After receiving a total of 26 applications, 10 panelists were selected. The panelists include youth between the ages of 13 and 25 who are representative of the cultural, gender, and regional diversity of the Yukon. Seven are from Whitehorse and there is one each from Haines Junction, Pelly Crossing, and Watson Lake.

Within the last week or so, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and I had the honour and pleasure of meeting most of the panel by Zoom. We were there for some of their first organizational meeting. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources might have been there for the balance of the meeting as well. The focus of this year's cohort will be on activities that build leadership, advocacy, policy-making skills, and engaging with other Yukon youth.

With respect to the member opposite's question, we welcomed the second cohort of panelists earlier this year, just now, and they are now continuing to build on the work of the first cohort. The focus we made for the second cohort was



leadership, advocacy, policy-making skills, and engaging with other Yukon youth.

I'm sure I can find out when — I think they're returning in the fall with their — I'll get that information, but they will be working in the spring and in the summer, returning, I believe, with their recommendations in the fall of this year.

**Ms. Tredger:** With regard to the last set of recommendations, is the government planning to create some sort of report card or accountability system so that the youth can see which of these recommendations have been implemented and where they are at with the implementation?

I do have the letter that the Premier along with the current Minister of Environment and the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources were copied on — so, the letter that the Premier wrote to the last youth panel. I would like to go through it in quite a bit of detail, actually, but before we start that, I was wondering: Is there going to be a broader, more public accountability mechanism for those recommendations, such as a report card?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As the member opposite will know, this is a — well, it would be all of government, but certainly a three-department response, and the letter itself, authored by the Premier — I am advised by my department that sort of three-department approach will continue with respect to dealing with the recommendations. I appreciate that the member opposite may wish to ask some specific questions in relation to this response letter, which has seven main recommendations. I have reviewed this letter at various times over the course of the last month, but in fairness, a number of the recommendations fall squarely within either ECO — the Executive Council Office — or with EMR, but I can certainly try to address some of the questions that the member opposite may have and then the mining and extractive industry, which is recommendation 7.

So, there is a commitment to work through these recommendations and to respond, but some of these recommendations are not within the purview of the Department of Environment.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, the question I asked was about whether there will be a process for reporting on these recommendations put forward by the last Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change. In the letter from the Premier, it says — and I quote: “We will continue this work and will provide updates on our progress through our annual reporting.”

So, I am wondering where that progress is going to happen, and while I appreciate that there are recommendations that apply to many different departments, to me, it seems like the most natural place to keep track of all those recommendations and make sure that they are happening as a whole would be the department with the Climate Change Secretariat, which we are debating at the moment.

I am wondering if the minister can provide more detail on what that reporting back is going to look like — that update on progress.

Part of the reason I want to do that is that this letter says — and I quote: “We have appended to this letter a summary of initiatives already underway which address most of your recommendations.”

That was not my reading of either the recommendations or this letter — that most of them were already underway. I would like to dive into that a little bit, because maybe there are pieces I am missing. I looked at these recommendations, which were bold, brave, innovative recommendations, and I was somewhat stunned to hear that they are already being done, because that is not what I see; so, I hope I can learn something different now.

I would like to start with section 1, which is the recommendations on education. I understand that Education is not the department we are debating. Again, this is about climate change, and that is the department we are debating.

Two of the recommendations were to create full scholarships for Yukon students pursuing out-of-territory post-secondary education and programs related to green energy transition with the condition of a return-to-work period and to make Yukon University tuition free for all northern youth.

I don't see that addressed in this section except by a comment that says, “Some of the recommendations ... are best actioned by ... the Yukon University. We encourage you to continue engaging with them as well.”

Does that mean that this department is not going to take any actions on these recommendations and leave it up to the Yukon University, or does the department see a role for themselves in advocating to respond to these recommendations by working with the Yukon University, as well as the Department of Education, on out-of-territory scholarships?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I guess my preliminary comments — and I recognize that the first cohort of the Youth Panel on Climate Change — this work finished a few months ago, but recognizing that the response that was sent to the panelists was penned and dated on March 8, 2022, so that, yes, absolutely, there is work to be done on an all-of-government approach. Some of the departments, including the Department of Education, are likely just receiving these recommendations and they will respond. The Climate Change Secretariat will be the clearing house, or they will receive the responses from the various departments. As far as the accountability piece, we will report progress in the *Our Clean Future* annual report.

I heard the first cohort of the Youth Panel on Climate Change. Most of the recommendations — but in any event, I found the education piece to be compelling, because I believe one of the person's names was Bruce — I think Bruce presented. It seemed that there was a significant gap, certainly in the public education system with respect to environmental education. That seemed like a good place to start as far as educating the next generation.

But the bottom line is that this letter is March 8. Work is to be done. If the question is: Will the Climate Change Secretariat receive the various responses from the various departments? The answer is yes. With respect to accountability, we have an annual report for *Our Clean Future*, and that report is published for this year around August — so relatively soon, and you will have the beginnings, or the embryonic start, of the responses to the recommendations on an all-of-government basis.

**Ms. Tredger:** I am actually very relieved to hear that there is a further response to this letter coming. As I have made quite clear, I have found this response extremely inadequate,

and I am very heartened to hear that there is more coming. I understand from that answer that it is coming in the *Our Clean Future* report, and I assume that there will be a section added on to respond to these recommendations so that these specific recommendations are responded to, and I look forward to that.

In the response letter regarding the second recommendation, it discusses indigenous guardians. It says — and I quote: “We are working with Indigenous Guardians through our work on parks and protected areas and with the federal government to support community-based adaptation projects.” That is in regard to, I believe, a recommendation about invasive species and increasing capacity.

Could the minister tell us what work is happening, which First Nations are involved, what projects are underway, and what the goals of the programs that are underway are?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As pertains to land guardians and First Nation participation in that regard, I will just provide a bit of background here. The Conservation Officer Services branch is a law enforcement agency dedicated to promoting safe communities. We deliver a suite of comprehensive programs and services in support of the well-being of all Yukoners in 10 districts, including Whitehorse and nine Yukon communities. Conservation officers investigate and enforce the Yukon’s environmental laws. Our goal is to conserve and protect Yukon’s fish and wildlife populations and their habitats by ensuring that everyone understands and complies with the laws meant to safeguard our natural resources. As one of the main enforcement agencies on the land, conservation officers collaborate with other law enforcement agencies — including Alaska, the Northwest Territories, and British Columbia — to assist in enforcing some federal environmental laws as well as British Columbia’s *Wildlife Act*.

Yukon conservation officers have a lot of ground to cover. They work together with many partners on the land to do so efficiently, including the public, other wildlife agencies, and First Nations. Managing human-wildlife conflict is a significant responsibility and challenge for conservation officers, whether that’s responding to nuisance or dangerous wildlife complaints, investigating livestock predation, crop damage complaints, or providing public notice of bear or wolf activity in a community.

Officers protect our fish, wildlife, and their habitat through inspections and field monitoring for compliance with trapping, hunting, and angling regulations.

While monitoring and compliance promotion helps to ensure that conservation measures are respected, public education, support, and trust are key components for making sure that Yukoners will be able to enjoy outdoor recreation experiences now and into the future.

Officers model ethical conduct for harvesting in the Yukon and educate the public in ethics through courses and workshops that they provide in collaboration with our stakeholders, interest groups, and local advisory bodies.

Officers are law enforcement professionals and undergo highly specialized training in a number of disciplines. Yukon conservation officers have the knowledge and skills to assist

RCMP when required, including on search and rescue missions, and have done so on a number of occasions.

Specific to the engagement with First Nation governments, there have been agreements reached with the Liard First Nation and the Kaska First Nation. In that respect, Kaska guardians have assisted with Parks with winter monitoring, and there are various transfer agreements in place. There have also been discussions with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations. I’m also advised that, with respect to the aerial surveys — which you have heard me speak about both in the last fiscal year and in the upcoming fiscal year — there has been First Nation involvement in those surveys.

As well, both staff in Parks and in Fish and Wildlife in the Department of Environment are actively engaged in conversations with First Nation governments and First Nation persons on the land. I can certainly provide greater detail going forward in a return.

Just to provide a level of detail for the discussions this afternoon, with respect to the Kaska guardians, \$30,000 was budgeted for last year, and \$30,000 has been budgeted for this fall. I am also advised that, in the discussions on administration of justice agreement negotiations, there can be a land guardian component of those, and the one example that has been brought to my attention would be the Teslin Tlingit Council.

**Ms. Tredger:** I have to admit that my frustration is rising a little bit, because we just listened to a long description of what conservation officers did, but I was relieved that there was some work going on with indigenous guardians. I am very excited to hear about that work; that is very good news.

So, in the interest of speeding this up a little, I would like to go through some of the other recommendations. So, recommendation 4 talks about indigenous sovereignty. I think that a notable omission in this response letter is that the recommendations from the youth panel are very clear — they are talking about both settlement and non-settlement nations — whereas in the response letter it exclusively talks about land claim and self-government agreements. I am just going to point that out.

In the next section, in local transportation, there are a number of recommendations that are not addressed such as implementing a bicycle rental program in each community, developing a winter food market — actually, to be fair, that is addressed, but in the response letter, it does say that the funding is provided for farmers markets, but the concept of a winter food market is not addressed at all.

A recommendation that really surprised me under recommendation 7 was a recommendation from the youth — this is number 2 under recommendation 7: “Prohibit corporate donations to political parties in the Yukon to ensure there are no real or perceived conflicts of interest surrounding environmental legislation for industry.” In the response letter, it says, “Respecting your recommendation on prohibiting corporate donations to political parties, the Yukon Legislative Assembly’s Special Committee on Electoral Reform is examining electoral reform options, which may include contribution limits for individuals and organizations/corporations.”

I was very surprised, because my understanding of that committee is that it is exclusively looking at electoral systems. I guess my question is: Does the minister have information that they are changing that mandate or that the mandate is different? If not, why were the youth told that's who would address this recommendation?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have no information today to provide to the Committee of the Whole Environment debate with respect to whether the Yukon Legislative Assembly Special Committee on Electoral Reform's mandate has been expanded in some way, but I am sure that information is available.

**Ms. Tredger:** I think that I have made my point. I just want to emphasize that I cried when I read that letter. I could not believe that the youth had poured their passion into this and they got this letter that said, "Yeah, we're kind of sort of doing these things. We are going to ignore the ones that don't apply to us. We are not going to give you a timeline for further recommendations and sort of shoehorn what we're doing into your recommendations, rather than having an honest conversation about them." I was so demoralized, and I cannot imagine how much more demoralizing it would have been for those youth. I am glad that the minister is looking forward to learning from this next cohort, and I very much hope that the approach will change. I am very heartened to hear that there are further responses coming; I will be looking for that.

I do want to move on, because we are running out of time and there is so much to cover. I would like to briefly talk about wetlands. The final wetland policy, I believe, is due in May, which is coming up quickly. One of the biggest concerns I heard about the draft wetland policy is the onus for protecting a wetland falling on either a conservation group or a First Nation to identify that it is of such significance that is worth protecting.

I was surprised by that emphasis, because there is a lot of evidence that wetlands are incredibly important for a whole host of reasons, not least of which is the amount of captured carbon they can contain. Given the importance of wetlands culturally, environmentally, and in terms of climate, why was the decision made that the burden of proof should fall on First Nations and environmental groups to prove that these wetlands are important, which is something we already know? Is there a plan to change that in the final document?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We are committed to completing a Yukon wetlands stewardship policy in 2022, as the member opposite indicated. The policy will help the Government of Yukon make decisions that respect the importance of wetlands and the benefits they provide and support a diverse, growing economy. Together, we can build a solid and consistent approach to wetlands stewardship that reflects the values and interests of Yukoners. This policy was drafted based on input from First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, federal and municipal governments, industry, and other key organizations through roundtable-facilitated discussions.

We heard from Yukoners through a public survey in the fall of 2021. A report on "what we heard" has been published

online. Our next step is to conclude consultation with our First Nation and indigenous partners.

Of course, wetlands are important in the Yukon, because they are essential to maintaining water flows, flood protection, purifying water, recharging and discharging groundwater, storing carbon, and providing habitat for fish and wildlife. In addition, certain wetlands support traditional subsistence and cultural activities, such as harvesting and recreation. The wetlands stewardship policies are intended to align with and complement existing regional land use planning efforts and work by assessors and regulators, like the Yukon Water Board and the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board.

The wetlands stewardship policy is just one way to address wetland stewardship. In addition to this policy, we are managing placer mining impacts on wetlands within the Indian River area using sector-specific policy guidance. We are evaluating the wetlands management guidance within the Dawson regional land use plan. Also, we are currently evaluating various tools to assess the health of wetlands. We have completed detailed mapping for the Indian River and Beaver River watersheds, and a similar mapping project focused on the Mayo and McQuesten watersheds is underway. This detailed mapping will assist future planning, assessment, and regulatory processes in these areas. We are also completing a regional wetland mapping exercise for the Peel watershed planning region.

The Yukon wetlands policy began under a roundtable partnership approach with collaborative development among many partners and shared responsibility to develop solutions and decisions related to the policy content. Five roundtable meetings were held with the policy development partners, including Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, municipal and federal governments, boards and councils, environmental non-governmental organizations, and industry.

During the public engagement period, the Government of Yukon received 207 responses from Yukoners in the form of e-mails, detailed responses on the policy, and survey responses.

A document summarizing all feedback is currently being prepared and will be posted on the government's website. I canvassed my officials and their best estimate is that the synthesis of the "what we heard" document — in fairness to the member opposite — does have diverse opinions, but those opinions and that response is in the process of being synthesized for release in the summer of this year.

The member opposite may also recall that there was a request by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in for the consultation period to be extended by 30 days, and that request was granted. At the end of last year, it was extended from October 4 to December 3. That is where we are at with respect to receiving all of this information. Of course, there is exciting work that is being done on the Dawson regional land use plan, and that dovetails with the wetlands policy as well.

In addition, there is still the requirement of the Yukon government to consult with First Nations on a government-to-

government basis, so that will be occurring in the next months as well.

**Ms. Tredger:** I have two follow-up questions. The first is: It sounds like if the “what we heard” document is coming out over this summer, which I would assume means by the end of August, that we won’t be getting the final policy in May, and I wonder if there is an update on when we can expect that final policy.

My second question is: Is there work being done on a system to manage the carbon release from wetlands in terms of how much we are going to allow? Is there thought being given to a system of capping the amount of carbon that can be released from developing wetlands or a system of making sure that we have some sort of sense of how much we are releasing and that we can make decisions about what levels are acceptable to us?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I am not sure whether I or my officials necessarily captured that final question. I am certainly prepared to answer it, perhaps in writing, going forward.

I think that it was about carbon capture and if, with this wetlands policy, there may actually be a sort of capped number of wetlands that could be at least potentially set aside because they have a certain carbon-capture potential.

I am not going to put words into the mouth of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but I certainly look forward to that question, and we will endeavour to answer it in a timely fashion.

So, I would just say finally that the “what we heard” document with respect to the wetlands policy is out, so the next step is to develop policy after the consultation with First Nations.

I know that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is on this file as well and would likely have some comments in the upcoming days when he is in Committee of the Whole.

The final comment that I would say — sort of a very high-level response from one of the executive summaries — is that the Yukon government is working to understand the role of wetlands and carbon storage so that we can have a better idea of how to account for them in our greenhouse gas emission calculations and targets.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair’s report

**Ms. White:** Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.*



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 65

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, April 12, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, April 12, 2022 — 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 made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 394, notice of which was given yesterday by the Member for Whitehorse Centre, was not placed on today's Notice Paper as it is not in order. In addition, the following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the action requested has been completed in whole or in part. They are: Motion No. 380, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, and Motion No. 381, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?  
 Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In recognition of National Public Safety  
 Telecommunicators Week**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise today to pay tribute to a very important group of people. This week is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week and we are all celebrating the people on the other end of the line when you call 911 in the Yukon. Whether you need police, fire, or ambulance, these people are often the comforting voice during a stressful situation.

It takes a special kind of person to do this job — someone who is able to stay calm, think on their feet, and connect with others.

Emergency dispatchers in our territory take on an immense responsibility every time they pick up the phone. For example, emergency response communications officers with the Yukon Emergency Medical Services team receive emergency calls, triage and prioritize the condition of the patient, dispatch the responder support needed, keep tabs on the safety of emergency responders, coordinate patient transfers to health care facilities, and provide lifesaving pre-ambulance arrival instructions over the phone, such as how to administer a naloxone kit, all while maintaining a calm presence for the person on the other end of the phone. It's a high-pressure, high-stakes, round-the-clock job.

I recently heard a quote stating that emergency dispatchers are the most important people you will never see. I must say that I agree with this statement. It also got me thinking — we really don't thank these people often enough. They work selflessly behind the scenes to keep Yukoners safe. Emergency response communications officers often provide a patient's

initial medical care but seldom see their entire health care journey. Similarly, fire dispatchers are not present for the photo opportunity once the fire has been extinguished. That's why I am so thrilled to have this opportunity today to pay tribute to this incredible group of people who receive and dispatch the 911 calls for the RCMP and policing services, emergency medical services, health services, and our fire departments. They help to create a better and safer community, territory, and country for the public.

Please take the time to celebrate these hard-working individuals in our emergency communication centres who dispatch our first responders to help us in our times of greatest need.

Thank you.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize our local 911 and emergency dispatchers and all other behind-the-scenes staff and volunteers during National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week.

For any of us who have ever had to call 911 in a critical situation, you know the important role that these dedicated people play. From the moment you call until emergency services arrive, the person who picks up the line is an important part of ensuring that the emergency is handled swiftly and professionally, with precision and the utmost care and respect. The person will assess and navigate the situation in response to a call, as well as provide instructions, make split-second decisions, locate and dispatch the appropriate emergency personnel, and often provide needed comfort to the person on the line.

When a dispatcher takes a call, there is no telling what they might be dealing with.

They are professionals and trained to help whoever might be on the other line. They dedicate their lives and careers to helping others and deserve this week of recognition by the public. I would note that the Yukon RCMP noted that, during 2021 alone, there were 30,000 calls to 911 in the Yukon — an average of 80 per day.

I would just like to again thank all of the professional telecommunications personnel for the work that they do to assist others each and every day here in the Yukon. Your dedication is much appreciated.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Every year, during the second week of April, the telecommunications personnel and the public safety community are honoured, and I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to thank those calm souls who answer our calls for help. Hopefully, you never have to dial 911, but if you do, know that you will be met by a calm voice that will walk you through your crisis. Whether it's related to health, fire, or the RCMP, the person on the other end of the line will know what to do and who to send, all while keeping you calm and focused.

So, thank you to the heroes behind the headset — those knowledgeable, compassionate individuals who have dedicated their lives to serving their communities.

*Applause*

### In recognition of early childhood educators

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to early childhood educators — to recognize and appreciate the essential services and valuable support that they provide to Yukon families. I hold up not only the value of early childhood educators, but also how ECEs help to create a healthier community for all Yukoners. ECEs foster innovation through child-led discovery and the creation of lifelong learners. They develop skills and competencies in children through purposeful play. They model empathy and care in early childhood, resulting in more empathetic and caring future adults.

Quality early learning experiences improve children's chances for future health and success. ECEs play a critical role in influencing the course of a person's physical, cognitive, and social development during early childhood, and let's not forget how, in the past two years, ECEs worked tirelessly to create healthy, safe, and positive learning environments during a pandemic — one of the most trying times that our society has faced.

Sadly, the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on women as primary caregivers. Investments in early learning and childcare are a critical pathway to recovery in this regard.

There are 364 educators working in licensed early learning programs throughout the Yukon — 316 in Whitehorse and 48 in the rural communities — who have provided support, care, and guidance in 74 programs with spaces for more than 2,000 children through the first year of our universal childcare.

The Yukon's early learning educators are engaged and dedicated to creating high-quality learning environments. Our early childhood educators are shaping tomorrow's world view, and for that, I am truly grateful and proud.

Mr. Speaker, I'm committed to supporting early learning childhood educators and all that they do. I ask all Yukoners today to stand with me and applaud the excellent work that our ECEs do and the meaningful services and contributions that they provide every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Yukon's early childhood educators. The years before a child starts school are critical to their emotional, physical, and educational development. Those critically important years set the stage for success and provide the foundation that a child needs to start their education journey.

For many parents who are in the workforce, it is important to them that during the hours they are away from their child throughout the week, they know that they are not only safe, but learning, socializing, and developing the skills they require to navigate school.

Toddlers and young children are continuously learning. They absorb information throughout the day. The role of educators to be able to provide the guidance and structure they require to nurture that learning is so important. It takes a special person to be able to provide this type of care. It takes patient, enthusiastic, attentive, interactive, and knowledgeable individuals to help build this strong foundation for our children.

Early childhood education is so much more than just daycare. It teaches our kids creativity, friendship, teamwork, cooperation, and respect for others — all skills that will help children thrive throughout their school journey.

To all early childhood educators and all those who work in early learning, who teach our kids these critical skills and provide a safe and fun environment for young Yukoners, thank you for your dedication. Your job is not an easy one, but know that the important role that you play in the growth and development of our children is sincerely appreciated, not just by parents, but by the entire community.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the amazing work of our territory's early childhood educators.

We trust them every day with our most precious resource, with our futures. Navigating parenthood can be such a daunting task, and early childhood educators go above and beyond to help.

For too many years, government has treated early years centres as a place to keep our kids busy so their parents could go to work, but thanks to the hard work of Yukon's educators, that changed and the government acknowledged the importance of early childhood education.

Early childhood educators have gone out on their own to find professional development options allowing for high-quality education no matter the cost to the centres themselves. Some have even opted to send their educators for training outside of the territory or brought in trainers and educators themselves. Our ECEs have fought to keep their centres open during COVID, regardless of the difficulties they faced. During COVID-19 lockdowns, many early years professionals went to work to ensure that front-line workers could still go to work.

In centres where this wasn't possible, many continued meeting children daily over Zoom. These difficulties are not over as they still have to work amidst constant exposure notices. Yet in the face of all this, Yukon's early childhood educators have continued to be dedicated to our children so that they get the best possible start in life.

So, today on behalf of the Yukon NDP, I pay tribute to all early childhood educators of the Yukon for their hard work that they do and continue to do for ensuring our children are safe and have a quality education.

*Applause*

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



## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling today five documents: from December 7, 2011, the *Yukon News* article entitled “New F.H. Collins school build delayed”; from December 18, 2014, a *Whitehorse Star* article entitled “Total school costs soar to \$54 million”; from March 26, 2014, a *Yukon News* article entitled “Premier downplays true cost of F.H. Collins rebuild”; from March 26, 2014, a Yukon Liberal Party press release entitled “Ballooning costs at F.H. Collins highlight spending in new budget”; and finally, from August 12, 2016, another *Yukon News* article entitled “Demolition costs for old F.H. Collins building higher than expected”.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Ms. White:** I rise to give notice of the following motion:  
THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with stakeholders and other governments to find solutions to retain access for Yukon mining products at the deep-water port in Skagway, Alaska.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support municipal and First Nation governments with testing waste-water systems for COVID-19.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create a central data collection system for waste-water test results of COVID-19 and make the information publicly available through its COVID-19 dashboard.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Wolverine mine site

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to provide an update on the former Wolverine mine site. The Government of Yukon and the receiver, PricewaterhouseCoopers, remain focused on continuing water treatment, maintaining infrastructure, and addressing any urgent site needs.

Water emerging from the underground is now treated on a year-round basis due to recent upgrades to the treatment process. A new treatment capacity has been added that allows us to safely discharge approximately 228,000 cubic metres of treated water from the tailings storage facility. This has brought water volumes back to within safe levels, and water treatment at the facility will continue throughout the 2022 season to further reduce levels. We have also replaced aging infrastructure, completed a series of water management infrastructure repairs, and upgraded the storm-water management systems.

Transfer of care and maintenance is the next logical step following the conclusion of the unsuccessful sale process led by the receiver this past fall. We are in discussions with the receiver on the future transfer of care and maintenance responsibilities to the Government of Yukon in the fall of this year, 2022. Wolverine is the first abandoned mine that the Government of Yukon has sole responsibility for, as it was permitted after the territory assumed responsibility for managing natural resources from the Government of Canada.

When the mine ceased operations, the cost to close and reclaim the mine was estimated to be \$35.5 million, though overall costs will likely be higher. Since 2018, the Government of Yukon has spent \$24 million on care and maintenance, water treatment, administrative costs of the receiver, and legal fees. About \$10.5 million of that spending was recovered from financial security posted by Yukon Zinc Corporation. We expect to spend approximately \$12 million in the 2022-23 fiscal year on ongoing care and maintenance and water treatment, urgent works to address higher risk areas at the site, remediation planning, and administrative costs of the receiver as they transition from their role. Prior to receivership, Yukon Zinc sold mine assets on-site to a company named Welichem. Currently, we are working very closely with the receiver and Welichem to resolve ownership and responsibility of site assets and equipment.

The story of the Wolverine mine is a cautionary tale of what happens when the security collected for a mine is not adequate for the risk of environmental impacts and proper remediation. The Yukon has had to learn this lesson the hard way — the expensive way. Mining remains an essential part of our economy and critical minerals an essential part of our energy transition away from fossil fuels. Our government remains committed to the responsible development of the Yukon’s mineral resources in a way that protects the environment, respects the rights and traditions of First Nations, and benefits all Yukoners.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that ministerial statement as well as the opportunity to respond to it today. We look forward to hearing details of the final care and maintenance plan that will be in place for this fall. I do have some questions about this project, however, for the minister.

The former minister told this House two years ago that the sale of the property was imminent; however, that failed to materialize. So, can the current minister explain what happened with that deal that the former minister announced a couple of years ago?

Then, during departmental briefings last fall, officials from Energy, Mines and Resources indicated at the time that there was substantial interest in the project during the sale process; however, as the minister mentioned, there was no interest when it went to court for sale. Can the minister provide us with any analysis done of why that early interest waned and there were no parties to come forward approximately one month after that briefing?

Finally, department officials provided us a response yesterday to questions that we raised during this spring’s

budget briefing. In that document, amounts for security currently being held on a number of larger projects were presented. Can the minister confirm that those amounts held are sufficient for work that would need to be done to remediate those projects?

I look forward to asking more questions about this and other projects when we discuss Energy, Mines and Resources later this Sitting in Committee of the Whole budget debate.

**Ms. White:** Yukoners know too well the environmental and financial cost of poorly regulated mines like Faro and Mount Nansen. We have been promised a new way of mining that would be done sustainably and to the benefit of Yukoners and their businesses. With modern mining and regulatory regimes, economic and environmental disasters were supposed to be a thing of the past, yet here we are with Wolverine, a mine that failed to pay its full securities, a mine that ignored its obligations in the mine closure plan, and a government of the day that failed in its responsibilities. Unlike the Faro mine, Wolverine was permitted after devolution, which means that it is a sole responsibility of the Yukon government.

Before fingers are pointed from the current government to a previous one, the unfortunate truth is that, regardless of party affiliation, the Yukon government is the Yukon government. So, what has the Yukon government learned from this experience?

We know that on October 31, 2014, Yukon Zinc Corporation missed a \$350,000 payment to Yukon government, but they were allowed to continue their operations until they closed early in the new year. The last securities payment that they made was on July 31, 2014. Wolverine operated for nearly three months without paying its securities, and we all know what happened next. The mine closed and went into receivership, leaving Yukoners holding the bag.

Yukon contractors were owed nearly \$4.3 million that they were never able to collect in full. Instead, they were offered pennies on the dollar, and when the underfunded security funds ran out last year, Yukoners had to pick up the bill. In this fiscal year, the Wolverine mine will cost Yukoners \$11.9 million just to maintain the site, and that doesn't even cover a closure plan. I would like to think that the *Miners Lien Act* has been highlighted as one issue in this saga. After all, it is the piece of legislation that allowed Yukon businesses to be left holding a \$4.3-million empty promise. So, this is a big problem for Yukoners and for industry.

What happened with Wolverine is a stain on the mining industry, affecting its image and credibility in the eyes of Yukoners, but it is also a stain on Yukon government's reputation. Yukon, its mining companies and suppliers, mine workers, and everyone who calls the territory home deserve better.

As the minister lays out this cautionary tale about Wolverine mine, Yukoners have questions about a current security deposit situation. Minto is currently violating its water licence due to the lack of storage in its tailings ponds. As a result, they recently had their security deposit increased by more than \$30 million. The government says that the new

deposit was to be paid by April 5, but it does not appear that Minto met this deadline. Instead, Minto has hired consultants to fight the increase and appears to be doing everything it can to avoid the payment.

So, I would like to know: Has Minto paid their security of \$104 million in full, and if not, when will the minister start to collect on this and protect the interest of Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I agree with the member opposite that we do deserve better, and I also agree that it is the responsibility of the Yukon government to clean up Wolverine.

As I said earlier, our Liberal government is committed to responsible development of the Yukon's mineral resources in a way that protects the environment, respects the rights and traditions of First Nations, and benefits all Yukoners. Mining and mineral exploration remain of central importance to the Yukon's economy, contributing significantly to the territory's economic performance through the pandemic. Critical minerals are also essential to address the climate crisis and transition to renewable energy.

The Yukon was one of only two jurisdictions in Canada to experience GDP growth in 2020, and it was largely thanks to mining. Unfortunately, the Yukon Party government and Wolverine have given us a textbook example of what not to do in mining.

The Yukon Party allowed Yukon Zinc to fall millions of dollars behind on security payments. Quoting the former minister, "... when it comes to the Wolverine mine, we chose not to shut down the mine..."

Indeed, they let it continue to operate for months while no payments were made. Of course, it isn't just taxpayers left holding the bag; there were plenty of Yukon businesses that were owed money, and many of those companies received only 11 cents on the dollar, thanks to this mismanagement.

Also, there were many dedicated mine staff who didn't receive their wages for months — some who continued to work without pay to protect the site.

The shape the company left the mine site in led to increasing environmental risks and costs. For example, when the mine portal filled with water and needed to be processed through the tailing storage facility, the cost of treating that water increased substantially many times over.

The sale of equipment from Yukon Zinc to Welichem led to a situation where the receiver was not allowed to use on-site pumps, generators, or even the camp. Challenged by not being able to use the existing on-site mine equipment increased risks and costs. This is the mess we inherited, and this is the mess we are literally and financially still cleaning up seven years later, and we do take responsibility for it.

After many court proceedings, we are on the right track to clean up the property, and we will soon finalize an agreement with Welichem to have them remove old equipment and machinery from the site. Since 2018, the Government of Yukon has spent \$24 million on care and maintenance, water treatment, administrative costs of the receiver, and legal fees. We continue to work to prevent serious environmental degradation. The capable site management team continues to

do this work along with the folks at Assessment and Abandoned Mines, and I want to thank all of them for their dedication to address the situation at Wolverine.

This year, we expect to spend approximately \$12 million on ongoing care and maintenance, water treatment, urgent works to address higher risk areas at the site, and remediation planning.

Work is well underway today in order to improve the environmental, socio-economic, and governance models of mining. We are working with First Nations to develop successor mining legislation. At the same time, we are working with industry and environmental groups. The Yukon Party could have done this work, but they chose not to. There are now three operating mines in the territory and a fourth has just been permitted.

With respect to Wolverine, we will continue to address the problems left behind and clean up the site. In the words of the site manager, "It's time we put this to bed."

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Alaska fisheries impact on Yukon River salmon

**Mr. Istchenko:** Earlier this year, a report commissioned by a coalition of groups in BC showed that the commercial fishing industry in Alaska could be affecting the number of salmon that return to BC to spawn. This prompted discussion and criticism of the Pacific Salmon Treaty between the US and Canada.

The T̓silhqot'in First Nations, as well as several other salmon stakeholder groups in BC, are now calling for a renegotiation of the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The *Yukon River Salmon Agreement* also falls under the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

What is the Minister of Environment's position with regard to the call for the Pacific Salmon Treaty to be renegotiated?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I had the opportunity to meet with my federal counterpart on this topic a number of months ago. I'm certainly open to this occurring. We know that there has been a full collapse of the Pacific salmon as they return to both the Alaska portion of the Yukon River and the Yukon portion of the river, not even allowing for subsistence fishing of either Yukon First Nations or Alaska First Nations.

I've read some reports — not recently — but have I read reports indicating that there are concerns about overfishing in the Bering Sea and the North Pacific, but also there could be issues with respect to the water temperature rising, as impacted by climate change.

So, I'm open to any and all avenues to try to rehabilitate salmon stocks in both Alaska and then through agreements with Alaska as well, as the numbers have collapsed.

**Mr. Istchenko:** What I wanted to know was the minister's position on whether the Pacific Salmon Treaty should be renegotiated. So, at least one of the First Nations in BC is calling for the Pacific Salmon Treaty between Canada and the US to be renegotiated. The chief of the T̓silhqot'in First Nations said that the people have sacrificed their aboriginal

rights to fish and were disappointed to find out that they made those sacrifices. He says — and I quote: "... only to learn that the drastic decline in returns was the result of major overfishing in Alaskan waters."

According to the 2021 state of the environment report, the 2020 population target for the Yukon River salmon was not met. Does the minister believe that the tools that are currently in place throughout the Yukon salmon agreement are sufficient enough to rebuild and conserve Canadian-origin salmon in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As indicated, there is very little fishing that is occurring in the Yukon, and the various species of salmon are not being harvested in any meaningful way in the Yukon.

We know that there is some fishing occurring in Alaska, but the bottom line is, in speaking to both the wildlife biologists in my department and my federal Fisheries and Oceans counterparts and to some of my counterparts through officials in Alaska, that it's a complex issue, and there are similar collapses to the stocks all along the BC coast and in Alaska, so it's occurring everywhere.

I will be continuing my discussions with my federal counterparts, my BC counterparts, and Alaska counterparts in order to reach some sort of additional and creative solutions, but the numbers on the Yukon River have not recovered, and we certainly wish them to recover.

**Mr. Istchenko:** The Yukon River Panel, which is established by the *Yukon River Salmon Agreement*, recommends spawning goals, reviews management strategies and conservation objectives, and funds restoration and enhancement projects focusing on Canadian-origin salmon stocks. Also, Yukon First Nations have placed voluntary restrictions or avoided subsistence harvest activities.

The question for the minister is: Does he believe that the current tools available to fisheries managers in both Alaska and Canada are sufficient to meet the goals of rebuilding Yukon-origin salmon stocks?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We strive to maintain quality fisheries and angling opportunities. To do so, we focus on resources in three main areas: monitoring fish populations by conducting surveys and assessments; assessing harvest impacts through angler harvest surveys and field programs; and also recognizing that Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) is the lead agency for salmon management. We also play an advisory role with First Nations and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans on matters pertaining to salmon management.

The Fish and Wildlife branch employs two biologists and two technicians who are dedicated to monitoring the status and health of Yukon's freshwater fish populations. Maintaining viable fish populations supports important cultural and social practices in the Yukon.

The subsistence fishing continues to be important to First Nations, and Yukon's licensed anglers are also very active in our lakes and rivers, with more than 33,500 fish harvested annually by licensed anglers.

To answer the member opposite's question, these discussions are ongoing, and as I indicated in both my first and

second responses, the genesis for the fishing stock collapse in the Pacific Ocean is complex, but as the secondary partner on this file, we continue to work hard to reach a solution.

**Question re: Mining legislation**

**Mr. Kent:** Five years ago, the Premier promised the mining industry that a collaborative framework for timelines and reassessments would be developed. We have asked about this many times in this Legislature, and the Premier and his ministers have evaded the question. However, a confidential briefing note that we have obtained indicates that the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon government sent a joint letter to the federal minister in December 2020 requesting a focused review of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, or YESAA. A reply from the minister was received on February 18, 2021, indicating that he was willing to work on these amendments.

Can the Premier confirm that this letter was sent, and if so, would he provide us with a copy of the letter and the response from the minister?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I don't have any update for the member opposite currently, but I will endeavor to get back to him on his specific questions.

We have spoken in the past in the Legislative Assembly about oversight when it comes to YESAA. We have spoken about our ability to work with both regulators to make sure that we are moving forward on a memorandum of understanding. We have spoken at length in Committee of the Whole debates on that.

As far as any specific new information the member opposite wants, I have nothing new to add right now, other than that we continue to work on these extremely important files with these agencies that really are, in my opinion, an industry standard right across Canada. I believe that the regulatory processes and our work and endeavours there are reflected in the most recent Fraser Institute update, which promotes very heavily the Yukon as a favourable mining jurisdiction in Canada.

Of course, YESAA is not just for mining, but it is an extremely important part, and it is extremely important recognition of the good work that is being done on this side of the Legislative Assembly with our regulatory processes.

**Mr. Kent:** I am hoping that the Premier will commit to get us a copy of that joint letter that was sent from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Government of Yukon, as well as the response that the federal minister sent back.

The confidential note also says — and I quote: “The purpose of the review will be to propose amendments to address issues surrounding the need for an assessment when a project’s authorization is amended or renewed.” To our knowledge, there has been no public statement or announcement made regarding these potential changes to YESAA.

Can the Premier explain why nothing has been announced, given that this initial letter was sent in late 2020? Can he confirm that work is underway to amend this legislation?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I would ask the member opposite to have a bit of patience with things, knowing full well that, again,

the genesis of this conversation — the reset legislation — started back in his days with Bill S-6.

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** The members opposite don't like the answer, I guess; they're speaking off-mic.

But again, it was really difficult to get us back into a track with the memorandum of understanding in mining because there was a lot of litigation pending at that time that was going to put a lot of our land into freeze when it came to exploration because of the two different decks when it came to the litigation from the former government.

But at the same time, COVID as well — very hard to move forward. But the good news is that these letters heading to federal — where you have First Nation governments and the Yukon government working together to try to find a common ground and to try to find a solution for a wrinkle in the system that really puts a lot of onus on First Nation governments when it comes to certain projects.

So, the good work of the previous Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and of the current minister as well to get to a place where both we and First Nation chiefs are writing letters to the federal government urging them and us to work together in a collaborative fashion is a welcome change of pace under the leadership of the Yukon Liberal government.

**Mr. Kent:** So, this briefing note that we obtained said that there was a joint letter sent in December 2020. A response was received a couple of months later from the federal government that was favourable to proceeding with the amendments, but we have not seen any public announcement that there would be changes to YESAA, which I'm sure the Premier and all members of this House would agree would be major news.

That confidential note also says that the most recent meeting of the oversight group was in September 2021 and that the assessment of amendments and renewals was to be discussed at that meeting.

So, can the Premier tell us if any meetings have been held since to discuss the proposed YESAA amendments? When will industry, the public, and other stakeholders be consulted on these proposed changes?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** You know, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to any announcements moving forward, we have been working hand in glove with Yukon First Nations when it comes to these issues. I know that this is a change of pace from the previous government, but again, Yukon First Nations have maintained that any decision concerning determinations and needs for assessments on projects, amendments, renewals, or what have you — the First Nations will be there at that table and we will support each other in these provisions.

I will say as well that we have an excellent new chair on YESAB, which is sending some really good waves throughout the mining community. The members opposite keep on talking about these confidential documents that they have managed to get a hold of and, interestingly enough, have proven to be unreliable. We, through ATIPP, have changed the rules to make sure that our briefing notes are accessible to the members opposite. There is nothing confidential about them. They are

accessible to the public — and the Official Opposition, when they were in power, not so much.

Again, more open, more transparent — these are not confidential things that the members opposite worked very hard to get a hold of. It is through the ATIPP process.

So, we will continue to work hand in glove with Yukon First Nations when it comes to these important initiatives to reduce red tape for our mining industry and for other projects in communities of importance.

**Question re: Mental health services**

**Ms. White:** Yesterday, I asked the minister about systemic failures in Yukon's mental health care system based on Lori Fox's article for *The Globe and Mail*. Instead of answering the question, she talked about what is supposedly available, so let's talk about it.

First, she referred people to the mental wellness hubs. The minister should know that they are chronically short-staffed and, according to communities, are far from meeting the needs. She also mentioned the Canadian Mental Health Association here in Whitehorse. While they are doing great work, they have no psychiatrist on staff, nor can they refer you to one. There are psychiatrists, but the wait times are six to 12 weeks and only if you can get a referral from a doctor, which, despite what the minister said yesterday, is a long time and one more barrier when someone is in crisis.

So, does the minister realize that her patchwork solutions for mental health just aren't working?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that mental wellness services here in the territory are critically important. I can indicate, of course, that we have improved mental health services through a number of initiatives here in Yukon Territory over the years that we have been here. They have increased. Are they perfect? No. Are they available to everyone? Yes. Are they working hard — all mental health workers — to make sure that they are serving Yukon communities? Absolutely.

Community-based mental wellness services and mental health services were simply not available prior to the determination of this government being in power and ultimately taking that problem — issue — to heart to make sure that there are community-based mental wellness services here in the territory.

I look forward to being able to continue this conversation.

**Ms. White:** Things are even worse for people who can't afford to pay out of pocket, and to quote Lori, wealthy people get better care faster through private services.

The few mental health care services available for free to Yukoners can have months-long wait-lists. They are short appointments with almost no follow-up. Mental health care is health care. No matter how much money you make or what benefits you have, everyone deserves equal access.

The minister's laundry list of what she thinks Yukoners need is not working. She even said herself: Are they perfect? Her answer was no. The minister yesterday said that funding isn't an issue, so will the minister commit to subsidizing at least 12 sessions per year with a private psychologist of their choice for every Yukoner who needs it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I did indicate that the financial resources were not necessarily the issue. I think that it is critically important — and I know that Yukoners are well aware of this. It doesn't seem to have maybe permeated the Legislative Assembly, but health care workers are at a critical shortage here in the territory and here in the country — actually, nationally and internationally.

We are working extremely hard to make sure that there are opportunities for Yukon caregivers to come here in the territory. We have — let's be clear — more physicians per capita than anywhere in Canada. We have the opportunity and the authority to use and have specialists come here, and they do come to the territory to provide services to Yukoners.

It is absolutely the case that there is money in this year's budget to hire more nurse practitioners, to expand the services across the territory, to expand the services through clinics, both here in Whitehorse and at the hubs across the territory. The format of those hubs, of course, involves multiple types of care, and that is what Yukoners need.

**Ms. White:** This isn't a critique of those working on the ground, but this is a critique of the government direction — that's what I'm talking about. Yesterday the minister dismissed Lori's story by saying — and I quote: "I certainly am not going to respond to an individual person's experience..."

Mr. Speaker, this was published in one of Canada's most highly regarded newspapers. It was fact-checked and based on a decade of reporting. Lori's story is not an individual experience; it has happened to hundreds of Yukoners for years while this government, and the one before, did little to help. I quote Lori one last time so the minister hears them loud and clear — and I quote: This is "... an open, standing challenge to all level's of the Yukon government to commit to fixing..." the mental health care system. "You're killing people - you nearly killed me."

Will the minister launch an audit of our mental health care system so that this story does not ever happen again?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think it's absolutely required that I correct the record and reiterate that I have not been dismissive of anyone's personal experience and I would not be dismissive of anyone's personal experience.

We have taken on the challenge of improving mental wellness services — mental health services — here in the territory. We have set up hubs across the territory. We have staffed those hubs as best as possible at the moment — up to 21 mental health workers across the territory — an improvement from the one who was responsible for everyone in the territory prior to our government coming to be.

We have put money in our budgets this year and last year toward the short-stay psychiatric unit to improve services at Yukon's hospitals. We have increased the budget for mental wellness services in the Department of Health and Social Services. We have increased the budget for Canadian Mental Health Services, which now has six-days-a-week service and is going to seven-days service when they can staff. We have recognized the issues brought forward by a world pandemic and an opportunity for Yukon to respond to that in a way that has been positive and will continue.

**Question re: McIntyre Creek park**

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. In the 2021 election, the Liberal Party committed to creating McIntyre Creek park. Yesterday, the minister told the Legislature that he had asked the federal government to consider developing an urban national park. Can the minister confirm this: Is the government considering a national park in Whitehorse?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The short answer is no, and I provided a response yesterday. The federal government is not committed to establishing a national park north of 60. However, what I did say was that Minister Guilbeault is committed — his mandate letter says to try to establish urban parks that are part of the national parks strategy below 60. The first urban park that has now been initiated, or has been opened, is in the Rouge Valley in Scarborough, just east of Toronto.

His mandate is to identify other areas in other provinces to establish urban national parks, and I believe there are five or six other potential sites.

What I also said was that there will be interest from the federal government to set lands aside and that their planning resources may come to bear so that there is a combined effort between the federal government, the territorial government, the municipal government, and First Nation governments in order to explore the possibility of establishing —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Ms. Clarke:** We are aware that the planned park is much bigger than many people realize and stretches from the mouth of McIntyre Creek all the way down to the former Whitehorse copper mine. There are many overlapping land interests in this area and several active or pending quartz claims.

Is the minister considering expropriating mining claims or private land dispositions in the proposed McIntyre Creek park?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** We have initiated discussions with the City of Whitehorse. We will be following up with the affected Yukon First Nations, Yukon University, and local stakeholders toward the creation of McIntyre Creek park. The McIntyre Creek area supports a diversity of habitats important to wildlife, including wetlands. It is also known to be an important cultural area for both the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council.

Yukon University also recognizes the importance of the area to support field-based learning and research. We acknowledge and respect that this is an area with several concurrent planning processes already underway. This includes, but is not limited to, the development of the City of Whitehorse's new official community plan — Whitehorse 2040 — the development of the Yukon University campus master plan, and the Łu Zil Män Fish Lake local area plan.

We will continue to work with the affected parties to discuss the park's development and ways to ensure the environmental protection of McIntyre Creek moving forward.

**Question re: Top of the World Highway border crossing**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** On March 31 of this year, the Minister of Tourism and Culture told Committee of the Whole that the CBSA would be opening the Top of the World Highway border

crossing, that it would be fully staffed, and we would be back to pre-pandemic levels.

This morning, we called US Customs and were told that no decision has been made yet about whether or not they will open the Poker Creek border crossing.

Can the minister confirm that what he told the Legislature on March 31 was correct? Will the Little Gold Creek-Poker Creek border crossing be fully opened this season?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, we've discussed multiple border crossings here in the House over the last number of weeks since the session started. Again, since April 1, 2022, the fully vaccinated international visitors to the Yukon have not — these are some of the things we have worked on — have not required a pre-COVID-19 test. We worked with our airports and borders. We worked in ensuring that we had Canada Border Services staffing at our airports.

We have also made things easier with the ArriveCAN app — that was ensuring that, for areas where there wasn't connectivity, that we had coverage.

Over the last week, we have been made aware from business owners in Dawson City of concerns on the US side. Of course, we have the opportunity to work very closely with Canada Border Services, and I applaud the team out of Vancouver for giving us the support there. One of our concerns at this particular time is when you think about the logistics of opening up that particular site on the Top of the World Highway. We're also watching what's happening with the crossing in Dawson right now and having to hopefully not have a delay on opening. Our understanding, and within our border group of work, is that we are going to have an opening. Again, the commitment was to make sure that we had Canada Border Services in place, and now we're looking at the delay on the US side, and still, we'll bring those back to the Assembly.

**Question re: Chilkoot Trail Inn social housing**

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat. Following damage caused by a fire, the Whitehorse fire department issued a notice to vacate the Chilkoot Trail Inn due to numerous building code issues. The residents of the Chilkoot Trail Inn are almost all social assistance clients and have few, if any, other options for housing. At the time, the Department of Health and Social Services announced that they would be working with NGOs, like the Safe at Home Society, to find temporary housing solutions for the residents. The owners of the Chilkoot Trail Inn have written to the government to ask for support to make the Chilkoot Trail Inn a safer place to live over the long term.

How has the government responded to this request?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. On January 17, 2022, the landlords of the Chilkoot Trail Inn delivered an eviction notice to tenants of the inn. Tenants were required to vacate the building by 1:00 p.m. on January 31, 2022. When the Department of Health and Social Services became aware of the closure of that building, staff immediately began to explore options to help tenants with community partners, including the Yukon Housing Corporation, the Safe at Home Society, Crown and Indigenous Relations and Northern

Affairs Canada, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and other community service partners.

Health and Social Services provided communication for individuals who were impacted by the closure and notified them of available supports and the services that they could avail themselves of. This was distributed in mid-January with the alignment of the eviction notices, and individuals who sought support for relocation were moved to other accommodations, and I look forward to further discussing this really important issue.

**Ms. Clarke:** The letter from the owners of the Chilkoot Trail Inn makes a fairly clear appeal to the government. To quote from the letter: “We are specifically requesting funding to assist with the above noted repairs with the understanding that the repaired CTI can once again be used as affordable housing for clients who otherwise are difficult to house.” They also say that they have been told that they are ineligible for CMHC or Yukon Housing Corporation funding.

So, is the government considering providing funding to allow this building to continue to operate the 39 units of affordable housing?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** We are closely monitoring the impacts of the move of individuals from that particular location and supporting the clients who are clients of Social Services to continue to be available, and throughout that process, we can indicate that the Chilkoot Trail Inn had rental agreements with 30 individuals, as far as we are aware, 18 of whom were supported by the Social Supports branch at Health and Social Services at the time of the eviction.

While Health and Social Services, it should be noted, may have paid the rent on behalf of social assistance clients who were living at the Chilkoot Trail Inn, Health and Social Services did not have a funding arrangement with the Chilkoot Trail Inn or any role or responsibility in its operations.

Safe at Home is a great partner and has committed to assist — and did work with finding housing options for people who were displaced, following the closure of the Chilkoot Trail Inn. If an individual resides in a hotel for a full six months or greater, they have rights under the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, which I think is incredibly important for people to know.

**Ms. Clarke:** Another request in the letter to the government was to have the government facilitate a partnership with a local NGO, like Safe at Home, to manage the building on their behalf. The owners acknowledge in the letter that this would result in a more effective, safer controlled environment for the tenants and help ensure that inevitable property damage is minimized.

Is the government considering supporting this request?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** At this particular time, we are in the midst of — we have received letters from the owners, or the representative of the owner. We are being very respectful of all levels of government, including the City of Whitehorse and local First Nations. There is a long history around this particular property. There has been lots of concern around this property. Moving forward, we will do the appropriate due diligence that we need to do. I don’t think that anybody within the City of

Whitehorse or our community wants to see some of the challenges that have happened in the past happen again.

We will continue to work with Safe at Home. I commend the work they do, and as was posed in the previous question, they do fabulous work. The work that they have done in concert with us on our assets has been great. We trust working with them. Of course, we are doing a big project, which we announced, for a number of Yukoners in the old Coast hotel.

Again, we will work methodically. We will ensure that we reduce risk for all Yukoners on this project. We will make appropriate decisions and bring them back to the House when the time is appropriate.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### **Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

### **Public Service Commission**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I’m not going to do much by way of introduction today. I would like to welcome Public Service Commissioner Paul Moore and our acting director of Policy and Planning, Sasha Gronsdahl, back to the Assembly today to assist in providing information for members opposite in

Committee of the Whole budget debate on the Public Service Commission.

I would like to just say thank you to the public service for the work that they have done over the past couple of years. It has been challenging since the start of COVID, but many things underway — collective bargaining — but in general, working to try to make sure that the services that government provides across all departments is supported and assisted, as we deal with vaccinations, the vaccine mandate, mental wellness challenges — the gamut.

So, just to begin with, I just wanted to say thank you so much to the public service for helping to keep the Yukon safe. I'm sure this is shared by all members of the Legislature. It is much appreciated for the hard work that folks have done.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's brief opening remarks and would also welcome the officials to the Legislature.

I don't have many questions, so I will just note, for the record, that I asked for a few pieces of information of officials at our briefing, and I just wanted to let the minister know that I haven't received those yet — just for notation there.

The first question I had was related to the vaccine mandate. Can the minister tell us the current status of the vaccine mandate? How many YG employees have either quit or were let go? How many are still on leave without pay? How many remaining officials from the government continue to either not provide their attestation forms or refuse to provide that information?

If the minister can just offer those numbers, I'll give him a chance to provide an answer there, and I'll have a subsequent question after.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank the member opposite for the reminder about the responses. I just checked with the commissioner, and I guess they're routing through our office. I will endeavour to find out where that information is at. My apologies for not — I think the fault lies with me — but we'll get it for the member opposite.

Then with respect to the questions about leave without pay, I think it started — the requirement started November 30 for the first vaccination, and then by the time we hit the second vaccination, which was, I believe, January 30, as well — there were people who were on leave without pay either because they had not been vaccinated or chose not to attest. That number was in the range of five percent of the total workforce, but I always tried to break it down for us in this House and the public. In terms of permanent and term employees, it was about 100 and about 200 of auxiliary on call, temporary on call, casual hires.

In terms of past April 4 — on April 4, we welcomed back employees who had been on leave without pay, except for those employees who worked in vulnerable settings. The list of vulnerable settings would include long-term care homes or hospitals, et cetera. I could provide the list, if necessary. Of those folks, there were 19 permanent or term employees, again, just under 100 auxiliary on call or casual. Some of those employees — I need to explain — if there are employees who are seasonal, for example, and we don't stay in touch with them over the winter months — we just don't have contact with them

— then they, in effect, are on that list. So, that's still being resolved.

The 19 term employees — most of those have already been reassigned or found different locations of employment that are not in a vulnerable setting. I think we are down to a handful. I think the number is five we are still working on. We have had no terminations to date.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister said there were zero terminations to date. Is he aware, or does the government track, how many employees quit as a result of the vaccine mandate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I did ask the Public Service Commission to try to look into to see if they could discern whether there were additional resignations at that time or retirements at that time. I think there was some anecdotal information of some people who chose, rather than going on leave without pay, to take early retirement. I will have to turn back to the commission and ask them again. At the time when this was first happening and I asked for that information, we didn't see much of a signal. I asked it to be compared against other previous years around the end of January, just to look to try to see. We didn't see that there was much difference, but of course, COVID time is different anyway, so it can be challenging.

While I understand, anecdotally, that there were some folks who chose to step back, we don't have information that I can share, because when people choose to resign, they don't always tell us what it is that is contributing to their decision. I did have some conversations with some individuals who sought other work, so I know there has to be some, but it wasn't something that we could readily see in the public service and discern from the data that we were tracking.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can the minister explain if they have considered removing the vaccine mandate altogether? I know that a number of provinces have fully dropped their vaccine mandates now. Some remain for vulnerable or health care settings, but some have been dropped altogether. As we have seen, the vaccine mandate that currently exists is for two shots. We know that has changed a lot, as well, over the months. There is now a fourth booster available, and the efficacy of a two-shot mandate is at least coming into question for some provinces.

So, I am wondering if the minister has considered, at least, fully dropping the mandate altogether, given the reduction of effectiveness of a two-shot mandate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I will note that this is a decision that is taken by Cabinet. It is based on recommendations from the chief medical officer of health. The member asked whether there was consideration for it — yes, absolutely. We were provided a range of options. I will say that, I believe, some time ago when the order — it was changed from being two vaccinations to whatever the current recommendation is by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization — so, whatever they say is the full dosage, that will be what is required. Over time, that may change, and if that changes from the advisory committee, then that is what will change.

Yes, of course, we looked at the situation. The advice that we got, and ultimately where we landed, was that there are



some settings, like the shelters and our long-term care facilities, where the risk was deemed to be high, and we wanted to make sure that people in those congregate settings who are vulnerable because they may have comorbidities or other health issues — that we didn't put them at undue risk. So, that was the reason.

I appreciate that other jurisdictions have landed differently. This was based on the advice that we got and, with consideration, it's where we landed, but we definitely considered a range of options.

**Mr. Dixon:** I would like to shift gears now to the issue of deputy minister severance. In 2018, the former minister committed to making severance for deputy ministers public. A *Yukon News* article said that the current Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission said that he wants — and I quote — "... to bring the issue of DM severance into the light."

He says: "I'm talking specifically about the severance that this government pays to DMs that are released from their roles in the government." That was the former Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission talking about the need to allow for transparency around the issue of DM severance. Of course, the Premier, before he was elected as Premier, advocated that the government also make deputy minister severance public.

Can the minister tell us whether or not that commitment from the Premier and the former minister has been acted on?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will have to look back to the reference that the Leader of the Official Opposition is making. I will check it out.

The note that I have in front of me talking about severance is that, since 2016 — let's say since the 2016 election — we have had 14 deputy ministers who have resigned, retired, or otherwise left the employment of the Government of Yukon. I am given to understand that, under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, it would prohibit me from releasing individual income with the low number of employees. I will try to investigate to ascertain where there's a threshold where there's enough where you could roll information up, but as I'm given to understand right now, we wouldn't be able to disclose severance payments because of that rule. But thank you for the question.

**Mr. Dixon:** Just for the minister's understanding, this is a *Yukon News* article dated June 13, 2018. The title of the article is "Yukon government promises more details on DM severance, eventually". The lead-in of the story reads: "The territorial government is promising to make severance paid to deputy ministers public..." Then it goes on and on, and the ATIPP act is referenced, of course. The article also referenced the 2016 commitment of the Premier. It notes — and I'll quote: "In 2016, prior to becoming Premier..." — the Premier's name — "... took the former government to task for refusing to release details..." about 10 deputy ministers who were let go over 18 months.

He said at the time — quote: "When the premier hires deputy ministers and then fires them, there's a cost to the taxpayer — hundreds of thousands of dollars each time that this happens ... It is very unfortunate that this government keeps having to do this and it is even worse when it refuses to tell the

public what this major turnover at the highest level of public service is costing the taxpayers."

So, the Premier made a clear commitment; the former minister made a clear commitment. The minister could have put forward legislative changes to enact or bring forward that promise, but it sounds like instead they have decided to just simply break that promise.

I stand to be corrected if that's wrong. I invite the minister to offer an explanation as to why that promise was made and what action has been taken to act on that promise.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Again, I will look into what the rules under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* say. I will try to see what is possible.

Again, I thank the member opposite for the question. If that's right — 10 people who were let go over 18 months — and I just listed 14 over six years — that's a tenfold difference. Maybe the challenge here is that we haven't had as many people leave. I will have to see.

I hope that the member opposite knows what was given — I should not assume. But, of course, the member opposite was a minister in the Yukon Party government and therefore presumably would have some ability to understand what severance was when he was in the role.

I will, at all times, be sure to try to do this in a way that would not disclose individual information but try to find a way to aggregate it so that it just is helping Yukoners to understand without sharing specific information about individual severance.

Again, I committed here, earlier in my response, to investigate to see what the rules are under the act to make sure that we do this in a way that is appropriate for our previous employees.

**Mr. Dixon:** Just so I understand, the minister is saying that he is going to go back and check what was committed to. Of course, what I can indicate is that the Premier did indeed commit to this in 2016. In 2018, the former minister committed to this.

I would just like to ask if there has been any action at all. Has any direction been given to the department to consider legislative amendments to act on the promise that the Premier and the former minister made?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I just stood and committed to and will do so again — I certainly will read back through the previous references to understand what was said. What I committed to do was to look into the act and to understand what is allowed and what is not allowed.

The member opposite just said that we could change the act. But there is a principle at work in the act — which I think I would try to uphold — which is to respect privacy of individuals.

What I'm saying is that the act has outlined how many people you would need to put together in order to not unfairly look into individual situations and to be able to aggregate the information together. That's a principle that is there.

The issue is not so much what number was set, but rather how many people have been let go. That's the difference. I will check to find out whether this is a way to share this information

appropriately under the rules of the act, which I believe are there to protect individual privacy while doing our utmost to share information.

As an example, we said that, under the new *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, previous briefing notes for ministers would become available to members opposite and the public. That was a change, so we will try to use the act to provide as much information as we can while, at the same time, respecting privacy.

**Mr. Dixon:** It is quite clear from that answer that absolutely nothing has happened between 2016 and now with regard to that promise from the Premier — certainly nothing since June 2018 when the former minister made the promise. If the minister has to go back and check now, obviously, over the past four years, nothing has happened. It's pretty clear that no action has occurred so far.

I will move on. The next question I had is related to the employee engagement. When is the next employee engagement survey going to go out, and for which departments?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** When I came into this role roughly a year ago, I, of course, sat down with the then-commissioner and very quickly met with the incoming commissioner. I certainly met with my colleague who was the previous minister responsible. We went over many files. This wasn't one of the ones that I understood to be of significant priority. That doesn't mean that nothing has happened in the interim; it just means that I have not inquired about it. I thank the member for his questions. I have offered to go back and look into what has happened. I don't think that I could stand today and talk about what has happened because I haven't seen this as a critical issue and have not made sure to get up to speed on it. I am saying that I will.

The most recent employee engagement survey was conducted last year, and I am anticipating that there will be results out shortly.

I am given to understand that results will be out shortly. I think, roughly, the employee surveys are done every three years. I think that we did hit a hiccup with COVID and things got postponed a bit, but my understanding is that the results of the survey that happened last fall are now being worked through, or formed into, the information package for our public service employees, and that will come out shortly.

**Mr. Dixon:** I know that the last set of employee engagement survey results didn't paint a very good picture for the Premier, and I was wondering if all of the departments will be included in this survey, or is it just a certain number of departments?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** All departments.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will cede the floor to my colleague from the NDP.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague from the Yukon Party, and I have to honestly say that I didn't quite anticipate my participation this soon, so I welcome the officials here.

Interestingly enough, after my colleague was asking about severance packages for deputy ministers, it got me to thinking, because I do agree. I hear what the minister is saying about privacy, but again, deputy ministers are appointed by Cabinet,

and they serve at the pleasure of Cabinet and very much are — I guess I wouldn't maybe say "not political creatures", but they are appointed. So, it got me to thinking about the work that I participated in between 2011 and 2016, and I do remember that was a question that was supposed to have been asked by the Premier and by the Yukon NDP.

I was just Googling through sunshine lists. So, a sunshine list is a list that is made that releases, actually, that kind of information. For anyone who is curious or listening, you can actually go onto the legislative website for Yukon, and you can actually find out how much everyone in this room makes, except for, of course, the public servants and the Clerks, but politicians' wages are publicly available, as they should be.

I was looking for sunshine lists, and I think it's really interesting that the Government of Ontario actually has a sunshine list. It is a comparative public sector salary — it is really interesting, because it only releases those salaries that are over \$100,000 — so, six figures — and it shows all sorts of interesting things. If anyone is curious, you can go to [sunshinelist.ca](http://sunshinelist.ca) and what it will show you is Ontario. It is interesting, because — this is an example. The first one up is the year, which says 2022. The employer is the "Ontario Power Generation" and it has the person's name. This person makes \$1,635,785.84 — sure. My guess is that they are probably a CEO or a high-level position within that, but that is an important point.

We are talking about sunshine lists and that kind of disclaimer, and there is a real cost to changing deputy ministers. I do think that this is worthy of conversation, or at least a mention, so I do appreciate the minister's stance, but I will say that, for sure, Ontario has a sunshine list. By the sheer surprise on my face, you know that I only got through one look as I was going through it, but I do think it bears mentioning in the future. I will just put that on the record.

What I wanted to get into is that during the debate on the supplementary budget from last year, we had a conversation — the minister and I — about sexual harassment. I wanted to know if there have been any developments since we had that conversation back on March 29, I believe. The minister and I were talking about sexual harassment policies within the Yukon government.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just before I answer the question from the Leader of the Third Party, I will say that, while we don't have a sunshine list, we have, in conversation with the unions, agreed to publish wage scales. So, we won't know what deputy minister X or the commissioner make specifically, but what we do publish is a range of salaries that the deputy ministers — all of them — will fall within.

I thank the member for her question about how we're working to support our employees and address issues of sexual harassment in a proactive way. When we were talking last, the member had mentioned about the Yukon Legal Services Society, which offers free advice and information on sexual harassment. I know that the commissioner reached out to that society the day after we were in here debating in the Legislature, and they formed a dialogue and talked about how to work together. That was one of the steps.

The second step was that we worked with the unions and formed an approach to areas of work that sometimes have been strongly not as diverse in their gender so may be more at risk of having issues of sexual harassment. What has begun is an initiative to work at those work sites to do a couple of things to provide direct information to staff and talk to them about, if they are having issues with sexual harassment, where to get support and how we can support them.

Second of all, it was to educate staff about a safe workplace and a harassment-free workplace and about the importance of inclusivity, whether that be gender or any other prohibited grounds from human rights — so, sexual orientation, ethnicity, beliefs, et cetera. So, that was the second thing that has happened since we last spoke here in the Legislature.

The third thing is that, in working again with unions, we have developed a companion guide — a conflict-of-interest guide — that basically clarifies scenarios and situations to proactively try to address situations that could lead to potential sexual harassment.

Those are the three ways that I know of steps we have taken since we were last here with the Public Service Commission.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. It's great to know that when we want to, government can move faster than molasses in winter. So, I do appreciate that very much.

I'm curious — I also appreciate the thought that it's about educating folks in areas maybe where there's less gender diversity. The truth of the matter is, I work with the Deputy Chair. If I was making unwanted advances, it's sexual harassment. I work in an office space that is very gender-diverse. The truth of the matter is harassment is harassment is harassment. If it's unwanted, it is harassment.

Maybe targeting areas where there is less diversity is important, but again, I wanted to understand more on the systemic issue. I was just pulling up the conflict-of-interest section from the *General Administration Manual*. I'm not sure if this is the most recent one. I'm hopeful it is. It says that the last time it was amended was in June 2008, so maybe I can get the confirmation from the minister. If I was to Google "conflict of interest Yukon government", this is what comes up.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I agree with the member opposite that we need to work on making sure that all of our workplaces are safe and free from harassment. While I think this is a good step that the Public Service Commission, in conjunction with the unions, has taken, I don't think that it should be limited. I think it was a step to start with targeting areas where there may be more risk. As we refined it and improved it, I think it can be useful for all.

I know what the member is talking about with the pace of government, but my experience with government is that people work carefully and with dedication. There are times when things take time because there are necessarily a lot of processes to try to help make sure of this. I know how, to the public, it can seem that sometimes government moves slowly, but I wouldn't want that to reflect on the dedication of public servants themselves.

With respect to the GAM policy, I will have to check on the date part of it, but the companion guide is like a

compendium to — or an attachment to — the GAM policy itself, so even if the date on the bottom of the policy is 2008, there are ways in which things get updated to it. The companion guide is an example.

To the point that was made regarding wanting this to be for all employees, the companion guide is, of course, meant to work for all employees.

**Ms. White:** To clarify with the minister, my criticism is never of the public service; it's always of the politicians who direct the public service. I guess I should say that I appreciate that the minister asked that the work be done, and I am grateful to the ever-able folks within the public service who completed that work. My criticism is never of those who do the work; my criticism is always of those who direct the work. I will just put that out there right now — always.

Right now, I am currently looking for the companion guide to the conflict-of-interest document. Is that currently available online?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I appreciate the criticism. I thank the member — that it is directed well toward me and my colleagues.

The companion guide is just in its final stages of approval.

I know that deputy ministers were reviewing it last week, and it should be up and available shortly. I think that it has been circulated through the policy folks and has worked that way, so it is imminent.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

I believe that I have a draft right now, and so I am going to go based on the draft because I don't have the final copy. I was hopeful that I could find it online and then we could have a discussion about the final.

One thing in the companion item that is new, I think, or possibly new — I'm not sure because I can't find the existing documents — is the "intimate relationship between employees" section. So, if the minister understands or has more of an idea about this document, I would like to have a conversation about what may be in the final document.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am just asking my colleagues to see if they can retrieve the document, and I could try to answer questions. I am happy to try to get it and happy to try to answer questions, but we are just trying to bring it up. I'll stop there.

**Ms. White:** If the minister is frustrated about not having a copy, imagine being in the opposition and dealing with a draft and not being sure where this draft is in the process. It might be the first draft; it could be the third draft; it may have had input or it may not have had input — I have no idea. Maybe what I will do is that I will highlight right now that it would be great to have a conversation on these documents with both of us having a copy of the one, but I am going to point out some things.

I am not sure that this is going to be in the final one. In the table of contents now, it says: "Intimate relationships between employees". Although I do appreciate it, this section talks about consensual relationships. Consent is really obviously critically important. The conversation that the minister and I had was about harassment — sexual harassment, which is unwanted, which is not reciprocal — so I wanted to know if there is a

policy that exists about sexual harassment. So, although I am looking at a draft that, at some point in time, says: “When in doubt, find out — a companion guide to understanding the conflict-of-interest policy”, in that table of contents that I have, it doesn’t actually talk about harassment; it talks about intimate relationships between employees, but that entire section is about consensual relationships.

So, is there a section somewhere — within conflict of interest or somewhere — that an employee can read about sexual harassment?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just want to be careful and thoughtful around this because the member opposite has a version of a draft document. I would prefer it if we let the public servants get to a document that is finalized. I will make sure to table it here so that everyone can have it — that it’s there. It is in process; that’s all.

Of course, there are situations where we have people who are in consensual relationships, but what happens when they are also in a relationship where they are a supervisor with someone who is being supervised? That can lead to challenges, so that is what this policy is trying to talk about — trying to help them interpret that type of situation and how to navigate it to avoid leading to situations that get into conflict or even possibly into non-consensual situations.

With respect to sexual harassment in the workplace, the main policy where this lives and works is the respectful workplace policy. That is where that information is. That policy sets out processes for addressing disrespect and sexual harassment in the workplace. Our Respectful Workplace Office is the place that’s responsible for implementing the policy.

I agree with the member opposite, but we are talking about two complementary things. The conflict-of-interest guide is not meant to be the main focus around sexual harassment.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. I’m sure that the minister can understand the frustration of trying to find documents online, including things like the *General Administration Manual*. Despite where I work, I’m not a Yukon government employee. I don’t have access to all sorts of the wizardry that I think exists. It’s behind a wall that I can’t get through, so I just imagine that it’s really fantastic. So, I would appreciate that when it comes out.

The next part is actually still going to be talking around that companion guide.

So, as politicians — for example, before the end of April, we need to sign a conflict-of-interest document. We need to sign a document that gets stored or tabled — I’m not even sure what happens to it — about our own conflicts. Within those conflicts are financial ones. It asks about the level of financial investments or if we have properties — it goes on to a long list of things. One of the things that I did notice in the draft is that there doesn’t appear to be anything that talks about — I think there is a section that talks about investments and private assets, but looking in other jurisdictions — so, I’m going to actually reference Alberta.

In Alberta’s *Code of Conduct and Ethics for the Public Service of Alberta* document, in section 13, it says: “Investment and Management of Private Assets”. The reason why I want to

bring this up is that it makes sense that, as Yukon or private sector employees, people shouldn’t be able to benefit from things that they know.

For example, I would say that I used to joke when I worked in mining camps that the only way I was ever going to invest in a mine is if I worked in the camp on the ground because you can see how it operates. You can see how it’s run. You can see what works and doesn’t work. I can tell you that, in the camps I worked at, I knew there were companies that were not going to survive based on how their camp was run.

But in my position now, one of the reasons why I have to fill out this disclosure notice is that I can have influence.

I can benefit from the influence that I hold here, but within the public service, there are lots of different positions where a person can benefit from essentially knowledge that’s known. I want to know if any other jurisdictions were looked at as far as bolstering the conflict of interest around financial gains.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** For elected officials and deputy ministers, there is a requirement to fill out an annual disclosure. So, like us, the deputy ministers have a form that they’re required each year to share any disclosure of a financial nature or an investment nature that would — could — potentially indicate a conflict.

That type of information around — for a broader public service, for all employees, about conflicts of financial investment and insider knowledge — is not in the companion guide, but is in the broader conflict-of-interest policy, and it talks about it where it says that there is a duty for employees to disclose that information should their situation change. So usually, I think the way it would normally work is, for a new employee or as they come into a new position, there would be a check on that with them. Then afterward, it’s their responsibility — if there is a — like, for example, if they’ve invested in something, that they would then have the duty to report that, but there isn’t a requirement for them to fill out a disclosure each and every year.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that answer from the minister. I look forward to seeing that finalized document, which is ultimately what I am looking for.

We heard from my colleague from the Yukon Party ask about folks affected by COVID, but can the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission tell me how many Yukon government employees there are? It can be the FTE equivalent. I am just looking for a whole number.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Noting that this number changes — it is never static — so, on any given day, it goes up and down, but if we are counting all employees, including auxiliary on call, casuals, all permanent and term employees, then the number is in the range of 6,150-plus or -minus on any given day.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that from the minister, so I would like to dig down into those numbers now. Out of that number, which can fluctuate a bit depending on the day, of the 6,150, can he tell me how many are full-time employees, let’s say, today?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will have to ask the commission to go off and get those numbers. The reason I have the full

number is because, as we were working on the leave-without-pay situation, I asked to be briefed at all times about how many employees we had.

Let me just be very clear for the member opposite and all Yukoners: There is a difference between full-time employees and the number of people who are working with us, because with full-time employees, you can calculate it based on hours worked, and you can work out an equivalent of full-time employees. What I was giving in my answer of 6,150 is how many individual people we have who work with us in any capacity.

I will have to get something more specific for the member opposite about the permanent and term. I know that the Public Service Commission can generate that number; I just don't have it here today.

**Ms. White:** I will ask the minister to also request the number of AOCs, the number of casuals, and the number of term positions. The reason why I think it's important to have this conversation right now with the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission is that, if you are an auxiliary-on-call employee, although you get a reimbursement per shift that covers things like benefits or sick days, there are a lot of things that you sacrifice. There are departments, offices, or workplaces within the Yukon government that rely solely on auxiliary-on-call or casual employees. I think that it is an important conversation to have. I will just give the minister an opportunity to respond.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I do have the number of auxiliary-on-call employees. I try very hard to not use acronyms. I am doing my best, but it is tough some days.

Our number of auxiliary-on-call employees ranges anywhere from 850 up to 900 or 950 in any given year. The last year that I have is for 2020-21, and the number that I have is 861 auxiliary-on-call employees.

The Leader of the Third Party is correct that the auxiliary-on-call employees receive pay in lieu of other leave entitlements, and their positions are not eligible for a pension. We are always in dialogue with the unions about auxiliary-on-call employees and what is reasonable compensation, where it is appropriate to be using them and where it is not. So, that is an ongoing dialogue at all times.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. Even if it is not the current number, it is still a number that gives us an idea to work with.

Can the minister tell me if an AOC employee of Yukon government was able to access paid sick leave due to COVID?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** No, as I just stated a moment ago, the auxiliary-on-call employees receive pay in lieu of other leave entitlements, like sick leave.

**Ms. White:** I think the reason why I want to bring us back to that is — you know, the minister belongs to a government that talks about “unprecedented times, worldwide pandemic — we encourage people to stay home when they are sick”, and I don't disagree with any of those things. I guess that the next question I have for him is: Does he have access to see, within departments, the number of AOC staff and where they are?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Auxiliary-on-call employees often have a real range of backgrounds in terms of their work status and situations. Some of them pick up extra work as auxiliaries on call. Some are retired, and some just enjoy being around the public service and do it for, I think, the collegiality. It is for a range of reasons. They are certainly a diverse group.

With respect to the question, does the commission have the ability to track auxiliaries on call across departments? The answer to that is yes. I don't have those numbers in front of me, but that is information that the commission could furnish.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I guess I'll just put the minister on notice that I would like to have that discussion in the fall if the Public Service Commission comes back with a supplementary budget. I think that's really important.

It's my understanding that a great number of the positions at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter are actually auxiliary-on-call because what we are told when we ask Yukon government about it is that it's in the process of transitioning. It's going to transition toward something different. The concern that I have is — understanding that the minister just told me that auxiliaries on call don't have access to sick leave, but the shelter is being run by folks who don't have security. They are not in auxiliary-on-call positions by choice; it's by circumstance. If they don't go to work, they know that it's going to affect their co-workers because, instead of it being just a fill-in, it's being treated like a permanent position by Yukon government, by their employer. I highlight that I have concerns, and the reason I would like to have a conversation about those departments and where they are is that I think there are some patterns that exist. I think those patterns are what need to be investigated.

Not only would I like to have the discussion in the fall if there's a supplementary budget, but I would like the minister to table those numbers for me — the breakdown by department. When we go to briefings, we do ask that because we are interested in knowing, but I do believe that it's something that — when we look at it from the 30,000-foot view down, I think we can see patterns and I think those patterns need to be figured out.

The reason I say that is — I think the minister is correct. There are a lot of different reasons for why people have those positions, but in other circumstances, it's because there are no term positions and there are no permanent positions being offered for that, and people do the work because they think it's important.

I would like to have a conversation about that in the future. I do understand what the minister just said about benefits being paid out hourly or per shift, but if an auxiliary-on-call employee is essentially working a full-time job and then gets COVID, the question remains that if we are supporting every other employee to be able to be sick, what happens to those who are unable to take that same benefit?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The commissioner provided me with the responses that had been drafted from the March 9 briefing. I will table them right now so that they are here. I thank the member opposite for her comments and questions

about auxiliaries on call by department. We will work to get those numbers for members.

I will just reiterate what I began with in today's Committee of the Whole debate by saying that I think all public servants are to be commended for their work to support Yukoners, whether they be permanent or auxiliary on call, whether they work in the Executive Council Office, the Public Service Commission, or Highways and Public Works. I feel that they are truly working to try to support Yukoners, and I will say that their work is much appreciated.

I will just table this.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that being tabled now, but if it's only one copy, it's hard for me to be able to reference right this second.

The Yukon Employees' Union sent out an e-mail that some employers had been incorrectly deducting union dues. Was one of these employers the Yukon government? If so, how is that going to be corrected?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am unaware of that being us. I will ask the commissioner to check into that to see, but I am unaware of any incorrect calculations for union dues.

**Ms. White:** Just as I wait for the return to make its way to me, can the minister tell me more about what happens in People and Culture — I'm not sure if "department" is the right word — in the Public Service Commission?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This division is responsible for a few things, including our Diversity and Inclusion Services, our Respectful Workplace Office, our strategic initiatives, and communications. There are a few specific projects that are being worked on this year. These include: recruitment practices, given all the labour pressure that exists in Canada and the world; streamlining human resource processes; and also conducting a comprehensive review of psychological health and safety in our government workplaces.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. One of the conversations that we had during the briefing was the working from home policy. My understanding is that directive 5 ended on March 18, so that has ended. I am sure that the minister will remember that, from my position, I believe that the more people we can get working in communities for Yukon government the better. If that means that they are working from home, that would be a benefit.

Can he walk me through where we are right now around the policy on working from home?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Even within my mandate letter there has been — and even as part of *Our Clean Future*, there was work for us to support people working remotely. While the pandemic was here, we had brought in directive 5, but sometime in the past year, we brought into place a remote workplace policy. That policy came into effect, but directive 5 was still in place encouraging Yukon government employees to work from home where possible. Once we dropped directive 5, the remote workplace policy was there and in effect, so it is in effect today.

What I can say is that we hit sort of a peak in work from home during the last wave of the pandemic. In February, we were at roughly 13 percent. In March, we were at nine percent,

and currently, in April, we are at seven percent. I can say that, under that remote workplace policy, we worked in a way to support our communities, so we said that it is okay, under that policy, if people wish to locate their work outside of Whitehorse. Again, I could table the policy if that is of interest. But say that it is a type of work that can happen remotely and that it works with your supervisor, you could work outside of Whitehorse, but you couldn't do the reverse. So, it was to try to support that people could move and work from communities outside of Whitehorse.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I do think it's critical if we want to support the growth or the vibrancy of rural communities — making sure that folks have access to good jobs is important.

The next question I have is: How are folks who are working from home with permission from their employer — so Yukon government — how are they covered under WCB? So, talking about ergonomic desks or things like that, how are people supported from workplace injury?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The employees and the supervisors have to go through a health and safety checklist and review where the work would take place remotely, which often could be home, and make sure that it is appropriate and adequate and up to the standards. So, there is a process in place to sign off on that.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. Recently, I was asked in the media about my thoughts about extending the First Nation hiring policy. I think it's an important thing. I know that the pilot project was, I believe, to run for 15 months, and it has been extended. Can the minister tell me about that extension and what his hopes are in extending that program?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** *Breaking Trail Together* is this initiative. We know it's important for our public service sector or our public service to reflect the diversity of the Yukon and the communities that we serve. We feel that it's important to extend the plan and the project, so we have now extended it to 2029.

When we brought this in, it was in the middle of COVID or as COVID hit. The challenge, of course, is that we're in a very tight labour market. We have low unemployment nationally. We have the lowest unemployment here in the territory. There is a lot of pressure for finding employees — and that is not just for the public service; it's across the employment sector in the Yukon. There is a lot of pressure on the commission.

We were hoping to see more of a shift in our public service. We haven't achieved it yet, but I can say that during the opening 15 months that we had the plan in place, we did have 78 successful indigenous candidates being hired out of roughly 600 competitions. So, there is work to do, because we want to increase those numbers. We believe that this is the right thing to do with the plan — to extend it — and I am looking forward to further work on it.

**Ms. White:** I am just looking at the additional information that is available for the Public Service Commission specifically under the "Employee Relations" headline. It is supplementary information and talks about employee

grievances, which are estimated to be 110 this year, but if we look back at the actual from 2020-21, the number of employee grievances was 344. We don't have the real number from 2021-22, but can the minister tell me why the actual number of employee grievances in 2020-21 was 344 and the estimate for this year is 110?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There was one specific issue that arose that resulted in 150 grievances. It was about a pay period issue. It resulted in quite a block in that year. That's the main reason. I will check to see if there were others, but that 150 was the same one, because it affected so many folks.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. My hope is that error was caught and rectified and not replicated in 2021-22. That is my hope.

At this point in time, I am sure I could ask a lot of different questions about the supplementary information, but what I am really interested in is talking about health. I thank the officials and the minister for their time, and I look forward to being able to discuss the companion document to the conflict of interest and taking a look at that. I will remind everyone that sexual harassment exists in all workplaces, and don't be a part of that problem.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am informed that the other 110 grievances, which were from the past fiscal year, are not related to the one that was there. They are probably all important in their own way. I will thank the member for her comments. It is important that we have workplaces that are safe and free of sexual harassment. I appreciate that it does exist and we need to do our best. I thank her for saying that we should take responsibility around this issue. I appreciate that.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 10, Public Service Commission?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 10, Public Service Commission, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$58,694,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$68,000 agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$58,762,000 agreed to***

***Public Service Commission agreed to***

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### **Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

### **Department of Health and Social Services**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will take this opportunity to welcome the officials from the Department of Health and Social Services who are here with me today and to introduce them to the other Members of the Legislative Assembly. I am joined by Michael Hale, the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, and by Rob Ganzer, who is the director of strategic finance for Health and Social Services. Their teams have been truly instrumental in ensuring that we develop a budget that supports Yukoners, and I want to thank them and their teams for all their hard work in getting us here today.

The Department of Health and Social Services has a large budget, but maintaining and improving the health and well-being of all Yukoners is important work and it is an investment that benefits us all. The government and the Department of Health and Social Services are committed to spending these valuable resources wisely. We are also committed to being transparent about how that money is spent, and I welcome questions from the members opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** To begin with today, I would also join the minister in welcoming officials to the House. I have a number of questions, as you would imagine.

I want to begin by asking about — we understand that there was money within this budget for a new position under the government's climate change and energy policy, or OCF. Could the minister please confirm how much is in the budget for that position?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The 2022-23 main estimates contain \$137,000 for a position related to *Our Clean Future*. It comes under the Department of Health and Social Services unit of population public health evidence and evaluation.

**Mr. Cathers:** So, over one-fifth of Yukoners — 21 percent according to the numbers that the minister likes to cite — don't have a family physician. We have called on the

government to reinstate the physician recruitment position that used to exist in Health and Social Services. Is there funding in the budget to do that?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** That you for the question. There is a position designated in the Department of Health and Social Services for this purpose of recruitment and retention. There is money included in the Health and Social Services budget to cover that position in this year, 2022-23. We are looking, as well, to partner with the Yukon Medical Association to enhance the effectiveness of that position.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to hear that the minister has included money for this, as we've called for.

Can the minister please confirm when this position within Health and Social Services is anticipated to be staffed? Could she clarify — she made some mention of the Yukon Medical Association — could she also indicate how much money is being provided to the Yukon Medical Association for physician recruitment?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The amount that is provided to the Yukon Medical Association — I don't have their memorandum of understanding with me or their transfer payment agreement, but we will look to see if we can find that information for the member opposite. We are not currently advertising to staff the recruitment position because our conversations with the YMA are ongoing. We would prefer to be able to partner with them so that we have a single recruiter or we have a team that is working on that in conjunction with the YMA. Those conversations are happening and we will make a decision. Hopefully, we will be able to proceed with them as a partner and be able to focus recruitment and retention work in that way.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the partial answer, but the minister didn't indicate how much funding is in the budget for that purpose.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that there are two amounts. I am not sure what the member opposite is asking about. I think that probably both amounts are what is being asked about. One is the amount that is provided to the Yukon Medical Association for the purposes of doing all of their work, which includes recruitment and retention, and the other is the particular amount that will be set aside should we proceed to hire or partner with the YMA to hire.

I have indicated that I don't have both of those numbers, but we will be happy to provide them. We may be getting them. We are continuing to look through the material we have to see if I can get those figures, but I think that is what the member is asking for.

**Mr. Cathers:** That's correct. I was asking for the cost of both amounts.

The minister has made reference again to a transfer payment with the Yukon Medical Association. Previously, during Question Period, she indicated that it included funding that they had the flexibility to use for physician recruitment and for the locum recruiter position they have created. Our understanding is that there isn't an agreement referred to as a transfer payment and that the 2017 MOU between the department and the YMA has funding included in it for recruitment, but that is clearly earmarked as a defined incentive

for physicians who meet specific criteria. Our understanding is that it is not flexible funding that they can choose to reallocate for other purposes, such as funding the new position.

Can the minister provide any confirmation of the claims she made in Question Period that a transfer payment exists with the YMA, under which they have funding that could be used to cover the costs of the physician recruiter position, and if not, would she correct her earlier comments?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I certainly don't disagree with the member opposite. There are provisions in that agreement — even in the current one that the member is making reference to with respect to recruitment incentives. I can also confirm that the Yukon Medical Association currently has a contract with a recruiter for the purposes of providing services and recruiting doctors to come here to the territory. They have done that. I have met this professional young woman, and I look forward to the effects of her work coming forward.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister didn't actually answer my question, and I would again ask her to provide a copy of any transfer payment agreement with the YMA that currently exists and which allows them to support financially the new physician recruitment position. The minister was very clear in Question Period in stating that the transfer payment allowed that. We have heard to the contrary from physicians, and we have seen, as well, the relevant parts of their 2017 MOU.

Again, does a transfer payment currently exist that allows the YMA to use funding from the government to support their physician recruiter position?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't hear a question there; I'm sorry. I appreciate the comment. I appreciate the point of view of the member opposite, but I don't necessarily hear a question. I would not be permitted to provide a copy of the TPA or the MOU with the Yukon Medical Association here today, but I will consider whether or not that's a document that they prefer to have available to the public and speak to them about that.

**Mr. Cathers:** The question was quite clear about whether the minister could confirm that the transfer payment with flexibility to fund that position that she told us in Question Period exists actually does and, if not, to correct the record.

But I'll move on. I would note that our understanding is that the 2017 MOU with the Yukon Medical Association actually expired on March 31. Is the government continuing to honour the provisions of that, including the benefit programs within it, and do they anticipate doing so?

Actually, let me rephrase that: Will the minister commit to doing so until they've negotiated a new MOU with the YMA?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Yes, the current MOU with the Yukon Medical Association — that does have an expiry date of March 31, 2022, but as the member opposite and everyone can imagine, we have had discussions with them about continuing to honour that MOU and all the provisions of that MOU until the new terms of the MOU have been decided through a negotiated process.

I want to make reference to that, because the member opposite did, clearly understanding that this is what is occurring at the moment, but that won't be something that everyone knows. The department is currently in negotiations with the



Yukon Medical Association about an agreement going forward. Those negotiations are currently ongoing, so I won't be able to say anything more about that, other than to advise people that this is what is happening, and we are currently honouring every provision of the reference to the MOU that was made by the member opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** We have the situation where over one-fifth of Yukoners don't have a family doctor. The walk-in clinic closed last year. The physician shortage crisis is about to get worse. We have learned that five doctors that we know of are planning to go on maternity leave and that there may be others, as well, who are planning to take time off or go on other leave that we are not aware of, but the problem that we are aware of is bad enough. We have also heard that some of them have had trouble lining up locums to take on their patients while on leave.

To date, we haven't really seen action by the government on this. I am pleased to hear that the minister is indicating a willingness to work with the YMA, but our concern, since this is a time-sensitive situation, is what government is actually going to do to address the problem. Stepping back from even the technicalities of how government does it or works with the YMA in this situation, the reality is that, for any physician who might be considering coming to the Yukon as a locum, people tend to make plans for work with some lead time, not just on short notice. For these gaps that are anticipated to happen over the next number of months, it is important that action be taken without any delay to line up locums to replace the physicians who are going on leave.

Can the minister tell me what the government has done, if anything, in this area? Have there been active offers made by her or by officials to physicians individually or to the YMA to assist them with this situation? What is the status of government's action on this important issue?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm just going to look for something else as well. I think it's important to remember that, of course, we recognize that provisions of medical service here in the territory are completely a priority for us and for the Yukon Medical Association. I know that in the international medical associations — the Canadian Medical Association — it is certainly a topic of serious contemplation and work, because there is a — I don't hesitate to say — a worldwide shortage of medical practitioners, but certainly here in Canada, individuals who have been properly licensed and educated for the purposes of providing medical services are at a shortage right now, and we have to recognize that.

We do have, through Insured Health, the provision that a locum can come to the Yukon Territory, provide fee-for-service, and have the opportunity to substitute for one of our local doctors relatively seamlessly. That is an important factor because there are, I would say, low barriers to that practice. I think that we also must remember that physicians here in the territory, for the most part, are owners and operators of private businesses, so they are responsible for getting coverage when they have patients — and their responsibility to patients — and have locum support when they are going to be away.

The Yukon Medical Association recruiter who I have mentioned is, I understand, focusing on recruitment of locums at the moment; that is a priority for the work that she is doing. There is some provision in the MOU with the Yukon Medical Association for locum service, identifying locums for their members, and helping in that way.

I guess lastly what I would say is that locums provide a very important service for Yukoners. It has been difficult to find individuals, on the one hand, who want to come and move to the territory and set up a practice; on the other hand, there are people who are interested in new experiences post-pandemic, if I can say that. Although, as we have warned everyone, COVID has not finished with us, and I think that is important to say.

I note that the physician recruiter who is contracted to the Yukon Medical Association is focusing on locums. We have great hopes that she will be able to identify individuals who would like to come here. It is also an incredibly important part of our process for recruiting physicians because locums who come and experience the practice here in the north and practise here in the territory can see what it might be like. We are working, as well, with money in this budget to contract additional nurse practitioners who will hopefully be able to provide services at existing clinics, and some might assist those medical practitioners who are planning to be away.

**Mr. Cathers:** I understand that the minister has indicated that they are negotiating with the YMA, and I recognize that the details of the arrangement between the YMA and the Yukon government — the same specific details that they are negotiating on are obviously things that the minister is not going to be the one doing the negotiations with the physicians on.

However, when it comes to the issues of physician recruitment and other additional measures that government can take that aren't part of those negotiations, there's no reason that the minister is unable to talk to the Yukon Medical Association at this point in time. I think it would be fair to say that most Yukoners would agree that when there is a crisis with a shortage of physicians resulting in over one-fifth of Yukoners not having a family doctor — and many not having access to primary care because of it — and the problem is expected to grow this year — most Yukoners would agree that not only would it be reasonable for the minister to talk to the Yukon Medical Association about additional measures that government can and should take to assist the physician community and to recruit and retain doctors in the territory but that, in fact, it should be an absolute priority for the minister to do that.

So, what I would ask is two things: Has the minister met with the Yukon Medical Association recently to discuss physician recruitment and what government can do to help encourage more doctors to move to the Yukon? Will she agree to reach out to the Yukon Medical Association and request a meeting to talk to them about what else government can do to attract and retain family doctors to the Yukon, including to address the gap in locum support that I referenced earlier?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** First of all, I want to clarify: I didn't say I wasn't able to speak to the Yukon Medical Association during the negotiations. Of course, that is not an issue. We have lots of things we can cooperate on that don't have anything to do with the negotiations, which are quite separate from that process.

I will have to look at my schedule. I don't want to guess at when I will have met with the YMA last, but the physician recruitment issue is one that is regularly on the agendas when the deputy minister meets with the association and with their executive director.

I think, less than two weeks ago — within the last two weeks is the estimate of the last time the deputy minister met with the YMA, but they are in very regular contact by e-mail, and certainly part of these conversations about sharing the recruitment responsibilities have been on their agenda. The deputy minister will also be attending the board meeting of the Yukon Medical Association on April 27. They certainly have no issue with reaching out to the Yukon Medical Association for the purposes of discussing this topic.

To be quite frank, the work being done by the deputy minister, along with the executive director of the YMA and their board, will be the way in which we can continue to cooperate on this.

I appreciate that the member opposite is insinuating that we do not have a strong relationship with the YMA or that I am saying things, but the YMA or members of the medical profession might be saying something different — that is the business of government. We are committed to having a positive, strong relationship with the Yukon Medical Association as a partner in our work going forward to provide modern, leading-edge medical services to the Yukon public.

I can also indicate that I have met with other partners and indicated that when we would be having meetings with those partners, through whatever the topics might be, that we will be wanting to invite the medical association, or when we meet with the medical association, we would want to invite other partners so that we are building a strong network of partnerships to provide services to Yukoners.

What I can also say about this question of locums and recruitment and the priority that it is, is that we provide \$300,000 annually to the Yukon Medical Association for the purposes of locum coverage or locum — I'm going to say — issues. Of course, they can do with it as they choose.

I can also indicate that in 2017, when the agreement was signed with the Yukon Medical Association, they had a little over \$300,000 remaining in that fund. The government permitted them to roll that over, or to keep those funds, for the purposes of enhancing their recruitment or locum coverage. How they wish to use those funds is set out in the transfer payment agreement — the MOU. There are different names; for this particular one, for the YMA, it seems to be an MOU.

Certainly not in my experience, although it is only a little less than a year right now, have there been any issues with how they spend those funds or the opportunity to provide them flexibility.

If I haven't made it clear, I want to make clear our commitment to being a good, strong partner with the YMA, because that's what will provide the best service for Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the minister's verbal commitment to be a good partner with the YMA, but we are looking for action — not words. Our understanding is that the MOU is actually not as flexible as the minister has indicated it is, that some of this funding is more clearly defined and specified.

I will move on to other issues, as I do have a very long list of questions on a large number of issues.

I want to ask about the bilingual health centre that is referenced in the budget and the budget speech and the walk-in clinic as well. The budget speech indicates that more than \$2.6 million will support this new bilingual health centre. Could the minister please confirm the location of the clinic, first of all, and, secondly, indicate what is the model for that clinic?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I understood the question to be about the bilingual health centre, which is quite distinct from any other form of medical clinic that we might be speaking about. I am going to concentrate with respect to the answer on the bilingual health centre. I appreciate the opportunity to do so. The government, of course, is dedicated and focused on this project to equitable access to health care. We have been working with the francophone community and other health system partners to deliver primary health and wellness services at a new health centre.

It is designed to be located at 9010 Quartz Road here in Whitehorse — which might be familiar to some people as the public health clinic — in some space there that is currently being redesigned and renovated for that purpose.

The bilingual health centre was one of the recommendations of *Putting People First*, and their recommendation indicates that it will improve care for all Yukoners — we believe it to be the case — including a growing francophone population, but a focus on bilingual. The renovation plan for the clinic is underway.

The bilingual health care centre will be a collaborative care model, a team-based model, which allows clients to access a range of primary care providers, depending on their needs, and to be connected with additional services as required. We will hire full-time staff, including a clinic manager, nurse practitioners, a licensed practical nurse, a registered nurse, medical office assistants, and a social worker, and we will contract physicians.

In addition to delivering innovative quality of care in both languages, the bilingual health centre is expected to expand access to primary care service for Yukoners and reduce some of the pressures on our health system. The bilingual health centre will be the first of its kind, acting as a catalyst to begin building our team-based, integrated primary health clinics in the territory in alignment with the recommendations of *Putting People First*. These are sometimes referred to in *Putting People First* as “polyclinics”. It is a new model of care, and it will be the foundation of Yukon's health and social services system and connecting every Yukoner to a team of interdisciplinary primary health professionals as close to home as possible,

which, of course, is the polyclinic model — the model designed and recommended by *Putting People First*. We look forward to the bilingual health centre opening later in 2022.

Recruitment for positions is actively ongoing. Some positions have been filled, but we need to continue that process and are doing so actively while we await the renovations for that location. I think that's my answer with respect to that.

**Mr. Cathers:** So, can the minister then indicate: Where is the walk-in clinic going to be located and what are the timelines for it opening?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I can indicate that the plan at the moment — still being completely finalized — is for a walk-in clinic to be located at the same place as the River Valley Medical Clinic was located. It was known as the “Whitehorse walk-in clinic” prior to it being closed last year. It is on Lambert Street in Whitehorse, not a very far walk from here. That will be an important factor with respect to the walk-in clinic because it will be a place that is known by Yukoners who might be looking to have that kind of service. We are currently working with Yukon physicians to support the opening of a new walk-in clinic.

The plan is to support — government funding will support the start-up of the clinic. It will be serviced by individual doctors, primarily from Whitehorse, who will take different shifts at the same time as they are doing other work, whether it be at the hospital or in their own clinics. They will sign up and agree to cover certain hours at the walk-in clinic. The initiative is just one piece of the work that we are doing to expand access to primary care, and we hope that the walk-in clinic at that location will be able to open as soon as May. We are also providing over \$200,000 in start-up funding for the purposes of the clinic starting and having the appropriate administrative staff, software licences, and the like for the doctors to be able to work there.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do want to pursue that a little bit more with the minister. With this walk-in clinic, who will be operating the facility? Will government be handling the administration and operations, or will physicians be handling that? Or will it be run by the Hospital Corporation or some other entity?

The second question I would ask is: Since the minister indicated they are working with current local physicians, has the government actually done an analysis to determine whether this is going to result in an increase in physician services to Yukoners or simply a reallocation of those services? If the doctors are here already and they are already practising — either in private practice or at the hospital or both — it does seem quite possible that a doctor who is working five days a week right now might choose to work at the walk-in clinic but, in doing so, would reduce the services that they are currently providing, either at their own practice or at the hospital.

Again, the question there is: Has the government actually done any assessment to determine whether this will result in an increase of services or just a reallocation of existing services that are being provided?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that it is important to note that the clinic I have been describing is — and I think I have

said this every time — a walk-in clinic, so it is designed for individuals who are not otherwise attached to a practitioner or for someone who might need to go there in an urgent but not emergent situation — somebody would be unable to see their own physician if they had one. Sometimes walk-in clinics do have individuals like that. It is designed to and should reduce the number of visits to the hospital for what are otherwise minor afflictions. Of course, when individuals attend the hospital, it has higher costs, just based on the nature of the service provided there.

I should indicate as well that this is a commitment by the Yukon medical practitioners who have worked with us to come up with this solution. It is not the only solution. It is not going to be a silver bullet in any way, but it is going to provide an additional option for individuals who need urgent or medical care when they might not otherwise be able to have it. I can also indicate that medical practitioners who will work at the walk-in clinic will have the same fee-for-service payment style as they would have if they were working elsewhere. Again, it would be on the clinic basis.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm just going to move back to the bilingual health centre and ask the question: At this facility, will doctors be bilingual? What are the criteria for patients being eligible to go? Is anyone eligible to go, or is it particularly targeting members of the French community, for example?

In addition to answering that question, I'm just going to go back to a question I asked previously on behalf of my colleague, the Member for Kluane, regarding the situation in Haines Junction. When I asked the minister about the resident physician in Haines Junction who was leaving earlier this Sitting, she indicated that the person who is providing those services would not be renewing their contract beyond today — or sorry, pardon me. I believe she said — I misread that. She indicated that it was beyond April 12, 2021 and indicated that the department is exploring options.

Has there been any progress on that? What is the government doing to try to ensure that there is a physician in Haines Junction to provide services there?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** With respect to the bilingual health clinic, we certainly anticipate hiring physicians who are bilingual, at least one of them for sure. The bilingual health clinic needs to be able to provide that kind of service, but there will be other bilingual professionals there as well. Anyone can attend the bilingual health clinic.

With respect to the Haines Junction note, the previous resident physician has not renewed their contract, and the Department of Health and Social Services has been exploring options, of course, to ensure that residents have coverage. A nurse practitioner has been recruited for the Haines Junction Health Centre, and they will deliver services to residents of the community along the north highway. The position will commence at — the estimate is at the end of June 2022 — so, in a couple of months — an individual moving to do that job.

We recognize that recruitment of physicians in rural communities is difficult. We are working with the Yukon Medical Association to identify new resident positions. In the meantime, the question was: What action has been taken? Two

Whitehorse-based physicians have been contracted to deliver virtual care services to residents at least twice per week in the Haines Junction area and have been providing supplemental, in-person community visits so that residents have continuity of care — so, those two physicians working together to provide service for those individuals in Haines Junction, both in-person and virtually.

**Mr. Cathers:** I don't think that the minister indicated who is eligible to go to the bilingual clinic, and again, it would seem that with one-fifth of Yukoners — over one-fifth of Yukoners — without a family doctor that, if it is available for anyone, just like any other physician who provides care, this will quickly become overwhelmed with the people who are wanting that service. I was just asking for clarity on whether they are offering priority or preference for people on that list — and not suggesting it, but just asking whether that is how they are dealing with it, and if not, how this is going to be operating.

I also want to ask about a couple of other things that were mentioned in the budget. The budget speech mentioned \$1 million for spirometry. What we don't have yet from the government is clarity on who is providing this service, where it will be provided, and when. So, I would ask the minister to provide that information.

My second question regarding specific budget commitments is with regard to the dental program that emerged as a result of the CASA agreement. Is this program set up to be the payer of last resort? What are the criteria for this program? Who would be eligible for it, and what would be provided under it, and when?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I can indicate that, on October 7, 2021, spirometry testing resumed here in the Yukon Territory. A company known as TrueNorth Respiratory is a privately owned respiratory health business and holds a three-year contract for the spirometry services in the Yukon Territory. TrueNorth's clinic in Whitehorse has been retrofitted to meet the COVID-19 recommendations needed for the resumption of spirometry services, which of course was an issue during the early parts of COVID-19, and testing ended as a result of those COVID protocols.

TrueNorth is working to reduce the existing wait-list, and it is anticipated that, by the fall of 2022, spirometry results will be able to be returned to a referring practitioner within four weeks of ordering the test. The 2022-23 main estimates have, as noted by the member opposite, just short of \$1 million for the in-territory spirometry services.

With respect to the dental program, in response to the *Putting People First* report, there was a recommendation in there as part of our commitment — and under the commitment of the 2021 confidence and supply agreement, working on implementing a territory-wide income-test, payer-of-last-resort dental care program within the year. As outlined in the confidence and supply agreement, \$500,000 was budgeted in the 2021-22 main estimates as an initial investment to develop the program. We have used these funds to contact public dental health specialists and to modify and ready our internal systems to be able to support this work.

There is an increase of \$1.3 million in the 2022-23 main estimates to continue the work on this initiative. We are committed to ensuring the program implementation in the 2022-23 fiscal year that provides dental coverage for lower income Yukoners who have no other form of insurance. I think that it should be noted that Yukon does provide coverage already in many forms. Many Canadian jurisdictions, including the Yukon, provide dental care for lower income families or social assistance clients, and the Yukon Territory does so already.

Yukoners registered in the pharmacare and extended health benefits program, social assistance clients, non-insured health benefits clients, as well as children in K to grade 8 in Whitehorse and in K to 12 in communities currently all have access to dental care. The *Canada Health Act* does not include dental care as an insured service, other than through in-hospital emergency oral surgery. Of course, dental care is an important part of health care. With respect to this work that is being done on the new dental care program for Canadians, it is also something that has recently been taken up by the Liberal Party of Canada in their new agreement with Canada's New Democratic Party to also work to deliver these kinds of services to Canadians who can't otherwise be covered by another program or afford important dental care. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about that program.

**Mr. Cathers:** So, on the topic of spirometry, the minister appears to be indicating that the funding is just to continue spirometry services, but the budget speech specifically said that the money would — quote — "... expand spirometry services in the territory." It says that on page 7.

If the minister could clarify, are those services actually expanding, or is it just a carry-forward of what they began in the previous fiscal year?

I also want to move on to the area of the chronic underfunding of the Yukon hospitals that has occurred since 2017 under this government. As the minister knows, we've debated this many times in the past. The government likes to claim that they have increased funding every year, but, in fact, in some of those years, the increase to the core budget was less than the rate of inflation, as the minister knows very well. In some cases, necessary funding wasn't provided until literally after the year-end.

There were also two years in a row when the hospital's annual report shows quite clearly that expenses were millions higher than revenue. For example, in the one that I'm looking at here now, it was close to \$4-million short at the end of the year according to the hospital's own report, and it was two years in a row with roughly a \$4-million hole in their operating picture.

So, let's talk about the hospital's core operating budget now compared to last year. Has the government increased funding for the hospital's core operational budget since last year, and if so, by what percentage and what dollar figure?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I want to address the spirometry question. I guess there's a wording issue in the budget. Clearly, spirometry services are being expanded as a result of the fact that they didn't operate for almost two years.

They have had funding and time to do renovations with respect to their services. We expect that the wait-list, which is currently as a result of the pandemic, will be resolved and then services can continue as Yukoners need them.

With respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation — I appreciate that the member opposite does not like the answer to this. I don't know where the Yukon Party gets the information with respect to the funding that's provided to the Whitehorse General Hospital. It has been increasing all of the time that the Yukon Liberal government has been in power for the purposes of providing those decisions.

The Yukon Hospital Corporation, of course, operates at arm's length from the government, and a board of trustees governs its activities and programs. The historic mains for funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation over the previous six fiscal years — I can provide the numbers for each of them. I can indicate that, in every fiscal year since 2015, the funds provided to Yukon Hospital Corporation have increased, with the exception of one year, 2018-19, which saw a \$2.3-million reduction. That was as a result of a pension solvency question with respect to the re-stating of values as presented and published from the 2017-18 main estimates. I don't want to go too far down that road, unless the member opposite wants more detail, which we can provide.

The budget in 2016-17 was approximately \$64 million. It then went to \$70 million. After that, as I have noted, in the one year, it saw a \$2-million reduction to almost \$68.2 million. It then went to \$74.9 million. In 2021-22, the core funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with small additional amounts there — within less than \$200,000 — was \$81.333 million, an increase of \$6.4 million.

In 2021-22, their budget was \$85.5 million, which was another increase of \$4.22 million, and in 2022-23, the budget that is before us, their funding is \$88.295 million, an increase of \$2.74 million. I can indicate that's approximately a 3.4-percent increase for the budget for the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I have additional information, if the member opposite would like, with respect to specific things noted in the budget regarding the short-stay psychiatric unit, for instance, or the Omnicell medication dispensing units and other information, but I will take my seat and await the next question.

**Mr. Cathers:** Although I do have a long list of questions, in the interest of sharing time with the Third Party, this is going to be my last one here. I do want to just note — I would be remiss if I didn't point out that the minister questioned where the Yukon Party was getting their numbers from about hospital funding. Well, we are getting them from the hospital's annual report, we are getting them from the information provided by her department in briefings, and we are getting them from the appearance of witnesses. I would point out in the annual report that if the minister looks in there — and I will just quote from the selected financial highlights as of — the report I have in my hand is for their fiscal year ending in 2020 — the hospital's own annual report clearly shows \$96.5 million in total expenses and \$92.6 million in total revenue. That is in their report.

Just my last questions here that I will group together quickly. There has been specific discussion about the MRI backlog. Has the government provided additional funding to the hospital to deal with that? In the area of surgical specialist wait times, we have heard from Hospital Corporation witnesses that they are too long across the board. Can the minister indicate what the government is doing to address those long wait times?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to address the questions from the member opposite, if I can, with respect to the MRIs.

First of all, before I get there, I should correct myself. I think I said the overall budget for Whitehorse General Hospital this year, in the 2022-23 mains, is an increase of 3.4 percent, but the calculations we have now are that it's actually a 3.2-percent increase. I just wanted to make sure I didn't mistake that 3.2 percent.

I can also note that the member opposite is looking at the annual report of the Whitehorse General Hospital. It includes approximately \$9.2 million of non-cash depreciation for the Whitehorse General Hospital accounting. Without going into too much detail with respect to that, it certainly probably clearly explains the differences in the numbers.

What I can also confirm is that I recently had the honour and privilege to sign the more than \$88-million transfer payment to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and they will, I know, use it wisely with respect to providing service for Yukoners.

I also note that we provide a capital budget as well to the Whitehorse General Hospital — and operation and maintenance. Those are the O&M figures that I was speaking about.

With respect to the MRIs — I think that the member opposite indicated that there was a long wait-list. Certainly, if it is for a non-urgent MRI here in the territory just now, there is too long of a wait-list, but I want to make sure that Yukoners hear and understand that the Whitehorse General Hospital endeavours to support urgent cases, which are evaluated by medical professionals, but current wait times for patients who require an urgent MRI are less than seven days. Whitehorse General Hospital endeavours to support semi-urgent cases in as close to 30 days as possible. As of February 28, semi-urgent cases were being completed within 44 days, so slightly over the goal of 30 days. At the same time, non-urgent cases were being completed within 20 months.

There are other options, of course. We have been working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and having conversations about an increased ability for the MRI to operate. Some places in Canada, for instance, have extended the hours with additional staff. I want to note and thank the individuals who do staff the MRI — the technologists who work in that process. Of course, our highly trained specialists have been affected by the shortage of medical professionals here in Canada. The Yukon Hospital Corporation has continued service with the use of casual technologists or locum technologists to ensure that acute and time-sensitive exams are completed as soon as possible. The Whitehorse hospital is continuing with aggressive recruitment activities both for permanent and short-term staff so that all options can be considered.

I appreciate the opportunity to note that for Yukoners. Thank you so much.

**Ms. White:** I would like to thank my colleague for Laberge for the opportunity to get the floor today. That is fantastic.

Before I get started, there was a recent announcement with the new hiring or appointment of a new Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services. My question is: Why is only one of the deputy ministers here? My understanding was that the department was being divided. We were going to on the Health and then the Social Services side. Can the minister explain why only one deputy minister is currently here for the budget debate on the mains in Health and Social Services?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Yes, I appreciate the opportunity to introduce, at least in the Legislative Assembly by my own voice, Ed van Randen as the second deputy minister with respect to the responsibilities of Health and Social Services.

I don't necessarily think it's fair at this point to say that the department is being divided, but certainly we recognize that there are priorities that require the attention of individuals in the deputy minister role in many areas of the Department of Health and Social Services because it is so broad.

Currently, Corporate Services is the responsibility of Deputy Minister Hale, although Deputy Minister Hale and Deputy Minister van Randen are working very closely together. Certainly, there are some responsibilities in Corporate Services and budget debate that will be the responsibility ultimately of Deputy Minister van Randen. We can certainly have access to him if there are certain questions that ultimately become his responsibility.

As this is budget debate and Deputy Minister Hale has just slightly more experience with our Corporate Services — it was incredibly important to bring the expert in the room, Rob, with respect to the director of strategic finance as an opportunity to provide as many broad and budget-based answers as we can.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate the answer, it's the minister who tells us that we have a new road map, that we're following *Putting People First*, and that we're looking at new ways of doing health. It is no criticism, of course, of the two support staff who are here and certainly not of the deputy minister who is present.

This is the first time in the history of Yukon government that a department has two deputy ministers.

A lot of time — and the conversation we have within the budget debate isn't actually about budgets but programming. Although I appreciate that the deputy minister who is present today will have access to folks electronically, I would have thought, since this is a new step, that we would have had the opportunity to have both or that the minister would maybe want to have both.

I digress. I will move on. The first thing I want to ask about is the transfer payment to All Genders Yukon for funding counselling for folks who are trans and their families.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the opportunity to answer this question. Our government continues to support non-governmental organizations and other partners that

provide Yukoners with the best possible care. All Genders Yukon is certainly one of those partners.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we provided All Genders Yukon with a total annual budget of \$106,000. In total, in the 2022-23 fiscal year, our government is providing All Genders Yukon with a total budget of \$161,000. In the fiscal year of 2022-23, we have committed to providing All Genders Yukon, as I have noted, with their \$106,000 base funding, if you will, and we have increased their budget by \$55,000 to fund counselling services for individuals who might seek counselling there. I just want to confirm that it is my understanding — although I could be corrected — that All Genders Yukon provides this kind of counselling by funding individual counsellors outside of their organization, if someone attends there and wants counselling, and they can use some of that funding to do so.

It should be noted that, during the 2021-22 fiscal year, we provided All Genders Yukon with \$106,000 as their base funding. This year, it's another \$55,000 to fund counselling, but during that period of time — 2021-22 — we provided additional, one-time COVID funding of \$111,000.

So, while I think it is clear, with the opportunity to explain — the base funding this year plus the increase of \$55,000 and the one-time funding of \$111,000 last year could be seen by someone not understanding the total of the budget as some sort of budget cut, but it was additional one-time COVID funding that was provided to All Genders Yukon back in 2021-22. So, their budget has not been cut. We provided them this year, actually, with an increase of \$55,000.

**Ms. White:** It is interesting that the minister talks about how that could be perceived as a budget cut, because that is exactly how it has been perceived by the organization itself. The difference in the budget, between this fiscal year and last year, is directly related to the number of counselling appointments that individuals can have. So, it has gone down from two a month to one a month, and so, although the minister said that \$111,000 was for COVID purposes, it was used for counselling purposes.

It is my understanding also that All Genders Yukon accessed money from the Canadian Red Cross to bolster — to be able to offer — those counselling services.

So, what we see right now — whether it is understood or not — is that number that is budgeted now is actually affecting people, and it is affecting the mental health of people who are supported by All Genders Yukon. Has the minister had a conversation with that organization? Has anyone in her department reached out to that organization to find out what that effect, or what that budgetary change, means to people on the ground?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question. I agree that any counselling services and opportunities for individuals to receive assistance through our NGOs is a practice that we want to continue to support. I think that the COVID one-time funding is going to have an effect, whether they are individual businesses, NGOs, or individuals who might have received COVID funding, because it will, in the future, change. What I can indicate as well is that the federal government has just, in

their current budget, announced a \$100-million increase in their budget with respect to providing mental wellness services to Canadians. We certainly expect and will be in rapid discussions with our counterparts at the federal government to determine which portion of that will be coming to the Yukon and how we might be able to use those funds.

We always make pleas, conversations, positions, and arguments with the federal government to build in as much flexibility as possible with those federal programs. We have been extremely successful at doing that. We are committed to the service provided by organizations like All Genders Yukon. I should note that I am aware of the services provided by All Genders Yukon, but I should note that counselling services, for instance, with respect to the Mental Wellness and Substance Use unit in the Department of Health and Social Services, is available to everyone, regardless of how an individual might identify or the concerns that they have.

We are very committed to talking to All Genders Yukon, if they have an opportunity to continue counselling services in that vein — and support them financially if that's a possibility. We will certainly respect their interest in doing so. I can say that I have not met with them about this particular issue, but I have not been contacted by them. We will confirm that they have not reached out to anyone at the department. Nonetheless, we will reach out to them to discuss this issue. I was certainly not interested in having them misunderstand the one-time funding or the increase in their budget for counselling services.

**Ms. White:** Before we continue on, I think it's really important that, when we talk about minority groups, we recognize that, although we all need supports, those folks who face more systemic barriers than others — folks who historically have a higher rate of suicide and self harm, folks who, unfortunately due to the way society is set up, have a much worse time — do deserve additional supports — straight up. I probably didn't say that in the most eloquent way, but let's be clear that folks who access the services and supports of All Genders Yukon deserve those supports.

It is important to note that the money that All Genders Yukon — so, in 2020-21, they had funding from both Yukon government, \$120,000, and they also got \$86,000 from Red Cross. That money was all used for counselling supports.

In 2021-22, again, it's the \$111,000, but it was still \$16,000 from Red Cross. The difference is that, in the 2020-21 fiscal year, the number of hours of counselling per unique individual accessing counselling per month was two hours and 30 minutes. In 2021-22, it went down to an hour and 22 minutes. It's expected to be at an hour a piece this fiscal year.

So, if we here, in this place where budgetary items are decided, think that this is acceptable — again, anyone will be able to point out the fact that I'm going to vote in favour of a budget I don't support because of the agreement that I signed, but let me highlight that it is not an acceptable thing.

We know that in December 2021, All Genders Yukon had to inform mental health professionals and members that there was insufficient funding to cover counselling sessions as of the end of January 2022. Again, they had to rely on emergency

funding from the Yukon government to cover mental health services for February and March 2022. And, going forward, All Genders Yukon is seeking sufficient funding based on the data that they have collected at this point and the anticipated growth of the support of that community.

Again, I appreciate that the minister and her officials will reach out, but again, this disproportionately affects a community that is already disproportionately affected.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.*







# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 66

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, April 13, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, April 13, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would like to welcome Mr. Jeff Hunston to the gallery today, and I ask my colleagues to welcome him. He is here for our tribute to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beringia Centre. He was a long-time leader in the Department of Tourism and Culture. I also just want to note that he is also a big contributor to our community, volunteering with sports organizations, such as Whitehorse Oldtimers Hockey. I had the opportunity and pleasure to sit with him on the Elijah Smith Elementary School Council where he spent many, many terms contributing to the school community there. Thank you for coming today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of International Day of Pink

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the International Day of Pink, which is recognized each year on April 13.

This year's theme is "Represent". This bold statement should make you think about what the Day of Pink represents and what we all represent when we participate in the day. We believe that, when we wear pink on April 13, we represent equality, diversity, inclusivity, solidarity, kindness, courage, acceptance, and much more.

Discrimination is everywhere and takes many forms. The LGBTQ2S+ community is not unfamiliar with bullying and the violence that stems from hateful beliefs. While progress has been made toward removing those social barriers from our society, we must still come together to raise awareness around all forms of bullying.

In Canada, the pink shirt movement began in 2007 after a high school student in Nova Scotia was bullied for wearing a pink shirt. The entire school took a stand and began working together to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying. Our education system is on a journey to reimagine inclusion, to move from tolerating indifference to seeing our diversity as a core value, and days like today are a reminder for all of us to examine how we personally and systemically are actively including everyone's uniqueness.

In Yukon schools, bullying awareness and discussions about gender and diversity are integrated into activities, classroom lessons, and events throughout the school year. Our high schools are all showing leadership and courage through gender and sexuality alliances and other social justice groups. These groups work each day to shift the school culture to be more inclusive and intolerant of bullying. In fact, I witnessed incredible leadership just this morning when I met with students from the gender and sexuality alliances of Porter Creek Secondary School, Vanier Catholic Secondary School, CSSC Mercier, and the Aurora Virtual School. These students, through their respectful dialogue with me and their compassion for one another, truly captured the spirit of International Day of Pink.

Today is a day when we demonstrate the celebration of diversity by wearing pink, of course, but by acknowledging how small actions can make a big difference. Let us continue this work to create a Yukon where we can all feel safe, valued, and supported to attend school, pursue our livelihoods, build healthy relationships, and connect to our community.

*Applause*

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the International Day of Pink. Today, we unite in pink in celebration of diversity and to raise awareness against all forms of bullying.

In 2007, a child in Nova Scotia was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to his first day of the ninth grade. Thanks to the actions of a couple of the young man's classmates, an international movement began. It started small, with the purchase of 50 shirts for classmates to wear in protest to the discrimination that their friend was subjected to. Their message was that anyone can bully and can be victimized by bullying, but together we can work to stop it.

Today, we wear pink around the world in protest of that same discrimination and harassment. Governments, organizations, schools, and individuals around the world wear shades of pink in solidarity against bullying, homophobia, transphobia, and all forms of discrimination. We celebrate diversity, tolerance, and openness and work to be a society that models inclusion.

When my son was in elementary school, he wasn't sure if he could wear pink. After that story about the pink shirt broke, he was leading the pink fashion in high school. It is truly important to be reminded: Boys can wear pink, and we all have the power to be kind.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the International Day of Pink. Today, millions of people worldwide are standing together against discrimination and bullying, whether it's based on race, age, disability, gender, or sexuality. Today, we celebrate our rich human diversity by wearing pink. Often, it is a small act of resistance that starts a revolution. As we have heard, that is exactly how pink shirt day was born. A movement in Nova Scotia that was started with an

act of resistance has since inspired millions of participants in more than 25 countries to stand up against discrimination and bullying.

Right here at home, we only need to look at our local high schools to see what inclusion and kindness look like in action through the work of the GSAs. Gender and sexuality alliances support all kids in a school by having a safe space for LGBTQ2S+ students and their classmates. These spaces radiate kindness, and that kindness permeates the very fabric of a school community. It was students who told us that they wanted their peers to feel safe and be able to participate in a GSA no matter what school they attended, so it's up to us as leaders to honour their calls to action. That's why it is so important to ensure that every kid, no matter what school they attend, feels safe, accepted, and supported through activities or groups like a GSA. We in the Yukon are on the cusp of making this a reality with Bill No. 304.

Pink shirt day reminds us today and every day to lead with kindness.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 29.

The centre, with its prominent woolly mammoths and unique architectural design, is an iconic site along the Alaska Highway, but it is more than just a display of ice age mammals and amazing fossil finds. It is a showcase in celebration of Yukon's significant role in global ice age research and a place to learn about the territory's ice age past.

The feature exhibit at the Beringia Centre is the reconstruction of the Bluefish Caves, an archaeological site located south of Old Crow within the traditional territory of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Bones and stone artifacts discovered at Bluefish Caves are some of the earliest evidence of the first people in North America. Research suggests that people visited the Bluefish Caves as early as 24,000 years ago.

Another highlight that we are proud to display are the three mummified ice age animals recovered from the Klondike gold fields in the traditional territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in: a caribou calf, a Yukon horse, and Zhùr, the wolf pup that made headlines around the world. For all the Zhùr fans out there, a limited edition print of two Zhùr posters illustrated by Canadian paleontological illustrator Julius Csotonyi will be available this summer.

In addition, there will be a new Beringia Centre introductory film showing to welcome visitors. This film, entitled *Crossroads of the Continents*, was produced and directed entirely by Yukon filmmakers, and it includes new and exciting archaeological and paleontological research and showcases the important work in collaboration between First Nation governments, placer miners, and the Yukon government.

When the Beringia Centre opened in 1997, its focus was to provide visitors with a window into Yukon's ice age past. The

centre's outreach program is evolving with modern formats boasting an active online and social media presence, including the popular Beringia Centre Science Talks series.

The centre has expanded its educational focus, developed on-site and take-home programming for children, school groups, and families, and is amplifying Yukon Beringian research to the world.

The last 25 years have been filled with much accomplishment, and I'm excited to see what the future will hold. This would not be possible without the amazing team at the Beringia Centre. Their hard work and passion in sharing the Yukon's ice age history is commendable.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre.

The centre, located on the Alaska Highway near the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, was originally built in 1992 as a visitor reception centre, or VRC. However, at the time, it became a sore spot as it was felt that visitors would never come into the downtown area and would just continue along the highway without visiting our capital city, Whitehorse. The new VRC, along with government offices, was built next to the Yukon government main administration building. On May 29, 1997, the highway facility officially became the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre.

This interpretive centre's focus is on the ice age history and the land bridge that linked Yukon to Siberia — a vast subcontinent called Beringia. It is the window into Yukon's past. It presents and preserves the First Nation and scientific views of an amazing story. The story is fascinating and well-told. The staff offers tours, and one can also self-guide through the well-marked exhibits.

Programs and events are held there throughout the year with scientific presentations and films among many other things. The facility can also be rented for local events and is a lovely place to gather. School classes are always welcome to come and engage with the staff to learn about this exciting time in history — the myths, the legends, the findings, and the amazing facts all under one roof.

The most recent find in Yukon, the Bluefish Caves, located just 35 kilometres southwest of Old Crow, is an important and incredible link to this period. For all the archaeologists and paleontologists who thrive on ancient history, it is hard to imagine their joy and excitement.

We know and often see news coverage of finds or unearthing of mammoths, horses, and other animals in the gold fields. To be able to study these creatures that no longer exist and share the knowledge with the world is invaluable — the megafauna, the woolly mammoths, horses, six-foot beavers, giant bears, and more — a menagerie of large beasts that have been recreated in pictures for us to ponder.

To all the staff, innovators, artists, and leaders, past and present, who have made this a world-class facility, thank you, and we wish you continued success in your development and growth. Thank you to the museum and heritage arms of the

Department of Tourism and Culture for keeping this facility updated and relevant as new exhibits are refreshed. If you have not done so, get out and visit this local treasure.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beringia Centre. As a child, visiting the Beringia Centre was an absolute delight, whether it was during a school trip or on a holiday with my family. What could be more fun than giant replicas of woolly mammoths and learning that they once made their home in the Yukon? As an adult, I still adore the mix of science and history. It highlights so much of the great research that is done in the territory. It's amazing that Zhùr, the 50,000-year-old mummified wolf pup, lives right here in Whitehorse.

I have also come to appreciate the support the Beringia Centre gives our community as an event space. It makes so many events possible, from festivals, to speaker series, to interactive activities. I also know that a space that is well-run does not happen by accident, so thank you to the Beringia team that keeps it running so smoothly. Thanks to your hard work, we all enjoy learning about the Yukon, both past and present.

Thank you, and I look forward to the continued evolution of this great local attraction.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENT

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling today four important documents. The first is a CBC article, dated March 19, 2015, entitled "Yukon Zinc granted creditor protection after mine closure"; another CBC article, dated January 28, 2015, entitled "Yukon Zinc owes \$3M in security payments for Wolverine Mine"; an article from the *Whitehorse Star*, dated March 19, 2015, entitled "Fifty-two Yukon firms are owed \$4.3 million"; and finally, a *National Post* article, dated December 25, 2016, entitled "Over \$350-million spent to clean up abandoned mine in Yukon and not an inch has been remediated".

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

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise in the House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT it is the opinion of this House that licensed firearms owners should not be subjected to forced confiscation of their lawfully acquired personal private property without just cause.

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

THAT this House urges the federal government to respect the rights of law-abiding firearms owners by repealing their May 1, 2020 regulation that reclassified thousands of legally purchased rifles and other unrestricted firearms as prohibited weapons.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Yukon Parks Strategy

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As Yukoners, we are proud of our beautiful, vast backyard. As we see warmer — or at least, truth be told, sunnier — days every day, we all look forward to the camping season just around the corner. Today, I would like to speak about our work under the new *Yukon Parks Strategy*, which sets out a long-term direction for the Yukon's territorial parks system for the next 10 years.

In 2022-23, we will work on a number of important infrastructure improvements to Yukon parks across the territory. This year, our government will invest \$1.5 million to upgrade, maintain, and replace boat launches and docks at a number of Yukon campgrounds, including Aishihik Lake, Ethel Lake, Frenchman Lake, Lake Laberge, Nunatuk, Otter Falls, Quiet Lake south, Quiet Lake north, Tagish bridge, Teslin Ten Mile, and Twin Lakes. This is a great initiative for tourists and Yukoners alike who enjoy being out on the water.

We will also invest over \$1 million toward facility upgrades, kiosk installations, hazardous tree removal, and campsite rejuvenation at a number of campgrounds, as well as playground replacements at the Pine Lake and Yukon River campgrounds. In addition, we will invest \$290,000 to add campsites at existing campgrounds, and we are piloting green operations, such as installing recycling stations at sites, as well as expanding and enhancing trails and day-use areas where possible.

Yukon parks now have two Cybertech compacting garbage systems, one at Wolf Creek and one at Marsh Lake. They each hold 300 litres of garbage — the weight of the garbage compacts. It is part of the greening operations strategy.

This system has more capacity, is bear- and fire-proof, and efficient. In the past, in the Wolf Creek Campground alone, the Department of Environment did two trips per week with garbage to the dump. Now it will be once every two weeks — of course, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

A big piece of the success of Yukon Parks is our continued partnership with Yukon First Nations, and this year, we have partnered with the Dane Nan Yé Dāh Network and the Kaska Land Guardians program to help with park monitoring and the trail development in the Watson Lake area. We are also working with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Singletrack to Success trail crews to develop a new hiking trail in the Conrad Campground area.

In addition, our government is currently working with the six affected First Nations to identify a suitable location for a new campground close to Whitehorse that would not be more than a two-hour drive from the city.

Yukoners love camping, and we found that this love does not dissipate in the winter. That is why, this year, we piloted an enhanced winter recreation service at six parks and have received very positive feedback. We look forward to building on this success next winter, and we strive to help more Yukoners enjoy camping year-round.

Our government will continue to actively support Yukon Parks to help ensure that Yukoners can safely enjoy our territory and see all that it has to offer. As we approach this camping season, I want to remind Yukoners to be safe while camping, carry bear spray, let friends and family know where you are camping, when you expect to be home, and make sure that you plan ahead and bring all the necessary safety items you need.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I would like to thank the minister for the update on the *Yukon Parks Strategy* and parks infrastructure, as well as for the opportunity to respond here today.

So, we do have a number of questions about the *Yukon Parks Strategy* that have not yet been answered. The most obvious question that many Yukoners are wondering is where the next territorial campground will be located. In the press release announcing the release of the parks strategy, the commitment was clear. Major action included — and I quote: “... building a new campground near Whitehorse with up to 150 campsites...” Since then, the minister has told us that the government has been targeting a location within a two-hour drive of Whitehorse and that it would have easy access to a body of water.

In Question Period last week, the minister said — and I quote: “The final decision has not been made, but I can advise that, as indicated, the proposed campground could be larger than 150 campsites.”

Mr. Speaker, for context, this would make the proposed new campground, by far, the biggest one in the Yukon. However, the minister also said that he has been told by the department — and I quote: “... there is a possibility of this plan being divided into separate and discrete but smaller sites that may be identified...”

Of course, many Yukoners are very interested in learning more about which option the government is going to choose and what locations are currently under consideration by the minister. I hope he can use his response today to address this.

Additionally, many Yukoners are eager to hear what the minister has in store for campground reservations. The parks strategy says that the government will test online reservation options to improve fair access to some campsites in some road-accessible campgrounds and that they will be doing a pilot project on this. Can the minister tell us if this pilot project has been completed, which campground was tested, and what the results were of that project?

The parks strategy also contemplates making certain campgrounds more available year-round. As well, the strategy says that there is a need for a modest level of service in the off-season to deal with garbage and visitor safety. Can the minister tell us which campgrounds are available year-round and which

campgrounds have had this new, modest level of service added in the off-season?

I would also like to hear from the minister about other commitments in the parks strategy — specifically, commitment 4.2 on page 15. It says that the department will develop a Yukon territorial parks system plan to guide the development of existing and emerging parks and the establishment of future parks. We would like the minister to explain what work has been done on that commitment and when we might be able to see the new parks plan.

While I am happy to hear the updates from the minister, I sure hope he can also provide further information, when he gets on his feet again, about the questions I have asked here today.

**Ms. Tredger:** Like many Yukoners, I am eagerly awaiting the start of camping season, and thank you to those parks crews who are plowing snow out of many sites so that we can get an early start.

I was glad to hear in debate recently that, for the new campground, the government is considering multiple, smaller campgrounds, rather than one mega campground. As the minister mentioned, this may reduce the environmental impact of the campground and I would suggest might give it a more secluded and quieter feel as well.

I do have a question about the new campground. I notice that the parks strategy makes only a passing reference to accessibility, so I am curious to know: At these new campgrounds, will there be accessible sites and accessible outhouses? Many YG campgrounds have been getting makeovers with accessible sites, outhouses, and playgrounds, and we hope that this will be the standard going forward.

We were disappointed that the government has pushed ahead with raising camping fees for Yukoners. I wonder: What other options has the government considered? Have they considered increasing fees for tourists but not for Yukoners? Or have they considered opportunities for revenue elsewhere? One comparison the Yukon NDP has made before is how much the government charges for campground use compared to other Yukon resources. For example, there's Yukon mining royalties, which haven't gone up for gold since 1906. Campground permit revenue in a typical year is already more than half a million dollars, whereas placer mining fees, with nearly \$100 million worth of production, brought in less, at \$385,000.

Raising the campground fees is missing an opportunity to keep campgrounds accessible for all Yukoners. So, we look forward to the new investment and hope to see consideration of physical accessibility and financial accessibility as a priority in campground planning.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In total, the 10-year *Yukon Parks Strategy* was created with input from more than 1,500 Yukoners, 10 First Nations, and 28 local organizations. As we implement the strategy to strengthen our parks and help get more Yukoners and visitors out in our beautiful backyard, we will continue to involve the voices of Yukoners and Yukon First Nations to help enhance the camping experiences the Yukon has to offer.

Through our work to plan the next location of Yukon's newest campground close to Whitehorse, the government invited all six Yukon First Nations with traditional territories within two hours' drive of Whitehorse to discuss possible locations and partnership opportunities. As both the Member for Kluane and the Member for Whitehorse Centre have indicated, there is more news to come on that front, as we go forward with that consultation.

As of now, the Yukon government maintains 42 campgrounds with more than 1,000 campsites, hundreds of outhouses, 12 recreation sites, and 57 territorial parks. Mr. Speaker, in 2021, we hosted over 52,000 people from over 48,000 campsite nights at our road-accessible campgrounds, including nearly 3,600 nights during our extended season in early May and in late September.

The Yukon government collects about one-half million dollars of revenue from the sale of camping permits, which accounts for a small percentage of the costs associated with maintaining our parks. Yukon camping fees have not changed for 20 years, and still today, our camping fees remain some of the lowest in Canada, and our parks have no fees for entry, day use, parking, boat launch, and they include free firewood. We are the only jurisdiction in Canada to provide all these amenities at no additional cost.

Mr. Speaker, we also offer a 50-percent discount for Yukon seniors, which is also one of the biggest discounts for camping fees for seniors in the country.

Yukoners will also soon see more improvements coming to Yukon parks, including a new online payment system to pay nightly camping fees at a discounted rate, which will launch next month. They will also soon see more year-round recreational opportunities and accessible wilderness experiences, such as paddle-in and hike-in sites.

Mr. Speaker, the *Yukon Parks Strategy* is guiding development of our parks, which will benefit Yukoners and those visiting our territory for generations to come. It is helping to improve camping experiences for everyone, ensuring that campsites are maintained, amenities can be offered, and our campground networks can continue to expand.

I look forward to continuing to see the exciting work unfold under the new *Yukon Parks Strategy* and thank all our First Nation partners and Yukoners for helping ensure that we offer some of the most beautiful and most memorable camping experiences in the country.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Diabetes programs for children

**Mr. Kent:** In a January 2022 letter, the Yukon type 1 diabetes, or T1D, support network raised concerns about the Department of Education's response to the Auditor General's 2019 report. In that letter, they say — and I quote: "... the Network believes that the Department of Education's response to the Auditor General's recommendation that there be a full review of the services and supports for inclusive education is

inadequate as it fails to incorporate the needs and perspectives of children with disease."

Has the Minister of Education taken any action to address the serious concerns raised by the Yukon T1D Support Network?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. In terms of health, safety, and well-being of our students that is always at the heart and centre of the work that we do and strive to do in our schools, the health and safety of students and staff is our first priority.

School staff definitely have a duty to students who are at risk from severe medical conditions, such as diabetes and other serious illness, and who may require medication and other care while they're under school supervision. These students require and receive planned care.

We do have an Administration of Medication to Students policy that's followed very closely and carefully. We certainly welcome the opportunity to have further dialogue and meetings with the T1D Support Network to review the extensive policy — our existing policy — and then identify any gaps.

All Yukon schools follow, as I have mentioned, the Administration of Medication to Students policy, which requires planned care and support for students with various medical conditions, including diabetes.

I look forward to further questions.

**Mr. Kent:** That response leads into this second question that I have.

At the Public Accounts hearing in January with the Department of Education, the deputy minister was asked about T1D's request for a diabetes policy in education. She said at the time that — and I quote: "I think that we would determine that next step after we review the existing policy and then identify where there are any gaps..."

Can the minister tell us what specific work has been done on reviewing the existing policy, and has the minister reached out to the T1D Support Network to ask for their input on this policy review?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you very much for the follow-up question. I think that this is really important and vital. As always, we take the health and well-being of our students very seriously, and we always look to work with our partners in education. We certainly value the work that the T1D Support Network does and we are always interested in working with groups, especially those with specific expertise. Our department is willing and wants to work with the T1D Support Network and have their input to work on the review of the existing policy and to identify any gaps. We are always interested in ensuring that our policies are strong. If there are areas in which we can improve on them, we certainly will.

Again, we do have a policy in our schools that is followed — the Administration of Medication to Students policy, which is taken very seriously by our education professionals.

**Mr. Kent:** So, that letter from the T1D Support Network also says — and I quote again: "That the Department of Education has thus far failed to incorporate their needs into broader improvement considerations shows either a calculated dismissal of these needs or an erroneous omission." So, it is

clear that a new approach is needed to address the needs of children with disease in our education system.

Will the minister agree to develop a stand-alone policy to address these needs in our K to 12 schools? Will she also agree to work with the T1D Support Network to develop this policy?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think that I have already said that we will work with the T1D Support Network to look at the existing policy and identify any gaps.

It's important and vital, of course, that we are ensuring that our policies are the best that they can be and that is our interest — to ensure that Yukon schools have good policies in place. Schools are required to follow our Administration of Medication to Students policy, which includes processes for documentation of chronic medical conditions and any other required supports from adults while children are in school.

I also note that not only are we committed — the Department of Education — to working with the organization, the Department of Health and Social Services is working with the T1D Support Network on how best to implement a territory-wide type 1 diabetes strategy, which, of course, will include work that we need to do in our schools if it is to be a Yukon-wide strategy.

#### Question re: Whistle Bend development

**Mr. Hassard:** So, the housing crisis has gotten exponentially worse under the Liberals. This is in large part because the demand for lots is much higher than the supply provided by the government. The government's own budget documents make it very clear that, for the five and a half years of Liberal government, they have completely failed to keep up with the demand for lots. To quote directly from the budget: "The increase in prices have made owning a single detached home out of reach for many Yukoners."

That's why Yukoners were surprised when the Liberals abruptly cancelled the construction tender of Whistle Bend phase 7 last year, essentially delaying the release of at least 90 residential lots by a year.

So, Mr. Speaker, why did the Liberals delay Whistle Bend phase 7?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to rise on my feet this afternoon to talk about all the land development that our government is doing to help Yukoners.

I take exception to the preamble by the member opposite; I don't think that's any surprise.

Frankly, the reason why the territory is going through the lot squeeze that we are is because, frankly, they didn't develop a lot of lots and, under our mandate, the growth in the territory's economy is really extraordinary and is bringing a lot of people to the territory who are looking for housing. So, I know the member opposite failed to mention that, but that's a key reason why we're looking at developing more lots. We are actually doing that. We are working to get as many lots as we can out the door.

Now, we continue to advance Whistle Bend as quickly as possible in phases. We work closely with local contractors who carry out the construction and supply the materials needed to get the job done.

We ensure progress every year, releasing lots by way of lottery for private citizens and contractors in advance of the spring start to the construction season. Once Whistle Bend is complete, it will include 16 phases — 2,173 lots. I am happy to talk on this subject in future questions.

**Mr. Hassard:** Five and a half years — and the government is still blaming the previous governments, but I guess I'm not surprised.

To quote the Minister of Community Services from last spring: "The phase 7 construction tender just closed. It will supply another 90 residential lots targeted for release in the fall of 2022." But then the Liberals, as I said, cancelled that tender, resulting in the delay of more housing and making housing less affordable for everyone.

The Official Opposition has obtained a confidential briefing note indicating that part of the reason the Liberals delayed phase 7 was so they could redesign the tender to conform with the First Nation procurement policy.

Can the minister confirm if this is actually the case? Did the Liberals delay the release of residential lots by at least a year because of the First Nation procurement policy?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Wow, Mr. Speaker — that's a heck of a preamble. I am going to dig into this one a little bit because, frankly, we are being berated by the members opposite for actually making our briefing notes public.

The members opposite suspended the distribution of briefing notes. They were public because, in my former role as a journalist, I asked for them. When I did that, they shut it down. They actually made it so that we could not obtain the briefing notes from the government that were public information. These briefing notes are here to read into the record. How can that be confidential? This is a record that I am supposed to tell the public about. I am glad they have them in their hands, because that is the action that this government took through this rewritten ATIPP act — to put it back in the public's hands after it was revoked by the previous government. I'm not going to take any lessons from that.

As far as the lots and the First Nation procurement policy, I would love to know if the members opposite support the First Nation procurement policy. I'm getting the sense that they don't from preambles yesterday and today. I don't know where they stand on this, so I would love to hear, in his next question, whether or not the member opposite supports the First Nation procurement policy.

**Mr. Hassard:** It's unfortunate that, after five and a half years, the minister still doesn't understand how Question Period works either, but I'm not surprised about that. What is clear is that the Liberals have completely failed to keep up with the demand for lots over the last five years. Their own budget documents show that their delays in getting lots to market have contributed to this crisis.

Now, this briefing note confirms that the Liberals have made the political decision to delay the release of at least 90 lots. The newly issued tender for phase 7 closed on February 23. The government website indicates that the contract has still not been awarded — so more delays. Will the



minister tell us when the contract will be awarded, and when will phase 7 finally be completed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I can share with the House today is that the direction that we have given, at all times, to the Department of Community Services and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is to redouble efforts to get as many lots out as quickly as possible, using our new procurement policy.

I disagree with the members opposite. I think that they have been unreliable on this issue. Under the Yukon Party, four years — \$24 million in total on land development. This year alone with the Yukon Liberal government, \$26 million — that's four times the rate at which we are investing — \$13 million in Whitehorse, \$13 million in our communities. We are working to develop as many lots for Yukoners as quickly as possible. We just had a lottery recently — 78 lots, I believe. There is more work to come, and I would like to thank the Department of Community Services for all the work that they do to develop lots as quickly as possible for Yukoners.

**Question re: Universal paid sick leave**

**Ms. Tredger:** In January of this year, the Making Work Safe Panel presented a report on paid sick leave. It recommended implementing a universal paid sick leave program that would make sure that all Yukon employees have access to 10 paid days of sick leave each year. Since then, the government has neither responded to nor accepted the recommendations. The hundreds of Yukoners who were consulted in the making of this report are still waiting for answers.

Will the Liberal government commit to implementing these recommendations so that Yukoners have access to 10 days of paid sick leave each year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I want to thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. It's a real pleasure working with her and the panel on the recommendations for a paid sick leave program in the territory. We did do the engagement, and it went very well.

The report that we tabled has gone to government and it has been — they were recommendations only — and now the government has taken those recommendations, and we are breathing life into those recommendations, but there is still work to be done; there is no doubt about that. We are now engaging with local businesses and other groups to address the concerns about the panel's recommendations that we received, but we do know that having sick leave in the territory is important for Yukoners. It is important, certainly, in light of what we have learned through COVID, and we have extended our paid sick leave program — which has been delivered through Economic Development so successfully — to the fall of this year, while we actually assess the great recommendations that the Making Work Safe Panel has made to government.

**Ms. Tredger:** I appreciate that it takes policy work, but the clock is ticking. The temporary paid sick leave program expires on September 30. That is less than six months away. By the time the next session of the Legislature starts, the sick leave

program that the minister is counting on will already have expired, leaving many Yukoners forced to choose between going to work sick or losing their wages.

Health professionals have spent the last two years begging people to stay home when they are sick. Overwhelming evidence from around the world shows that paid sick leave helps keep people safe and healthy. Leaving Yukoners without paid sick leave is an unacceptable public health risk.

So, will this government commit to bringing forward changes to the *Employment Standards Act* in the next Sitting, and if not, what is their plan to keep Yukoners safe after September 30?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question from the member opposite. We know that there is value in providing a paid sick leave program for Yukoners; that is why we have done it throughout the pandemic; that is why we have extended that program until September of this year. We also know that employers have concerns about how a program would be introduced and managed within the Yukon. We also know that the engagement that we conducted together showed that there is support for a paid sick leave program in the territory, but it also left unanswered how that program would be implemented or paid for. That policy work is going on right now, through the Department of Community Services. We are working on that policy work right now. We are then going to have Cabinet discussions about how to proceed, once we get the information gathered together and have the answers to some of these questions before us.

We also have to work with the local business community and Yukoners in general, once we have those ideas, on how to actually implement this. So, there is a lot of work yet to be done. We are working on that work right now and we hope to have answers as soon as possible for Yukoners, because we know how important this matter is for them.

**Ms. Tredger:** The minister said this is important; the minister said this has value, but I still haven't heard a clear answer about whether we're going to get paid sick leave or not. The Making Work Safe Panel did a thorough public engagement. Yukoners' support for a universal paid sick leave program was overwhelming. Hundreds of Yukoners shared their thoughts and stories — stories of people who had to sell their possessions to cover their rent if they missed even one day of work, stories of parents who struggled every time their kids had the flu and couldn't go to daycare because they couldn't afford to stay home.

Yukoners have spoken, and they deserve a clear answer from this government. Is this government going to implement universal paid sick leave — yes or no?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have said on the floor — you know, as part of this whole panel process, I heard those same stories. I know how important this matter is to Yukoners. I know the benefits that it can bring to a society when it's implemented. As a matter of fact, our government is learning that first-hand, because we actually have a policy in place that is actually helping Yukoners at this very moment, and we have extended that program until September. That buys us needed time while we continue to assess and consult on this very, very important

matter for Yukoners. I have committed to doing that work. We're going to continue to do that work.

**Question re: Carmacks arena**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Last year, the minister told us that the Carmacks arena is slated to be completed in the fall of 2022. A press release last year indicated that the original budget for the project was just over \$16 million. Can the minister confirm that the project is on track to be completed this fall? Can he tell us the new total budget for that project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm happy to rise to my feet again and get some questions. It has been a while, so I really do cherish this moment.

We are building infrastructure across the territory. We are building arenas; we are working very hard to provide the recreational opportunities that Yukoners have demanded for so very long. These investments are critical to our community, and we know that there were some issues with the Carmacks arena. We lost — the key contractor actually pulled out of the job and left us in a pickle. We are actually working to get that project back on track.

I have said before in this House that the project is on track. We fully expect it to be finished in the next few months.

We also are working very hard to recoup costs from the former contractor on this job. I know how important recreation is to the community of Carmacks. I know they're expecting this rink, and I'm really excited — I will be very excited to see it open in the next few months.

**Question re: Recycling diversion credit program**

**Ms. McLeod:** Currently, the Yukon government pays recycling processors to accept non-refundable recyclables, such as cardboard, paper, and plastic, by providing them with diversion credits. The vast majority of these products come from the City of Whitehorse. The City of Whitehorse caps the amount of diversion credits paid out at \$150,000 total. This means that there is less financial incentive for processors to accept materials beyond that cap.

Will the Yukon government provide additional funding to the City of Whitehorse to remove the cap on diversion credits?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It was a rich preamble from the member opposite. We are working very, very closely with the City of Whitehorse on a number of different issues. I have regular communication with the administration and with the mayor of Whitehorse. This is not an issue that the mayor of Whitehorse has brought to my attention lately, but I am certainly willing to entertain the request when it comes my way to see how we can help, because that is what we have been doing so much.

What is at the root of the question this afternoon, though? Is it the amount of garbage and waste that we are producing as a society? We know that we are taking great steps to reduce and make the people producing that waste pay for the waste they are producing. We have to do this because we, as a society, are producing way, way, way too much garbage. So, we have to take steps. When we came into office, we had municipalities coming to us and saying, "Please, you have to help us with our

waste management." My colleague, the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, stepped up and actually took steps to address the amount of waste we are producing in this territory. We are going to continue that effort into the future.

I have more to say on this. I hope I get the opportunity.

**Ms. McLeod:** The 2018 Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste recommended that the diversion credit program only be continued for a few years, while the 2018 changes to the designated materials regulations were implemented. It has now been four years since that happened.

What is the minister's plan for ending the diversion credit program, as was recommended by the ministerial committee in 2018?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that we continue to work to implement a user-pay and managed regional model for solid waste in the territory throughout the territory, as a matter of fact, based on the recommendations from the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste management, represented by the municipal Association of Yukon Communities and Yukon government officials. Work underway will set conditions for a more sustainable and efficient system and requires us to address long-standing land tenure issues, develop regional agreements, plan for future environmental mitigations, and plan for future liabilities related to site closures and decommissioning. We continue to make progress on this.

It's all part of extended producer liability — we have to do better, Mr. Speaker. Let's just say that we have to do better in this territory in managing the waste that we produce. We are going to have to pay for the waste. We are going to have to make the people who are producing waste pay more to do that. That is part of the method with which we will reduce waste in the territory and better manage our waste sites.

**Question re: Stevens Quarry development**

**Mr. Cathers:** On April 7, 2021, the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources signed a letter to the constituents of my riding, making a very clear promise about the proposed development of the Stevens Quarry. The letter said — and I quote: A re-elected Liberal government "... will maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry ... It will not be developed..." over the next mandate. Recently, I asked the current minister if he is planning on honouring this promise made by his colleague. His answer was unclear about whether or not he would be honouring the promise made by his colleague, so I would like to give him another chance to answer.

Will the current minister commit to upholding the promise the former minister made to my constituents about the Stevens Quarry?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Earlier, we had a question about the importance of lot development, and my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, and I stood up, and we talked about how important lot development is here in the Yukon, including Whitehorse. We have seen record growth in Whitehorse and record growth across the country, so there is a lot of pressure. All of that development requires gravel.

How I responded previously, and how I will respond again today, is that I asked the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to work closely with the City of Whitehorse to identify what the demand is for gravel and to identify where potential supplies are. We are working on a number of creative solutions. I am well aware of Stevens Quarry. I recognize that it has a lot of potential, but I also recognize that, when YESAB reviewed it previously, there would be a lot of steps that would need to be taken if we were to develop Stevens Quarry.

What I've said before and what I'll say again today is that it's very important that we have gravel here in the city to make sure that we continue to facilitate lot development, and I will continue to do that work with the City of Whitehorse.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister dodged the question. When the former minister wrote the letter to my constituents last year, he was clear and unequivocal. He said that Stevens Quarry would not be developed over the next mandate. Yet now it sounds like the current minister is backing away from that commitment. Last time I asked about this, the current minister said that one of the areas he's looking to develop for gravel supply is Stevens Quarry.

So, the question is simple: Is he going to keep the clear promise made by his colleague last April, or is he going to break it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I hope this is clear, Mr. Speaker. Gravel is important for the City of Whitehorse. I've met several times with the City of Whitehorse. I tell you what —

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

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The member has the floor. I'm having a hard time hearing him speak.

Please continue.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to gravel — I'm surprised that the members opposite would pick Stevens Quarry over lots. Now, I'm not saying that we're going to develop Stevens Quarry; what I am saying is that lot development is what our priority is. In order to have lot development, we will need gravel. So, we are working right now to identify where the demand is for gravel here in the City of Whitehorse and where potential supply is. We will work on creative solutions with the City of Whitehorse and the industry — where there is gravel supply.

But I am surprised that the Yukon Party would pick Stevens Quarry over lot development; that surprises me.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I have to remind the member that we're asking about a clear commitment made by his colleague on Liberal Party letterhead last year. This may come as a surprise to the minister, but there were people in my riding who believed, when the former minister wrote a public pledge during the election not to develop Stevens Quarry during the next mandate, that he actually meant it.

Now the current minister is giving us the sense that the commitment is not worth the paper it was written on. This has unfortunately become the trend with this government and this

minister. He's quick to promise whatever he thinks will help him in the short term, but then fails to back it up with any action at all. We've known this for a while, but now my constituents are getting a clear example.

Why would the former minister make this promise for my constituents in writing if the Liberals never had any intention of living up to the promise they made to my constituents?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Each time I have stood to speak to this issue, I have never said that we are developing Stevens Quarry. What I have said is that I have asked my department, in a request from the City of Whitehorse, to work closely with them to identify sources of gravel and to compare the supply that is possible against the demand that is needed. I am very hopeful that we will find solutions that don't deal with Stevens Quarry — that would be terrific. But I am also saying that if we do not, then we will look at Stevens Quarry. Stevens Quarry would require many steps to get to development because, under the YESAB review, it was identified that there would need to be planning work.

So, I am happy to come out and talk to the constituents of the Member for Lake Laberge, but what I am trying to say clearly in this Legislature is: We, as a government, support working with our municipalities, we, as a government, support lot development, and we, as a government, will do our best to make sure that the lot development can proceed and we hold it as a high priority.

Apparently, the Yukon Party does not hold it as a high priority.

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

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

**Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**Department of Energy, Mines and Resources**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to begin by welcoming two of Energy, Mines and Resources' assistant deputy ministers. To my left, Samantha Paterson, who is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Corporate Services, and to my right is Stephen Mead, who is the Assistant Deputy Minister of Mineral Resources and Geoscience Services.

Recently, I got to sit down with the department staff. I went through the work that they were doing across the board. It's quite something — the range of work that happens — whether that is in developing more land and increasing the amount of opportunities we have for agriculture, whether that is all of our work through the Energy Solutions Centre on shifting the energy economy, whether that is our folks who make sure that our mines are working well and do the inspections, whether that is managing the lands we have with the work we have now on the *Lands Act*, land use planning for Dawson and other areas, everything around forestry, mining — there is a lot.

I just want to begin by thanking the department for all of the work that they have been doing to get us here today. I look forward to debate.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for his opening comments and I also welcome his officials here today to provide support to him during Committee of the Whole for the afternoon.

I wanted to start out asking the minister about forestry and fuel wood issues. Obviously, this last winter, there were a number of stories and concerns with the lack of fuel wood for commercial cutters. We heard stories of firewood being shipped in from as far away as Fort Nelson through the winter months.

Where I will start with the minister, though, is with respect to a news story that just popped up this afternoon talking about a local sawmill — Creekside Wood Supply sawmill. Mr. Doug Kerley is the mill's owner and he's a constituent of mine. He will be shuttering his sawmill after the Easter long weekend. In this story, he attributes the shortage of timber to a variety of things but maintains that the government's policy around opening areas to timber harvest is the main culprit. I know that the minister has been back and forth, as his predecessor was, with Mr. Kerley, trying to find solutions.

I guess the question for the minister would be: Why does the minister believe it came to this situation where this individual had to close down his sawmill, rather than being able to find timber for him in some of the latest resource

management plans, such as the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes one?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will begin by saying that I think that this is not really about a fuel wood issue, but this is about a saw log issue. I have worked closely with Mr. Kerley, as has the Forest Management branch. The challenges began when there was an attempt to open up some area for saw logs — there would have been firewood there, as well — around Johnsons Crossing — that was not approved through YESAB. So, on that front, when that was not approved, I sat down with the Teslin Tlingit Council to talk to them about ways that we could work together as governments, and what I heard from them was that they were interested in seeing areas developed, so the direction that I gave to the department was to please work with Teslin Tlingit Council to look for other opportunities, but of course, those sorts of things will take some time.

We also worked with Mr. Kerley around trying to use our response to climate change and to make our communities safer, through Wildland Fire, where we are creating areas where we are reducing fire risk and, in particular, around the member opposite's riding. So, we looked for opportunities there; there were some. I got into a conversation with Mr. Kerley about the possibility of him expanding his operations to include a kiln to dry wood, and he was working with the Department of Economic Development on that front.

Mr. Kerley took me around to some of the sites, where we looked to see what was happening, and then there was another challenge, where he wanted to do some processing of wood off-site, and we had arranged for some wood storage in unused gravel pits, but unfortunately, we weren't able to use those same storage pits — or previous gravel pits — to do wood processing, and it would take either a regulatory change or a legislative change.

We continue to work — when I last spoke with Mr. Kerley, he indicated to me that he was going to do other work this summer and not operate his sawmill, and we agreed that we would stay in touch, and if we were able to find further solutions through the Forest Management branch, they would be well-received.

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Kerley indicated in this news article that there simply isn't enough wood to keep his employees working and the business viable. It goes on to say that, in peak season — it's a small mill, but it still provides employment for four people. They are now cutting what timber they have left in order to get one more shipment out to his primary local customers.

With respect to the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan, which was signed off within the last couple of years, when can we expect some sort of a commercial timber supply analysis and some of the timber harvest permits to be let — not only for potential fuel wood or fire abatement opportunities, but more specific to what Mr. Kerley would need for Creekside Wood Supply, if he is willing and able to take that risk to restart?

When can we expect some timber supply analysis and timber harvest options to come out in the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan? Because

I don't believe that there are any economic opportunities for saw logs in that plan, as it is written.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I can say, with respect to the Whitehorse and Southern Lakes Forest Resources Management Plan, that our government and the Forest Management branch are working with the three affected First Nations — the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än' Council, and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Terms of reference have been signed that will help guide the work of the implementation team. I understand that planning is being done now, in collaboration with that implementation team. I don't have a note at the moment about what the anticipated timelines are, but I can indicate that the group is working on it now.

**Mr. Kent:** So, there's no timeline with respect to when that would be ready.

I know that the minister was in attendance — as was I and as was the Member for Whitehorse Centre — at the Yukon Wood Products Association meeting last June where some concerns were identified with the thresholds in YESAA as far as which projects would have to go to executive committee screening rather than a designated office evaluation under that environmental assessment legislation.

So, has any work been done with respect to either adjusting those thresholds as far as what level of screening has to take place for specific forestry projects since that time?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, first of all, I will say a few things. One of the things that was talked about at the June meeting with the Yukon Wood Products Association was pressure on wood supply. One of the main points of pressure was Quill Creek, which was at that time with YESAB. Subsequent to that, we worked with YESAB to identify to them that there was pressure on the wood supply — firewood supply for Yukoners — and they worked to get that plan released. Then the Forest Management branch worked to get it permitted, and that got out. Now I can say that this area, which is near Haines Junction, is being developed, so that was good news.

There was another challenge that was not YESAA-related but was related with one of our main wood producers down in Watson Lake. He was harvesting down the Stewart-Cassiar Highway just across the border and there were challenges with some of his blocks with the Government of British Columbia. We worked to try to support him through that, and he was ultimately successful in getting those cut blocks. So, that was another way in which we helped.

With respect to YESAA, what we're talking about are things that are in the act and set as thresholds. So, if we're talking about how that will be addressed, that would be with the YESAA reset oversight group. I believe the Premier spoke about this yesterday here in the Legislature. I know that we've been working through the Yukon Forum with First Nations to talk about this work.

The Premier indicated that this all began when there were amendments made to YESAA previously with the Yukon Party government, which did not work with First Nations as those amendment came in. That is what led to this challenge. Thankfully, the current federal government took those

amendments back out and now we are working with that oversight group.

It's not unique to forestry; this is the broader question of YESAA. The Premier is leading that work through the Yukon Forum and working with the federal government.

**Mr. Kent:** I am glad that the minister mentioned the YESAA reset oversight group because that then gives us an opportunity to talk about that a little bit later on under some of the mining questions that I have. We did ask some questions yesterday in Question Period, but the Premier was unable to provide any definitive responses to those questions that I asked. We will touch on that a little bit later on here this afternoon.

I want to talk about wood supply, and this is more on the fuel-wood supply side of things. I know that my colleague, the MLA for Kluane, spoke to one of his constituents a couple of weeks ago about Quill Creek. This individual is the main harvester in the Quill Creek area. This morning, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and I, as well as the Leader of the Official Opposition, spoke to the main harvester in the southeast Yukon — harvesting, of course, in northern British Columbia, down the Stewart-Cassiar Highway, and shipping the wood into the territory. With the delays in getting the Quill Creek cut area out, the individual who lives in Watson Lake was the main supplier of firewood this past winter to the Yukon.

In the confidential session briefing notes that we have from last fall, it does mention that there was enough wood to meet the Yukon's demand this winter, so I'm curious, as we head out of the winter, if the minister still stands by that response that there was enough wood to meet the Yukon's demand over this past winter.

Then, of course, there was wood imported from British Columbia — much of it from down the Stewart-Cassiar Highway just south of Junction 37 with the Alaska Highway, but also some from Fort Nelson, so I am curious if the minister has done any analysis of how much of the firewood that was burned in the Yukon had to come that 12- to 14-hour drive from Fort Nelson over the winter.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think that I already partly answered this in my previous responses. I am happy to do so again.

I will just say — and I will share with Yukoners — that when we amended the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — the ATIPPA act — we made our briefing binders available for members opposite. I know that they continue to call these things “confidential”, but that was the change in the act that we made.

The member asked me: Did we have enough firewood this winter? It was close, for sure, and I have asked that some analysis be done. I asked someone who works in the industry outside of government to be brought in to try to do some assessment. I understand that this work is underway right now.

I was glad to see that we got Quill Creek online and that it was being developed. The situation in the southeast of the Yukon, where there are folks who go down to Cassiar — that is a pretty standard thing that happens, and so I don't think that it is very far away. I was very concerned when I heard that there was some wood being shipped from much farther afield, as the

member noted. That was when we were in that crunch — before we got Quill Creek going and before the harvester from southeast Yukon, Mr. Whimp — well, he had some challenges with his permits on the BC side — so both of those were not on stream at the time and that is when some of the suppliers brought wood in from farther afield.

That has been corrected. I think that was resolved, starting in November and December. I think it's important that we make sure that there is some supply on hand. We saw that when supply got low, prices went up significantly. I just want to say thanks to the Forest Management branch. They hustled pretty hard to try to make sure that there was wood for Yukoners. I think, ultimately, that is correct: We did get enough wood, but it was touch and go.

I can also say that I asked to have a review of woodlots across the territory — in other words, what areas the government makes available for woodcutters, whether it be personal or commercial, and also to look at the system overall. I have asked for that assessment to be done.

**Mr. Kent:** I am just curious if the minister is aware of problems that are going on in the Quill Creek harvest area. Right now, I understand the operator has been shut down since the end of March. The operator, who lives in Watson Lake and is harvesting down the Stewart-Cassiar Highway, is waiting on permits from the Government of British Columbia, which has been going on eight weeks, from my understanding. I am just curious if the minister is aware of that, and if so, what are his thoughts with respect to those challenges?

Obviously, we heard a lot last fall about Quill Creek and how this was going to give us that long-term supply, albeit it's focused in only one area of the Yukon. I will leave it at that.

What is the minister's understanding of what is happening in Quill Creek with the harvester being shut down since the end of March, and does he have any understanding of what's happening with those permits down Highway 37 in British Columbia?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will reach back into the department to find out what the status is on the BC side and Quill Creek. What I can say, with Quill Creek, is that when we got it through YESAB and started the permit process — it's like a 10- to 20-year supply of wood. There is a lot of wood there. I am happy to check to see if there are any concerns at the moment, but it's a longer term supply of wood.

Up in the Dawson region, I think things were generally good. We had supply provided north of Whitehorse — sort of between here and Carmacks with several areas. So, I will ask the department to give me an update on what's happening. It would be separate issues — if there are things going on with Quill Creek and if there are also issues going on with Mr. Whimp's work down on the BC side on the Cassiar. What I can say is that, with both folks, I know that we have worked with them in the past six months to try to assist. I'm sure we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Kent:** So, those concerns were relayed to us directly from both of those harvesters. As I said, my colleague from Kluane heard from his constituent, and then we spoke to the harvester out of Watson Lake this morning about his concerns.

I'm also curious if the minister is aware of any of the quality problems with the wood supply out of Quill Creek. I heard — obviously that wood has sat there for quite some time, and the butts of the wood are rotten, so it's not a very good quality product that is coming out of there. Has the minister been made aware of any of the quality concerns with what's coming out of the Quill Creek area that may shorten the "10- to 20-year" time horizon in his words that he said?

Just before I sit down — and I know that on the floor of this Legislature, we have back-and-forth in Question Period; we have been accused of bringing unreliable information. When we say that these were confidential session briefing notes, it's because right on the top of these briefing notes that we obtained it says "confidential". If the minister is concerned about that, then perhaps he would direct his officials, or the government as a whole would direct all officials, to remove the word "confidential" from these session briefing notes. But in order to provide accurate information, we'll continue to refer to them as "confidential" as long as we're reading from them.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Thanks for the suggestion to remove the word "confidential" — thank you.

With respect to Quill Creek, whenever we develop an area, there is always going to be some way to estimate the amount of wood in there or the size of the resource. I am sure that there are always differences and you refine that understanding over time. If there are some challenges with some of the butts of wood, that's okay; we can go back, but still, I will say that this was a significant supply.

When I asked the department, as we were coming up to the winter, to share with me the number of areas that they had made available for permit — and you compare that against how much wood is typically burned in a year in the territory, and it is several times more than is available through permit. If you are a commercial harvester, in particular, you have to develop roads in, and you have to make sure that supply chains are working well. For example, I know that when Quill Creek was starting to be developed, it had a challenge. There was an issue with, I think, a trailer or something really specific. It was right in the middle of a cold snap, so there are times when things have hiccups, for sure. What I will say is that the amount of wood that we had available through permit is typically many times more than the amount of wood that we use. I think that is the way it needs to be.

I am not sure about a reassessment of the overall supply, but I think that it is important that we work with contractors and have some back-and-forth with them. I think that is how the Forest Management branch works at all times.

We will update those numbers to assess the resource, but this was the first year of a many-year project around Quill Creek. It still will be supplying wood for many years to come. Whether that number goes up or down — I'm sure we will judge as we get further along with it. I appreciate the feedback.

**Mr. Kent:** A lot of these remarks and concerns have been relayed to us directly from the individuals on the ground doing the harvesting. If the minister hasn't done so for a while, I would encourage him to reach out to those individual harvesters and get a sense for what their concerns are and what

it's looking like for this upcoming winter — although we don't seem to be out of the current winter. But next winter is — my understanding, from some of the commercial suppliers who operate in my riding, is that it could be another year of tight supply, increasing costs, and hauling from places as far away as Fort Nelson if we don't address this as soon as possible with the concerns that they are raising.

When I went through the Yukon Liberal Party's election platform from last year, I couldn't — outside of a mention of biomass — really find anything specific to forestry. Then, going through the minister's mandate letter of July 5, 2021, the only mention that I could find was with respect to identifying regulatory and program improvements that could support the growth of Yukon's biomass energy industry, including the use of waste products. Obviously, that raised a concern for us because I know that in 2016 there was a commitment from the Liberal government to review — or implement, I think it was — I don't have the exact wording — a forest management plan in southeast Yukon. That's the question that I have for the minister.

Again, according to the confidential session briefing note from last fall — the southeast Yukon — it says: "In December 2020, Liard First Nation entered into a funding agreement with the Government of Yukon to establish a forestry table to address forestry concerns at a government-to-government level, support their participation in forestry initiatives and move forward with forest resources management planning. The proposed planning boundary for Southeast Yukon may include all of the Kaska Nations, both settled and non-settled Yukon First Nations, and transboundary Aboriginal groups." So, those are the two paragraphs in the briefing note about southeast Yukon.

Can the minister give us a sense of where we have come in the last year and a half or so since December 2020 when that funding agreement was entered into and if there are any updates from that forestry table that was established to address the forestry concerns at a government-to-government level?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I am told is that the department is expecting a report back in the next month or so, so that is where the work has led to.

**Mr. Kent:** Will that be a final report that will address all of these concerns that I listed in the southeast Yukon, such as support for their participation in forestry initiatives and moving forward with forest resources management planning? Can we expect — I don't want to speculate, but I will just ask the minister to perhaps provide a little bit more detail on what we can expect in that report in the next month or so.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have not seen a draft of the report yet, so I am not sure that I can provide too much. I will ask the department for more information, and if I get any, I will provide it.

**Mr. Kent:** I look forward to getting some more information. I am sure that the Member for Watson Lake will as well. Many who have lived in Watson Lake for a while remember the days when there were a number of active sawmills and operations down there, and they are anxious to see some sort of forest management planning down there so that

a timber supply analysis and timber harvest agreements and permits can be put out that would potentially see some of those operations kickstarted again.

The other question that I have on forestry is with respect to the *Forest Resources Act* review. These notes from last fall said that the *Forest Resources Act* is currently under review and that there have been some meetings with a number of First Nations. I won't list them all here today, but they've been meeting since 2019 and are developing recommendations regarding proposed updates to the act. Those meetings obviously started three years ago, so can the minister provide us with any update on where we're at with proposed updates to the *Forest Resources Act*?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I know, for example, that this is part of the suite of successor legislation. Most times when people hear "successor legislation", they are thinking about our mining acts — our quartz and placer mining acts — but it actually also includes forestry and our *Lands Act* as well.

I know that there has been review work ongoing, and I know that they are looking at the timeline for when that would lead to us being back here in the Legislature. I think the earliest that we anticipate is 2023, but I understand that there is still quite a bit of work underway. When I get the information about what's happening around forest resources, I can check in to see more detail on what's happening. I have had a few sit-downs with the assistant deputy minister and also the Department of Justice as we talk about our legislative agenda, but I haven't had a brief recently on how the conversation is going with First Nations on those potential amendments. I will get back to the member opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** This note that I am reading off of was last updated on September 23, 2021, and it says that First Nation consultation and public engagement is expected to occur in the spring of 2022. Afterwards, the working group will make their final recommendations to the Government of Yukon.

I guess my question for the minister is: Are we on track to have the First Nation consultation and public engagement completed this spring?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think where we are in process with the *Forest Resources Act* is — the working group is comprised of First Nations and the territorial government. There are some recommendations. They will move into Cabinet first for a review, and then they will move out to public engagement after that.

As the member opposite will know, that timing is always dependent on Cabinet's review first, so that is the next step in the process.

**Mr. Kent:** Again, just going back to this note, it does say that the review was initiated in 2017, so we are five years into the review. It does say under the background piece — and again, this briefing note looks like it's about six months old or so or maybe even a little bit more than that. It does have some examples of changes that the working group is likely to recommend, so I'm curious if the minister — it looks like there are six that I have here — would be able to share an updated version of what some examples of those changes might be.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would be happy to share those after they get through Cabinet. So, I think that's the process that

we have. What I can say is that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is working on many pieces of legislation and in particular around successor legislation — the *Quartz Mining Act*, the *Placer Mining Act* — which are a century old. Our *Lands Act* — which is going to be important for almost everyone I'm sure — this act was part of successor legislation and this is the review process. A next step is to take those recommendations to Cabinet. Once that has happened, then we will go out to the public, and I would be very happy to share it with the member opposite and all Yukoners at that time.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that and I look forward to getting that information from the minister.

I did want to move on to some other topics now under land management. The first one is the resource roads regulation. Of course, the minister knows that we passed the act last fall which would enable the development of the regulations. At the time, he mentioned that they would be ready this spring. I'm just hoping the minister can provide us with an update and let us know if they're still on track to be ready this spring.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I know that the work is underway and I don't have a note on any adjustment to the timeline. I am just checking in with the department to ask them to give me their best sense about timing — whether they are still on track. I will hopefully get back up to my feet when I have a note on that, but I do know that we were keen on this regulation and that was why we brought the bill in, in the fall. I look forward — thank you to the world. The department indicates to me that it is on target — one moment, Deputy Chair. I will get back to you as soon as I hear.

**Mr. Kent:** So, during the mineral Roundup, my colleagues and I held a number of Zoom meetings with mining companies that are active in the Yukon — mostly, obviously, out of the Vancouver area — and what we had noticed with the YESAA process was that there was a delay in issuing a number of decision documents. What we heard from some of these individual companies was that some of those delays were a direct result of waiting for this resource road regulation to be developed. So, I am looking for the minister to comment on that. If delays in issuing decision documents — and these aren't the bigger ones. These aren't the larger projects; these are ones that are done at the designated office evaluation level. They are class 3 and class 4 mining permits — those types of things — but again, they are waiting on decision documents and some of them have been delayed for months.

So, I am curious if the minister has heard similar things from industry and what his thoughts are to advance this regulation so that backlog in issuing decision documents can be alleviated.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Definitely when I've had conversations with industry or with the various tables, like the Chamber of Mines or other groups, there is always conversation around YESAA and also the department and our permitting processes and our need to work to achieve timelines. There is always a balance between fulfilling our responsibility with respect to consultation of First Nations around that.

There are challenges, for sure, but what I can say is that the minerals branch is always working to support industry to move

ahead — I want to find a word that means “as quickly as possible while meeting all responsibilities”.

I agree that there is interest in the resource roads regulation. That is why we brought the amendment to the legislation this past fall. That's why we've been keeping it as a priority.

I can also say that, if there are times in which a YESAA process has taken longer than possible, I know that the folks at the branch do their best to try to expedite work at our end so that — they're conscientious of the challenges that industry faces with respect to timelines. They always do their best to try to make up that time, if it is possible.

**Mr. Kent:** For the minister, some of the recommendations were sent from YESAB last summer, and some of those decision documents were still outstanding as of January. That's not a reasonable thing for industry to have to deal with, as far as the certainty of the permitting system goes. That may have changed; I am hopeful that it changed, but I will have to go back and check the YESAB registry to see if those decision documents are still outstanding for some of those projects that we heard about.

I do want to move on to another topic, which is the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area. I know Environment is the lead, but I believe that Energy, Mines and Resources does have a role in this. Obviously, the minister will be well aware of this, as this area is part of his riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I am curious if he has any update for us on the Tagish River HPA. My understanding, from individuals I have talked to, is that the draft plan was consulted on; then that plan was finalized. There are three parties who have to agree to it: Canada, Yukon, and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I am curious if the minister can provide any update on the status of that. Then, of course, one of the more contentious issues for those who live and have homes or recreational properties along the Tagish River is the dock usage. If the minister has any updates on that, I would appreciate those as well. Otherwise, we can redirect to the Minister of Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just moving back to the resource regulations, what I understand is that we will be working shortly with First Nations on the draft regulations. There still is process to follow after that, so I don't think we will make this spring of this year. I don't have a firm timeline at this point, but I understand that our next step will be working with First Nations on those regulations.

With respect to the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area, it is a tripartite agreement. My understanding is that all of the parties are there in principle. We are just working together now to finalize a timeline for the agreement. I know that there was some conversation between departments and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to work with them to identify when we would finalize that and bring it forward to the public. I think that this habitat protection area agreement is close. I have always known, as the member opposite notes, that there are concerns about how existing docks along the Six Mile River would be handled. I think that was there directly within that agreement to talk about constructive ways to address that



situation. It is there in the draft language and just waiting until we get to that finalized state.

**Mr. Kent:** As I mentioned, there was consultation on the draft recommended plan, but my understanding — and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong — is that there will not be consultation on the final recommended plan. I am curious why there will not be consultation on the final recommended plan. My understanding is that it will move right into implementation once the parties sign off on it.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We may be getting into a question that would be better suited for my colleague, the Minister of Environment. I attended many of those meetings in the community around the plan itself. I don't know how many, but it was a handful, anyway. This was always one of the main points of conversation, but I will have to defer to my colleague, the Minister of Environment, with respect to the question from the Member for Copperbelt South.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that. We will redirect those questions to the Minister of Environment.

I wanted to talk about some climate change and energy initiatives that the government has underway, specifically, the mining intensity targets.

Again, when it comes to the confidential notes that we received from last fall, this one was last updated on September 23, 2021. Under "Mining Intensity Targets", it says that emissions for mining vary year to year, making it difficult to set target levels. Government of Yukon is working with industry to set mining intensity targets for quartz and placer mining by 2022. As committed in *Our Clean Future*, PricewaterhouseCoopers is contracted to develop a mining intensity target.

I know when we asked about this earlier in this Spring Sitting, the minister mentioned something about a panel that he was on during the virtual Geoscience Forum in January, but not much more on what consultation has started. Obviously, this is an ambitious undertaking if we're into April and consultation hasn't started. When we asked that question, I shared it with a number of mining executives. Some of them got back to us and said that there had been no consultation initiated yet on this. So, I'm curious if the minister can give us an update on what's happening with respect to this, and does he anticipate there being enough time left in 2022 to get these targets in place?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Let me clarify a bit. The panel discussion that I was on was on February 9, and it was hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Mines with the mining industry. The whole topic of the panel was to discuss mining intensity targets. There were several industry folks there and we had a conversation — a public conversation about this issue.

I'll share one anecdote from the end of that panel discussion. Based on the questions from the Member for Klwane, I did try to see if there was a transcript available; unfortunately, there is not. There is a video recording of the panel discussion, and I will make that available through a legislative return as per the question from the Member for Klwane.

Over the past year, since taking on the role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I have had many conversations

about this topic, but I would not call them our "formal consultation period" as of yet. I can remember my first meeting with the Yukon Chamber of Mines. I can remember sitting down with the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. I have had several conversations about this issue, but I would not call them the formal piece.

What I understand is that we are working now to develop options for mining emission targets for both quartz and placer mining, as we committed in *Our Clean Future*, and we will work with industry to establish those targets. It will be based on some of the conversations that we have had initially and understanding *Our Clean Future*. As we have stated all along, it will take into account the variability and type of mines operating in the Yukon and, overall, our goal to get to net zero by 2050.

One of the things that I will say is that, when I have talked with industry — either mines or mine planners or industry representatives — there is an understanding that we all need to shift the energy economy, and that includes mines. In fact, we signed on to the critical minerals strategy, which I just saw emphasized quite heavily under the federal budget, and the point of that is that we will need minerals to help make the energy transition from fossil fuels, whether that is copper for transmission lines or zinc or other metals that we will need for batteries and solar panels.

The one anecdote that I wanted to share was that, at the end of the panel discussion hosted by the Yukon Chamber of Mines with industry on mining intensity targets, each of the panelists was asked: What is something that excites us? The thing that I said that excites me is that, in the past, we weren't there in conversation with industry, and here was industry leading this conversation about getting to zero emissions.

So, that's what — in the decades that I have worked on the issue of climate change, I have always worked to try to bring industry with. There are some times when that has been a difficult job, but what I think is different now is that we're all on the same page and we recognize that we need to get there. The question is not if but when and how.

**Mr. Kent:** Apologies to the minister — I'm not sure if he mentioned this or not, but according to *Our Clean Future*, these intensity targets are supposed to be in place this year. In fact, this confidential note says that, beginning in 2022, quartz mines will be required to project their anticipated greenhouse gas emissions, identify measures to reduce emissions, and report annually greenhouse gas emissions through the quartz mine licensing process.

I'm glad that the minister has acknowledged that his appearance on a panel didn't constitute consultation or the beginning of consultation with industry.

Apologies to him if he did answer this in that previous response, but when will the consultation with industry begin on developing these mining intensity targets? Especially since, as I mentioned in these notes, they're supposed to start this year to project their greenhouse gas emissions and measures to reduce them and then report annually, as part of their licensing process.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I appreciate that the member opposite is going to continue to refer to these notes as confidential, even though we've changed the law to make sure they're shared with folks across the way, because when they were given to us, they were, at that time, confidential. I again note that.

But this one happens to sit in *Our Clean Future*, which the members opposite also said they support. So, that's a pretty public document. So, you know, there's no surprise here that our goal and responsibility is to develop these targets within 2022.

The issues about having mines report — that is, I think, just a policy change; that's just a policy change. That will be there as we go through renewals of licences, so that's good. We have signalled that to the mines. I appreciate that it's not yet formal consultation, but we have, as I said, been in dialogue with mines and industry groups around shifting from fossil fuels and the importance of it.

So, it's not just about setting targets; it's also about achieving those targets and how we work to have our mines transition from fossil fuels as well. It's a big task, but I also know that industry is very innovative and has a lot of resource capabilities. They are smart folks, as I have known for many years when I worked in mines; they understand what they are doing. I think that they are onboard with our overall goal.

When will it happen? I think that the work within the department has been informed by those conversations with mines and industry. I think that it's going out later this year. I anticipate where there will be that opportunity for industry to engage with us more formally. I look forward to it happening this year.

**Mr. Kent:** I am going to press the minister for a little bit more detail on that, rather than just the very vague "later this year" commitment that he has made, as far as this undertaking. As I said, these sessional briefing notes that are marked "confidential" that we have obtained say that beginning this year, quartz mines will be required to "... project their anticipated greenhouse gas emissions, identify measures to reduce emissions, and report annually greenhouse gas emissions through the quartz mine licensing process beginning in 2022."

The minister has said that this is just a policy change, but that's a fairly significant change for them. He has referred to them as "smart folks" — I think those are the words that he used — and we agree. Of course, everybody wants to be mindful of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but in order for this to be implemented this year — I mean, we are in the middle of April. Many of these individuals will be quite busy throughout the summer months, whether it is marketing or being on site or investor tours or other things.

I am just going to ask the minister this again: When does he anticipate the formal part of the consultation to start? If they are going to implement it in 2022, as is committed to in *Our Clean Future*, then I would have thought it would have started last year, but again, here we are in April, and it doesn't sound like the consultation piece has started yet.

As I mentioned, when we asked this question earlier this Sitting — I have a large distribution group of individuals in the mining industry and we send those questions out. We did hear back that there has been no consultation as of yet. I think that was confirmed here this afternoon by the minister, but we need to know when the consultations are going to start with the mining industry so that they have an idea of what sort of reporting requirements are going to be placed into their quartz mine licences.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think there is either some confusion or some conflation of a couple of things here. First of all, we need not refer to the briefing notes which we are sharing with the opposition members. Let's refer to *Our Clean Future*. I am on page 60 of *Our Clean Future*, under the actions about reducing the carbon intensity of mining and ensuring mining projects are prepared for the impacts of climate change. I believe this document was released in the fall of 2019 — so, two and a half years ago. We have indicated to mines all along — so it is action 16: "Include new provisions in quartz mine licenses by 2022 that will ensure critical mine infrastructure is planned, designed and built to withstand current and projected impacts of climate change."

17: "Require quartz mines to project their anticipated greenhouse gas emissions, identify measures to reduce emissions, and annually report greenhouse gas emissions through the quartz mine licensing process beginning in 2022."

So, what we are doing is, as indicated over the past two and a half years to mines, is that when they obtain a new licence or a renewal of their licence from a point forward in 2022, we will ask them to report their greenhouse gas emissions. How is that done? Typically, that's done by measuring fuel usage, and different fuel types have different emission profiles, but that's how we've done it here in the territory for the rest of emissions. So, those mines are quite capable of doing that.

So, all of that part of it is pretty straightforward. The mines have known that this is coming for the past two and a half years. It is due this year.

Then with respect to mining intensity targets, that's the goal that we set ourselves, including industry, to say, "Hey, how much should we reduce our emissions over time?" If the ultimate goal is to be at zero by 2050, it doesn't matter whether that's intensity or absolute, because it's zero. So, that's the ultimate goal. Now it becomes a question of: What steps should we take to get there by 2030 or some other intermediate step? That's what we will work in dialogue with the mines.

I think that we will have work starting either this spring or summer where we present options and conversation to industry. As I have said all along, over the past year, I have been in informal conversations with mines about that. So, it's not that we're starting from a blank slate. We have been having conversation with them. The formal part of the engagement will happen later this spring or early this summer, as I understand it.

**Mr. Kent:** I appreciate that from the minister. I will relay that to those in the industry who have been asking us about this — that the formal engagement will begin later this spring or early summer and that the minister has indicated that these will be in place in this calendar year of 2022.

I do want to ask the minister about some of the independent power production projects that are underway. Again, going back to last fall, the notes mention that there are three power production projects that have signed energy purchase agreements with their respective utilities. There is a north Klondike Highway solar project, a solar project located in Mount Sima in my riding of Copperbelt South, as well as a solar energy project in Old Crow — the proponent was the Vuntut Gwitchin government.

Is the minister able to provide us with an update on whether or not there are additional IPP projects that have signed energy purchase agreements since last fall?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I sat down with the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation yesterday, and I understand that there are lots of projects that are in planning phases. I will note that, in terms of ones that we have signed — I apologize if I missed anything that the member opposite said. I think that he referred to the north Klondike Highway project, Mount Sima, and Old Crow — the Vuntut Gwitchin solar energy project. We have one more that has been signed since last fall and that is the Klondike Development Organization's solar energy project. The Klondike Development Organization built it up in the old solid-waste dumpsite up on the Dome Road, I believe. We are advanced in our negotiations with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership for a power purchase agreement from their hydro expansion. We spoke about that earlier this week with the media, and I have spoken about it here in the House before. So, those are the ones that are signed or in advanced negotiations.

**Mr. Kent:** Does the minister have an update on the wind farm that was proposed for Haeckel Hill? At the start of the previous mandate in 2016, early into 2017 while the IPP policy was being finalized, I know that it was one of the projects mentioned at the time. I believe there is perhaps a different proponent now, but I'm looking for an update on that wind farm on Haeckel Hill.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will turn to the Yukon Development Corporation to get an update on this one. I have heard that it was advancing. I was told the other day about specific work that had happened, and I'm just not recalling. I will try to get an update for the members opposite.

I know that there has been development on this project in the past month, so I will see if I can't get some extra information.

**Mr. Kent:** My colleague just passed me a note from the project proponent who is partnered with the Chu Niikwän Development Corporation, which is the Kwanlin Dün First Nation development corporation. It does say that the project status is pre-construction and that it will be in commercial operation for 2023 — recognizing, of course, that the minister will check with Yukon Development Corporation on this. Hopefully, he gets a chance to confirm those timelines that are on the proponent's website. The website is [northernenergycapital.com](http://northernenergycapital.com).

I do want to talk a little bit about some land use planning initiatives that the government has underway. The first one that

I know we have talked about every Sitting since the initial announcement is the Beaver River land use plan. I am curious if the minister can give us a status of where it is at. Of course, we know that it is coming to — or has just passed — being a couple of years late from the initial commitment of being done on March 31, 2020. Now we are two years later, and I'm not sure where we are at. We talked about this last fall, so I'm curious if the minister can provide us with an update on when he expects that plan to be finalized.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I did sit down with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and had a couple of conversations with Chief Mervyn and with his team on this. I know that our deputy minister was working directly on it. I agree with the member opposite that the timeline has stretched. I think I rose earlier — a week or so ago — here in the Legislature to talk about it. What I said was that we would remain working and respectful with First Nations — in this case, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun — on this planning process. We are committed to completing a road access management plan with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and ATAC Resources. I believe that there have been ongoing conversations between the people doing the planning work and ATAC. I think that the timeline has pushed again, so the latest note that I have talks about early 2023.

What I can say is that, having seen this process stretch out, I have been asking that there be regular reports back to me about the process to ensure that it is staying on track. At this point in time, it feels like the process is on track, but I recognize that there have been challenges and acknowledge that the time has been much longer than we projected and wanted. We will continue to work with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to realize this plan.

**Mr. Kent:** I want to turn to a couple of things that were contained in the confidence and supply agreement that the Liberal government signed with the New Democratic Party.

One thing was to accelerate regional land use planning. Obviously, the Dawson land use plan is working its way through the process right now, but what has been done with respect to accelerating regional land use planning in other areas throughout the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is in my mandate letter, and I have asked for the assistant deputy ministers and deputy ministers to work through some options around how this might proceed. My last conversation with the Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was to look at the issue and bring it forward. I think that this would probably lead us to the Yukon Forum. We have had direct conversations with several First Nations. For example, I recently sat down with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

They expressed to me their interest around moving forward on this, but they are interested in looking broader than just in the Yukon. Their traditional territory extends into British Columbia, so that was part of that conversation. I have also sat down, as I just expressed earlier, with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. I had a brief conversation with the Selkirk First Nation, so sometimes the challenge — for example, if we are thinking of the Northern Tutchone region — is that different First Nations are at

different stages about where they wish to be with respect to regional land use planning.

I have raised the issue with colleagues from the federal government and just recently, again, briefly with Minister Wilkinson when he was here earlier this week talking about wanting the federal government to be in support. We have been exploring various ways and at all times being respectful of First Nations' desires, which are not all the same — they range in what their desires are — but what I have always indicated to them when I sit down with them is to say that it is within my mandate letter, and I will work with them to advance land use planning when they are ready.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Kent:** So, just before the break, we were talking about some of the EMR commitments in the confidence and supply agreement between the Liberals and the New Democrats. I'm curious about the successor resource legislation development, if the minister can provide us with an update.

It is our understanding that, as part of that agreement, those two pieces of legislation would be tabled this fall. I'm curious if the minister can give us an update on where we're at, as well as how much money is in this year's budget for that work to continue, or be undertaken, with respect to the successor resource legislation development.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Let me start with the update on the steering committee and the work on successor legislation. It's going very well is what I will say. I recently was invited to speak again with the steering committee and had a chance to connect with them a little bit. I guess they were back up to a partially in-person meeting and partially by Zoom. The steering committee has identified key topics throughout their work. They have taken on some of the larger topics. These include disposition, reclamation, monitoring, enforcement, and royalties. So, they have been working on these issues. They maybe have 10 or a dozen different ones. I guess it sort of depends on how you carve it all up, but they have taken on those significant issues.

I can also say that they have met with industry. They have also met with environmental groups. They have now also had the industry and the environmental group sit together, working at one table, which I think is very positive. I will work to get some information on the budget that we have identified this year for the successor legislation work.

Also, while I am on my feet, I will update the House on activities on Haeckel Hill. We have a dozen or so personnel on-site daily right now, along with heavy machinery. They are placing the anchor rings; they are moving them up the hill right now, which will block the access road for some stretches of time. That will put in place the base for the windmills. That was the thing that I mentioned earlier that I had been informed that there was activity on, and it was those anchor rings.

I hope to have more to announce on this shortly. It is moving ahead, and of course, we are excited about wind, because solar is great, but it is predominantly a summer energy and we need winter energy, and one of the realities for the Yukon is that the wind blows in the winter.

So, Deputy Chair, the amount in our budget is approximately \$1.4 million for successor legislation — in the 2022-23 budget.

**Mr. Kent:** Apologies to the minister; I may not have heard, but I am just kind of curious — if he did answer, apologies about the timing — whether or not that is going to be ready to be tabled this fall or not — both the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act*.

I will move on to another question with respect to the drafting of a mineral staking and development policy for planned and zoned communities, if the minister can give us an update on where that is at. I am sure that it will be quite topical as we move into May and the Association of Yukon Communities gather for their annual meeting. Again, an update on that, and if he can just clarify whether or not we can expect that legislation to be tabled this fall.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I can say is, as per the confidence and supply agreement, that the work around successor legislation also requires that we have that full engagement — that full consultation — with Yukon First Nations and that work is ongoing right now. I will just say that we are in the middle of that and I can't judge it yet, but the work on successor legislation is doing well. It's deep in the heart of it, and I will look to hear back from First Nations about what kind of time they need to make sure that this is done well and correctly, as per our agreement.

With respect to mineral activities in Yukon communities, we did go out some time ago, just before the pandemic started. We were doing work across the Yukon with municipalities, First Nations, and also local advisory councils to talk about land use conflicts related to mineral staking and zoning regulations. We carried that out to produce the "what we heard" document and to talk about the situation. What we are doing now is using the results of that initial engagement to draft a framework to guide plans and regulations, and we are out there talking with the public again; we are out there talking with municipalities and LACs, and then we will be talking with the public this year, so that work is ongoing right now.

**Mr. Kent:** I do want to ask the minister about compensation for mineral claims. Obviously, there was an announcement made by the government about the relinquishment of a number of claims during the annual Mineral Exploration Roundup. That was one of the press releases that the government put out at the time. One of the

companies that relinquished a number of those claims also made an announcement about that.

Outside of the Peel watershed, where does the minister see potential new cases for compensation emerging here in the next couple of years? We know the Dawson regional land use plan — the associated restrictions and staking withdrawals — affects a number of claims. The territorial wetlands policy may also restrict development activities.

We have the proposed McIntyre Creek park, which extends up and through the old Whitehorse copper area, which has a number of active claims as well. I guess perhaps even the Beaver River land use plan may affect existing claims as well, or strand claims, if protected areas cut them off from surface access.

Can the minister give us an idea of where he sees potential new cases for compensation beyond what has already happened in the Peel watershed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I can say that the work to resolve the compensation for mineral claims in the Peel has been pretty successful. There have been no expropriations, and that's despite the fact that, around the Peel, there was a lot of staking because of how the land use planning process unfolded with the Yukon Party. That issue has been going well.

One of the things I will say is that we typically use relief from other monetary obligations as a way — so it's not revenue that we were previously counting on. It's just a way in which we can get to that compensation.

We can say that wherever we do land use planning, there is a potential for this, but I don't want to speculate on that. I will say as well that, with the Dawson regional land use plan, we have approached this differently. What we agreed to do is that, when the draft plan came out, we would withdraw lands that were identified for conservation. Even before the draft plan came out, we took some of the highest profile areas for which we anticipated to see conservation as sort of the higher value. We put protection in place then. We did it as the draft plan came out, and I think that when the final recommended plan comes out, we will do that again. That is so we don't get as much conflict with claims. Inevitably — there will likely be some, and we will continue to work with it in the way that we have. So far, we have been quite successful at finding compensation for those claims, so I think that has been a very good model and we will keep using that model, but it's difficult for me to speculate about where that will be in the future.

**Mr. Kent:** I did want to ask the minister about the western Arctic offshore and the oil and gas moratorium that is in place. I understand that the original five-year moratorium put in by the Trudeau government was set to expire in 2021 but has been extended until the end of 2022. Obviously, the Government of Yukon is an equal partner when it comes to the negotiations of western Arctic offshore oil and gas co-management and revenue-sharing regimes. I am curious if the minister can tell us if his government is in support of developing oil and gas resources in the western Arctic offshore.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The Government of Yukon continues to participate actively in negotiations with Canada, the Northwest Territories, and the Inuvialuit Regional

Corporation on the western Arctic offshore oil and gas accord. We haven't been as involved in the past, but we are actively involved now. I think that the main point is that we are wishing to have the ability to have a say about whether there is oil and gas development in the Beaufort, north of the Yukon — in the area that is the Yukon's overlapping jurisdiction. That is what we have been working toward. I know that the negotiations are in their final stages. I am happy to report back to the House once that is signed — or I am sure that we will make that public. It is not about being pro or con; it is about having the Yukon's perspectives and participation in the decision-making in the offshore.

**Mr. Kent:** So, when the Premier spoke recently about Arctic sovereignty — and I believe that he and his colleagues from the Northwest Territories and Nunavut had a call with the Prime Minister prior to the budget being tabled in Ottawa — he spoke about resilient communities and about — I believe that it was support for the Canadian Rangers in the north. I guess that is why I am asking this question of the minister: Does the Government of Yukon support oil and gas development in the western Arctic offshore, as part of what the Premier was speaking about with respect to resilient communities? Is that something that the government supports?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will just respond in the same way that I just did. What we support is that the Yukon has a decision-making role in activity that would happen in the Yukon's offshore. I, of course, won't speak for the Premier, but the purpose, as I understand it, was to make sure that we were part of the decision-making process.

**Mr. Kent:** It's my understanding that the draft accord was to be completed by the end of 2021. Has that taken place?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm pretty sure that the accord is just about ready for sign-off by the parties, so it will be shortly.

To be very specific about the question, if the member opposite is asking whether the draft accord was ready by the end of 2021, I'm not entirely sure, but I do know that the accord is in front of the parties now.

**Mr. Kent:** I'll follow up, I'm sure, in future Sittings with the minister on that particular issue.

I did want to ask about the releasing of the 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers land parcel to the private sector for future housing development. I know that EMR is one of the parties, according to the mandate letter. They are not the lead, as that is being led by the Housing Corporation, but they are in a supporting role. I know we talked about this — I think it was last fall or perhaps in the spring — but I think the minister mentioned that they had hoped to see construction on that parcel in this construction season. Is that still on track with respect to that 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers land parcel?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is a Yukon Housing Corporation lead. I'll provide a little bit of information. I'll see if I can get any further right now, but I'm sure there will be an opportunity to ask this question of the corporation when they're here.

I understand that we have an RFP in the works. I think it is intended to go to tender fairly soon. I don't know a timeline, but if I get that information from my colleague, I will share it.

Yes, it is part of my mandate letter to work from the perspective of the Land Management branch to make sure that we are supporting the Yukon Housing Corporation and, for that matter, our colleagues at Community Services and the City of Whitehorse on this project.

For Yukoners who don't know about this, it is a full city block that previously had not been developed because of some remediation that was required. That remediation is now achievable in how the lot is developed, so that is why we are going out. We also know that we have wanted to explore opportunities for private sector development, and this is one of those ones where we are doing that, and we are looking forward to 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers coming onstream.

**Mr. Kent:** I wanted to turn the minister's attention to the YESAA reset oversight group. We brought this up in Question Period, I believe yesterday, with the Premier, and the minister referenced it earlier on in debate, so that's why I thought perhaps we could ask him about it as well.

We have established that on December 21, 2020, the Yukon government and the Council of Yukon First Nations sent a joint letter to Minister Vandal at the time requesting a focused review of the *Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*, or YESAA. The federal minister responded on February 18 indicating that his commitment to working with members of the oversight group on amendments and renewals, and the purpose of the review, will be to propose amendments to address issues surrounding the need for an assessment when a project's authorization is amended or renewed.

As I mentioned yesterday, it is over a year ago that this exchange of correspondence happened and the purpose of the review was established. I understand there was a meeting in September of last year to discuss the assessment of amendments and renewals. I am curious if the minister can provide us with an update on where this is at and when we can expect these to go out to the public and if the minister has any indication of when he expects this to potentially be tabled in the House of Commons. We can defer to the Premier when he is on his feet for the Executive Council Office, but I am curious about why there has been no public announcement about potential changes to YESAA when this was initiated well over a year ago.

That will be my final question before I cede the floor to my colleague from the Third Party. Again, I thank the minister and thank the officials for their time here today. I have quite a few more questions, but they will have to wait for another day. Hopefully, we get to have Energy, Mines and Resources back on the floor here before the Spring Sitting concludes.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is the lead of Executive Council Office, so that would be the Premier who will update. What I can say is that I have had conversations with federal counterparts about YESAA and the process. I also know and will inform the House that our MP, Brendan Hanley, has also been having conversations about this with us and with federal ministers. I will leave it for the Premier to provide an update on any specific next steps that are there. I recognize that this is working with First Nations and the federal government to

improve YESAA, and it was our commitment all along to do that work in conjunction with First Nations. I think that it is the right way to go.

The members opposite are asking about timelines and are concerned about those timelines, but my perspective is that some of the challenge here is that when the Yukon Party previously introduced these amendments without working with First Nations, that set us back. This is the work that we are doing now to get that on track. I am happy that the work is being done in conjunction with First Nations.

**Mr. Kent:** Just to correct the record, the Yukon Party did not introduce this legislation. It is federal legislation, as the minister knows. When he says that, it is not being factual and not providing accurate information to the Legislature.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank the member for correcting the record there. No, what happened was that the Premier of the day, Premier Pasloski, worked without First Nations and asked the federal government to bring in those amendments through the Senate. That is why we call it "Bill S-6". And First Nations were plenty upset; Yukon First Nations were plenty upset about those four amendments, and that's what we're working to resolve today.

**Ms. White:** The minister just left the door wide open by saying that plenty of First Nations were upset. So, let's talk about the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun that is currently taking the Yukon government to court because they say that Yukon has breached its constitutional duty to implement treaty promises — land use planning. The minister has told me multiple times that he's ready to do land use planning when First Nations are. I think this is an indication that Na-Cho Nyäk Dun is ready to go, so where is the minister's stance on that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Ahead of the last Yukon Forum, I had several conversations with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, in particular, talking about Beaver River land use planning. The Chief of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and I sat down at the Yukon Forum, and the chief asked me if we were supportive of going ahead, and I said that, yes, we are. On that day, there was conversation with the other First Nations in the Northern Tutchone region. They were also expressing at that moment that they were ready to go. Subsequent to that, we got different information back from other First Nations, and so what we are doing and what I've indicated to Chief Mervyn is that it is in my mandate letter. We do want to proceed. We also want to be respectful of the other three regional land use planning areas, but I continue to express my support to Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and interest in moving forward on regional land use planning with them.

**Ms. White:** Although I do appreciate that answer from the minister, this is a quote that I read in a Question Period. This is the quote: "The treaty promise of land planning is meaningless if there is no land left to plan when the planning finally begins. It is meaningless if nearly 30 years — an entire generation — can pass without the promise being acted upon."

So, the reason why I'm reading that in again is because the minister can say he has the utmost respect, but Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has also said that, since this petition was first filed last year, the Yukon government has multiple times tried to have it

thrown out. So, how is that a respectful relationship between governments?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** With all due respect, I will defer to the Department of Justice. I won't speak about a specific court case.

What I will speak about is the importance of land use planning. What I will say is that, at every turn, I have continued to be supportive, whether that's the Beaver River land use plan, the Northern Tutchone regional land use plan, Dawson — on all of these, we, as a government, continue to be supportive to move forward with land use planning.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister's stance about not wanting to speak about it, but I just wanted to put out that if we want to talk about plenty of First Nations being upset, there are current examples, so let's just be honest here.

I think that one of the challenges — I can go back between 2011 and 2016. At the time, out of the 80 quartz mining applications that went before YESAB — they were almost never denied. They could come with the recommendation that they would be denied and the government of the day allowed them to go forward.

The reason I'm bringing that up is that when the — I'm going to call it the "spot plan". When the government started the process around the Beaver River land use plan spot plan outside of the land use planning process — it's not described in the UFA; it's not described in chapter 11 — it was completely independent. At the time, my colleague and I highlighted our concerns that, if there was a moratorium put on staking, the area would be staked out. At the time, the then-Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told us that we were overreacting. Within days, it was all staked out.

One of the concerns that the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has is that, since 2006, there have been over 500 quartz and placer mining projects put forward in their traditional territory, and only one project has ever been declined.

I think, if we want to talk about working with First Nations, going hand in hand, it's about making sure that we do so in a respectful manner. I think that goes beyond words; it goes in actions as well.

I hadn't planned on leading with that, but the minister just opened the door. If he has a comment about the work with First Nations when YESAB makes recommendations — or even for or against — how does his government decide which projects to approve and which ones to deny?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, first of all, with respect to any time there is a project that is proposed and which has gone through the YESAA process, we always consult with relevant First Nations before issuing decisions. We certainly consider the recommendations from YESAB, and if the project does go ahead, we always consult again during the regulatory phase. There are always ways.

Now, the member opposite, if I heard her correctly, said that before we were in as government, there was not one of these denied, and I am assured by my department that there are many that we deny. I guess I would have to hunt back to get specific examples, but there are certainly projects where we deny. There are other projects where, based on the balance of

the evidence that we have in front of us, we approve, and so there are times when there will be a First Nation who has indicated to us that they don't wish to see something go forward, and yet we will approve.

I don't ever expect that any two governments can always agree on all things. I can expect, or believe, that governments should always be working respectfully — government to government. What I can say is that there is a clear difference between us, as a government — and one of the main things that we chose to try to do, when we came into government in 2016, was to repair the relationship between First Nations and the Yukon government. We re-established the Yukon Forum. We have met four times a year since we came into power. And I tried to say to other governments, whether they are municipal or First Nation, that I don't always expect us to agree, but I do expect us to treat each other in a respectful fashion. We have heard examples of it today. Successor legislation — that is a way in which we are sitting down with all First Nations, and it has been really a tremendous effort.

I also worry because sometimes in conversations about mining, it is as if we — there is something specific about mining, as opposed to other types of land development. There are all sorts of land development. There are roads; there is agriculture; there are lots that we develop. There is mining; there is forestry; and there are all sorts of land-based activities that we have. There are some that are of more or less concern.

When I hear about blanket notions of what should happen and then at the same token, I get an application to do something, I can see that the whole idea of a pure moratorium is difficult, because there is always going to be a project that is wanted and another project that is not — for a range of reasons.

What I think we have agreed to do, based on our conversation with First Nations, is to accelerate land use planning. It's not an immediate process; I appreciate that, but starting with the Peel, we have that back on track. We have Dawson now working, and we, as a government, are ready to work on other regional land use planning processes.

With respect to the Beaver River land use planning process, I agree that it is not a regional plan, but I recall in conversations with the previous Minister of Environment that the way in which it was developed was — I will check to see where it was derived from, but it was always respectful of the final agreement — let me say at least that.

**Ms. White:** I fully understand that YESAB has lots of decisions that come in front of it. I think that from a lot of perspectives, it is the mining ones that can be denied from the YESAB perspective and then approved by governments, and those are the ones that become contentious. We could talk about the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, where they didn't want the subdivision of land and took the Yukon government to court.

I guess my point is that, despite the minister saying that they are doing things differently, if First Nations still need to go to court to stop things or to have their voices amplified or heard in a different way, then I think we still have to work on it. In all fairness, this minister is part of a government that was a majority government for four years before the last election. I

appreciate that there is work being done on successor resource legislation now.

I would like to think that I am part of the reason why that is happening. As was mentioned by the minister, that is part of the CASA commitment. It's good that it is happening, but when the minister was part of a majority government for four years, that work didn't start on successor resource legislation. It hadn't been started. It looks like the Minister of Education has a difference of opinion, so maybe the minister can correct me. Was this work started prior to that commitment in 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have a couple of points. The member opposite raised the question of Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Just last week, I sat down with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation to talk about land use planning and to discuss issues. Again, the point about the court case in and around the Ten Mile area was raised. I was with the Premier when he sat down with the chief and council previously and said that if CTFN wishes to put the court case in abeyance, then we can have that conversation, but, of course, we respect that it is the First Nation's prerogative to choose which avenue to take these conversations in. At all times, we work with them to have that conversation. Even when I talked with the steering committee on successor legislation, I talked with them about the journey to get to this point.

What did that include? First of all, it included the mining memorandum of understanding with all chiefs. That was signed early in our mandate. That led to the mineral development strategy — where we asked this panel to go around the territory and have conversations with Yukoners, including industry, about getting to successor legislation. Now we are there. So, yes, it's a journey, and I think there was groundwork put in place in order to get us there.

I wish that there was the ability to get to the end goal faster, but I have learned in my role in politics — not just here in this Legislature, but in other areas, and I'll even include running a community centre — that process is important and that we bring Yukoners along with us and they are part of that journey. I do see those steps that led us to successor legislation.

**Ms. White:** Can the minister tell me how many ounces of gold were mined in the territory last year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** My apologies, Deputy Chair. Could I just get the member opposite to repeat the question for me?

**Ms. White:** Can the minister tell me how many ounces of gold were mined in the territory — let's say by the placer industry — last year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The last report that I have is from November 2021. The production for the previous season was 77,700 crude ounces worth approximately \$139 million.

**Ms. White:** How much in royalties did the Yukon government collect on that \$139 million of placer gold?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am just doing the math with my department here, but that would be \$29,000. I will also just point out that previously, when I was asked questions by the Member for Copperbelt South about successor legislation, one of the things that the steering committee has chosen as one of their first main topics is royalties.

**Ms. White:** So, \$29,000 of a non-renewable resource is how Yukon benefited. I appreciate that this is one of the topics of conversation around the successor resource legislation table.

I wanted to bring the minister's attention to an editorial that was written by his colleague in September 2011. I am going to read it — or good portions of it, anyway. It says, "A cost-benefit analysis" — "It's impossible to support the Liberal and Yukon parties' indifference toward 106-year-old placer gold royalties. But it is clear why they are turning a blind eye." Again, it is important to note that this is from the current Minister of Community Services, a member of Cabinet — has been a Member of Cabinet for a number of years. Although I appreciate that we are now looking at royalties, there was a majority government for a good number of years.

I am going to read from the article again: "It's impossible to support the Liberal and Yukon parties' indifference toward 106-year-old placer gold royalties.

"But it is clear why they are turning a blind eye. The costs outweigh the benefits by a wide margin.

"In this election, both the Liberals and the Yukon Party are positioning themselves as the players best able to manage the economy.

"And, amid this metal-price-driven boom, business people are a skittish bunch — a bit like a colt, worried the wrong rider will plunge them over a cliff.

"Radical actions, like raising royalties, would be considered reckless.

"So it's not going to happen.

"The Liberals are wooing this group — taking an aggressive approach to power generation, promising stable taxes and royalties."

It goes on to talk about the strong progressive policies — the Peel, a downtown sobering centre, support for an animal shelter, child-care assistance, and supported housing initiatives.

"The Yukon Party is promising a continuation of the last eight years by promising low taxes and royalties and wide-open development, including, it is assumed, development of the Peel. It is tossing crumbs to the social side — a yet-to-be defined tax credit to people caring for their loved ones and some undetermined money to build lifts for seniors.

"It has also announced a youth shelter, but it won't say whether it will be a new or existing facility.

"And both will maintain placer gold royalties that were set in 1906 when gold was \$15 an ounce and gas was a staggering 14 cents a gallon (equivalent to about \$4 a gallon in 2004 dollars), which, at the time, prompted calls for research into a cheaper alternative fuel, like alcohol.

"So today, placer operations in the territory are paying 37.5 cents an ounce on gold they wash from the territory's rivers. Currently, the price of an ounce of gold is \$1,790.

"Both the Liberals and the Yukon Party assert the placer industry is marginal and, while gold prices have gone up (they have risen 300 percent since 2006, when it was \$600 an ounce) they suggest, lamely, so have gas prices (a barrel of oil was \$62 in 2006, today it's \$86, and it is still relatively less expensive than it was in 1906.)

"As a result, neither will monkey with the placer royalty.



“It is, if you like, the cost of these politicians doing business with business.

“In 2009, the territory’s placer operations mined 43,500 ounces of gold.

“The territory collected \$16,000 on that gold. The industry sold it for \$47.6 million, less the amount it spent on diesel fuel.

“A nominal increase in the placer royalty to, say 2.4 percent of the current price of gold (equivalent to 1906), would net the territory \$1.1 million a year, enough to cover the cost of a new animal shelter, but not a lot in the territory’s federally fuelled \$1 billion budget.”

And it goes on — it goes on. So, we are at a time when gold has never been higher. I mean, it was a little bit higher before, but now, at today’s price, it is \$1,951 an ounce. A barrel of oil — the best I can figure is \$116 a barrel, and we are still collecting 37.5 cents on a non-renewable resource. That is the part — a non-renewable resource. This isn’t something we can grow; this isn’t something we can plant, and I think the part that is really important is that this non-renewable resource belongs to Yukoners.

So, I appreciate that this is being discussed, and I would like to know what feedback or direction is coming from the minister in that conversation.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I appreciate hearing the editorial from the past. What I can say is that we are currently carrying out successor legislation on quartz and placer.

To give you an indication that’s significant, those acts are 100 years old — more. So, that does require — it indicates that, if it hasn’t changed in 100 years, there are probably some reasons — that there was some reluctance to get to that change. It is pretty significant. We should acknowledge it, as Yukoners here, that this is a big step forward and one, no doubt, that is overdue in some senses. Royalties is clearly one of those ones. In fact, the steering committee chose it as one of the ones to work on.

What I can say is that, in my conversations with the Klondike Placer Miners’ Association, they have acknowledged that royalties need to change, and they won’t be surprised to see that they need to increase, but there is a conversation that has to happen about: How does industry support or benefit the public good of the Yukon?

There are various ways in which that might happen, including buying fuel — it’s one of the ways. There is a local economy there, but I don’t know that this is the only way. I don’t think we should — as we work through this and think through it, what we need to do is see that balance.

I can also say that — I mentioned earlier, when I stood on my feet, that there has been a table brought together by both — under the successor legislation, a working group created a table where the industry and the environmental non-governmental organizations came together. I think that at their joint meeting, they also agreed that placer royalties need to change.

I have asked my department folks to look up what it is for quartz, because we can compare those differences just as a point of conversation.

I just want to say that I agree with the member opposite that this is long overdue and that this conversation is ready to

happen now. She asked what direction I gave. I haven’t given very specific direction.

It has been more about asking that the work around these various topics, like royalties, be considered in balance of the whole system and that there should be — wherever we have resource extraction, whether it is renewable or non-renewable, we do need to consider the public good. That is sort of the high-level direction that I gave.

I will provide one more piece of information. I am looking at the final agreement of the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, and I am looking at section 11.8.0, which is entitled “Sub-Regional and District Land Use Plans”. That’s where the Beaver River land use plan is derived from.

As I said, the work is being done with respect to the final agreement.

**Ms. White:** It is interesting, because the NWT right now is in the process of looking at their royalty rates — their mineral royalties. I think it’s important to note that, according to the International Monetary Fund, governments should collect between 40 and 60 percent of the before-cash-flow generated by the projects. That is what is suggested by the International Monetary Fund.

It’s interesting that, last year, we got just shy of \$30,000 on placer gold. The good news is we also charged \$5,000 for grazing lease leases. To allow animals to graze on land, we charged \$5,000. It is pretty comparable, I guess, between the two. I appreciate that it’s going to be looked into; I do. I just thought I would highlight it. This is a question that has been asked from my side for a decade, because although the minister is right — it’s from 1906 — this has been a problem probably since the 1970s, when we became a government in the territory.

I want to move on, which is probably good for everyone. I want to move on to geothermal and petroleum services. Can the minister help me understand how geothermal and petroleum services have been moved into sustainable resources?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think the simple answer is, when you think of people who drill in the ground, who previously do oil and gas, they are also the people who do geothermal. That’s where the expertise within the department is. Geothermal itself is a renewable energy.

That’s why the move has happened there. Within every department, there are always little interesting ways in which things are divided up, but it’s because we’re focusing on renewables; that’s the main reason.

**Ms. White:** I should have caught myself before “geothermal” left my mouth. Of course, I agree that it is a renewable energy.

My concern is more around the petroleum services. I appreciate that if we talk about drilling, it will often be — it has been in the past — the experience of drilling for petroleum. My thought was that the minister’s government had said no to hydraulic fracturing — there is a moratorium.

There are examples of wells having been drilled in the territory for not hydraulic fracturing reasons, but are there currently any petroleum projects in the territory that are active?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We still have regulatory requirements within the branch. One of the questions that was

asked is whether we have active oil or gas wells. No, but Chance Oil and Gas still has leases just northwest of Eagle Plains, but we have regulatory requirements, so the branch still has that role.

As I said, we want to support geothermal work, because that's a good potential renewable energy.

**Ms. White:** I remember when Chance Oil and Gas was Northern Cross. I was here for that, so I am well-familiar. I imagine that court case is ongoing and the minister can't talk about it, so I will look forward to that result.

One of the things that had been discussed from our side for a number of years was the importance of mapping geothermal resources. The reason for that, of course, is air-source heat pumps, which are being promoted right now by the government — this is good and we can talk about that later — and the other options are things like ground-source heat pumps. So, if we have an idea of our geothermal resources, we can look at home heating without hydrocarbons.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I can say that what we have over the next several years is \$3.4 million, some of which is coming from the federal government, to assess geothermal resources and the potential within our territory. I will also say that usually this is not about ground heat sources, because when we are talking about geothermal, we are usually talking about things that are deeper. You can use heat exchange loops and there is some technology around that, but often what we're mapping is where there is that heat potential. Those ground-source heat pumps can typically be metres deep, not kilometres deep, but we are doing this mapping over the next several years.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I got tongue-tied and was thinking about heat and ground and pumps and their importance.

I am going to pivot a bit here. I would like to go to the Minto mine. I want to know the status, actually. I will ask for an update. I know Minto mine was found in contravention of their water licence. I know that, on January 5, 2022, a new security demand was issued for the Minto mine under the *Quartz Mining Act*. The Government of Yukon determined that the \$104,274,643 in security, inclusive of the existing \$72 million-plus that is currently held by Government of Yukon, was required to be furnished by April 5 of this year — just last week.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The member opposite is correct. We had done a new assessment for security and had indicated to Minto Metals that they were required to furnish an additional \$32 million and that the deadline was April 5. They weren't able to meet that deadline, so what happens now is that we have amended their quartz mining licence, and we have placed the operations under an additional set of restricted operating conditions.

They have, under these operating conditions, up until September 1. They are required to not increase site liability. They are required to manage their contaminated water, which is the most critical issue that is on-site, and they are required to report to us every two weeks.

What I will say is that the mine has been working very closely with our Compliance Monitoring and Inspections

teams. Both the territorial government and the Selkirk First Nation government have been very proactive in that work. They recognize what the situation is, and we also have identified that there is a higher snow load this year coming up for the spring freshet. This is why we have been working closely with Minto and they have been working closely with us. That is the current situation.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that update from the minister.

Yesterday, there was a ministerial statement about the cautionary tale of Wolverine, and Wolverine missed a \$350,000 security payment — \$350,000, not \$32 million. I appreciate that things have been amended.

It is my understanding that Minto mine is in the process of getting their own — I'm trying to find the terminology; I apologize — is in the process of getting their own inspection done or they're in the process of trying to counter that number from Yukon government.

Yukon government said \$104 million, and Minto has said \$76 million, which is the difference of a substantial many millions of dollars. Can the minister comment on that, please?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, Deputy Chair, this is what the process looks like at this stage. The money is owed, and that isn't foregone at this stage, but what the mine is doing is looking for ways in which to reduce the risk of the mine. So, that is what they are working on, and when we assess securities, it is in order to have the funds to remediate, should the mine close, but it is based on the liability of the site, and if mining companies can reduce that risk and that liability, then that is a way in which they can work.

So, whenever the regulator comes in — when we step in as the regulator and say, "This is what the security is", there is work that goes back and forth between industry and us, as the regulator. It is appropriate work and what is expected, so we are not forgoing any of this security, but the mine has an ability now — between now and September 1 — to find ways to reduce that liability, and one of the specific ways is if water is treated. That is one of the issues — probably the single most significant issue that is there under that \$32 million is the treatment of water.

That is where the mine will work now — between now and September 1. This is a specific phase that follows at this time. It is as prescribed, so the next step is for them to have, between April 5 and September 1, under their amended licence.

What I will say is that the mine has been very cooperative and has worked very closely with Compliance Monitoring and Inspections and the Selkirk First Nation as they go through this phase.

**Ms. White:** I am sure that I have mentioned this in recent years, but I worked at Wolverine when the first crisis happened. Well, it was the first of a long series of crises, if we're honest about it, when the water became so highly alkaline that it couldn't be treated. When we talk about water — understanding that the water is coming out of the ground and it needs to be treated before it can be put back into the natural environment — there is concern.

Because we know that we are not at the freshet yet — we know that the melt is coming and that this is happening — are there increased inspections done by the department?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The answer is yes, if we are talking about Minto mine, but I think we shifted a little bit to Wolverine there. I will say that I recently went to look at Wolverine directly. I asked the site manager if the member opposite's name was still up somewhere. He said that unfortunately that building had been demolished. He said he would send some photos of the fire that they used when they were cleaning it up.

Yes, if we are talking about Minto, we are in very close contact with the mine. That is one of the purposes of this amended quartz mining licence. It requires that there be additional inspections, additional reporting, and a much tighter turnaround. I will say again that Minto has been working very closely with our inspectors all along. We first went to them and identified the concerns, because I think we all saw the snow surveys that were coming out and we could see that there was additional freshet risk. That led to this ongoing conversation. We had to reassess securities, which led to further conversations.

So, the work has been ongoing. That is what I will say. My understanding of how the mine is working is that they are alerting our team if there are changes for the better or the worse. They are letting us know as those changes happen.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

I was on a website called [www.sedar.com](http://www.sedar.com) where public companies like Minto Metals are required to post all of their financial documents. It did talk about the request from Yukon government to increase the bond, but it also had a paragraph that said, "In light of the new surety bonding request, the Company engaged third-party consultants to perform a review of the surety bonding amount and have estimated the new bonding amount to be \$76.5 million as of December 31, 2021 compared to \$72.1 million in the prior year."

So, can the minister help me understand what the company is doing by getting that third-party consultant out to review the surety bonding amount?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just want to add to my previous answer that, when I mentioned about working with our inspectors, I should also have said that the mine has also been working very closely with the Selkirk First Nation. They obviously have a stake and an interest in this. It has been the three groups at all times staying in contact.

I think I am probably being pulled into a line of questioning that I won't have the ability to answer well. I believe that this is just a financial situation with the mine, so their surety bond is how they dealt with the original \$72.5 million in security. They may be looking at how they can use that in other ways, and it may be limited in how they can use it, but really, this is more a question that would need to be posed to Minto.

It is not our work to understand how the mine, or how any commercial enterprise, secures funding for its security; it's just that we require that security.

**Ms. White:** I guess, in asking the question, my hope was that the minister could help the average layperson, like myself, understand what the company was doing in the interim.

Again, yesterday, it was the ministerial statement on the cautionary tale of Wolverine, and that was missed payments of, you know, \$350,000 and this is \$32 million. I understand that we changed requirements and abilities for a number of months, but it just begs lots of questions from people like me who don't fully understand.

I am just looking across. Is there additional information?

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

**Ms. White:** Right, so I will not report progress right now. I look forward to the minister's response.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** One of the differences will be that Wolverine had already gone into temporary closure whereas Minto is an operating mine — so, there are differences. I have had some conversations with Minto about their financial situation, but I really don't feel that it is appropriate for me to talk about it. They have been very transparent around that in conversations with us, but I think that government has this responsibility to make sure that we — I said yesterday in this House that there is a cautionary tale, and so government needs to be responsible around these mines.

With Minto, my understanding is that we are in the exact step that is required right now. So, we reassessed security. It came in as higher. The mine will either generate that security for us or find ways to reduce liabilities to have us reassess that the risk is lower or they will not be able to operate. Those are sort of the options. At this point, when they did not furnish the security by April 5, we go into an amended quartz mining licence. That is the stage that we are in right now. In order to be in that stage, there is a requirement for bringing down the risks. We do that through a series of ways — by an agreement that they can't increase the risks, by having more reporting to us. So, that is the way in which this stage happens. It is an appropriate stage that we are at.

Again, one thing that I will say is that the Minto mine has been working closely with us and the Selkirk First Nation.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

**Chair's report**

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 67

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, April 14, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, April 14, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have a few constituents here from Marsh Lake: Ron Davis; Kristin Kulachkosky; and I think that is Nate Kulachkosky, but sometimes he looks a lot like his brother.

For our tribute today to Bill Thomas, we have many guests who have come to the Legislative Assembly.

Can we please welcome Gwenda Bradley, Jean Francois DesLauriers, Sylvie Léonard, Natalie Taylor, Jason Charlie, Cyprian Bus, Ngeta Kabirii, Jack Bogaard, Michael Dougherty, Kristina Craig, George Green, Hilary Wilkinson, Laurie MacFeeters, Jesse Whelen, Dennis Senger, Chris Gishler, and Bill's family — Ellen Thomas, Thomas, Liam, Elliott, and Sophie — if we could please just welcome them.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help me welcome today Melissa Laluk, who is the supervisor of the chronic conditions support program and a clinical exercise specialist and certified respiratory educator. With her is Amelie Clark, chronic conditions nurse educator and certified respiratory educator, and also with them is Joline Williams, a virtual health monitoring program coordinator, here for the ministerial statement today. Welcome.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In remembrance of Bill Thomas

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** It is my sad privilege to rise today to commemorate Bill Thomas. The youngest of four children, born to Macedonian immigrants, Bill grew up in Ontario and studied at Western and Queen's universities, earning his master's in economics.

In 1969, Bill started teaching — a profession that suited his gentle way. As an educator, Bill had an endless love for reading, research, and continuous learning. He taught at Mohawk College and was professor of economics at Sheridan College until he retired in 2007, when he and his wife Val moved to the Yukon to be close to their daughter, Ellen, and their grandkids.

When he arrived in the Yukon, Bill got stuck in right away and became an active community member. His contributions to Whitehorse and the territory are long-lasting. Bill's firm belief that volunteerism is critical to a healthy society demonstrated his genuine commitment to making our community a better place for all, especially those who are vulnerable or marginalized. Bill played an extremely active role in addressing the issues of poverty, homelessness, and the care for and the rights of people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

His humility, empathy, and wisdom made him exceptional at what he loved to do — engage and cajole others to think, question, and take action. Bill's focus remained on assisting the organizations that he volunteered for on the path of reconciliation and social justice.

When I met Bill, he had recently begun as co-chair of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, a role that would end up spanning 15 of the coalition's 25-plus years. Bill also helped to chair Seniors Action Yukon and was an active member of the Options for Independence Society and Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition. I know I am listing off a lot of groups that Bill helped with, but by far, it was more about how Bill did it rather than how many groups he worked with. Bill's leadership was subtle and quiet and somehow infectious. We didn't know that we were being mentored, but we were.

Bill led an impressive life and had a positive impact on many. As a loving husband of Val, proud father of David and Ellen, and the very dedicated grandfather of Kendra, Iain, Asa, Thomas, Liam, Elliott, and Sophie, Bill spoke often of his beautiful family.

He was a supportive and honest man. He put in countless hours driving the kids to after-school practice, taking them to the park, and spoiling each one of them with his attention, humour, and kindness.

Bill's biggest joy in life was bringing his family joy. Sadly, Bill lost his beloved wife Val this past spring. I would just like to acknowledge that it was actually one year ago today that Val passed away. It appeared as though Bill didn't quite know how to live his life without her.

Bill was a champion and a colleague to all those who shared his unflinching dedication to fighting poverty. Bill's perseverance left an indelible mark on efforts over the last decades to squarely face our ongoing housing crisis.

He brought insight, creativity, dedication, and wit to his work — in short, the ability to connect with people from all walks of life through community and volunteerism. He had a powerful yet quiet presence and believed that help cannot be given from a place of judgment. Bill often said, "Have the courage to step through your fears and to keep what's true in front of you."

I will close my tribute and honour Bill Thomas with a simple and powerful word he would use to sign off — courage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I just want to rise today to express, on behalf of the Official Opposition, our sincere condolences to Bill's family and friends — sorry for your loss. I thank Bill as

well for his dedication to the Yukon and its communities and all his services that my colleague, the minister, just detailed here earlier.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** It's an honour to stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to Bill Thomas, a man who not only believed but lived by the principles of social justice. He treated each and every person as a valuable member of society, always seeing the best in us and raising us up to be the best versions of ourselves.

I have to say that I was surprised to learn that Bill only moved to the Yukon in 2007. I say "surprised" because I can't imagine a Yukon without him.

Bill was a social justice activist to his core. As a retired professor of economics, he took all he knew from the world of academics — leadership, mentorship, research, and facilitation — and then he applied it to his volunteer work. He volunteered like it was a full-time job. If there was work to be done, you could count on Bill.

He played an active role in advancing the issues of poverty, homelessness, care for and the rights of people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and, of course, seniors' rights. The organizations that he cared about and where he shared his energy and his passions and his heart read like Yukon's conscience.

Bill was a master of hard conversations. He had the ability to truly listen before responding. He was able to facilitate meetings with folks from all walks of life and experiences, and because of his abilities, each person always felt heard. He took this skill with him wherever he went. He used that talent to the benefit of so many organizations he cared about: Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Options for Independence, and Seniors Action Yukon.

For eight years, he worked with the Northern City Supportive Housing Coalition, which sadly didn't grow wings when we all wanted it to back in the day, but we can see the seeds that were planted growing in the Safe at Home housing initiative.

Bill believed that volunteerism is integral to a healthy society, and his life's work attests to this. Contributing and giving back are things that he did throughout his life. He was wise, kind, and made sure that his heart was always available. He never judged anyone or anything and worked so hard to help make life better for everyone around him.

Bill has left behind a lasting impact on Whitehorse and the Yukon. His dedication to community and to the people around him helped make us all better. So, our heartfelt condolences to his friends and his family. He will be missed.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling today a number of documents. The first is a CBC *A New Day* episode from

November 7, 2012, titled "Advocacy Group Says Proposed Changes to ATIPP Act Attack On Democracy"; a *Whitehorse Star* article, dated November 14, 2012, entitled "Privacy commissioner objects to acts changes"; a *Yukon News* article, dated November 14, 2012, titled "Territory pushes for greater secrecy"; a *Whitehorse Star* article, dated November 6, 2012, titled "Lawyer denounces changes to information law"; another *Whitehorse Star* article, dated November 10, 2012, entitled "Minister skirts questions on openness"; and finally, a *Yukon News* article from December 14, 2012, titled "NDP calls for the..." — Member for Kluane's — "... resignation."

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have for tabling a legislative return relating to matters outstanding from discussions with the Member for Copperbelt South on March 21 in Committee of the Whole under Vote 3 for Education.

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling an editorial written by the Minister of Community Services, entitled "A cost-benefit analysis", dated September 21, 2011.

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

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Community Services to hold a public meeting to explain to constituents of Lake Laberge why they are planning to break the election promise not to develop Stevens Quarry that their Cabinet colleague, the MLA for Porter Creek South, made at the public meeting he held on April 1, 2021 and in writing on Liberal Party letterhead on April 7, 2021.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise in the House today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to reject the recommendation to create a new tax on trucks and SUVs, as proposed in the new ministry of Environment and Climate Change plan.

**Ms. White:** I give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to grant Yukon midwives hospital privileges in the Dawson City Community Hospital and the Watson Lake Community Hospital.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to make midwifery support available in communities outside of Whitehorse.

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



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT****Chronic conditions support program**

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to speak about our government's ongoing efforts to support Yukoners' health and well-being and, in this case, those living with chronic health conditions.

The Government of Yukon's chronic health conditions support program provides client-centred programming to help Yukoners with chronic health conditions live well and plan for the future. All programs are free and available by doctor or self-referral. Clients can participate as individuals or in group activities. The services cover a range of conditions, including diabetes, cardiac disorders, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and many more. Programming is varied and includes nurse educator support, exercise services — both virtual and in person — and virtual health monitoring.

The chronic conditions support program is about a healthier tomorrow and focuses on improving quality of life for Yukoners. To do this, they offer a mix of virtual and in-person services. This allows the chronic conditions staff to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and, most importantly, to help ensure that clients can access the care they need wherever they are.

By offering a variety of services, it is our hope that the chronic conditions support program provides Yukoners with the health, education, and services that they need to feel empowered and live well.

Mr. Speaker, the program has just moved into a new physical location in NVD Place. This new space is a permanent home for the program, after operating for too many years in various locations. It has four clinic rooms, a gym, a group education space with video-conferencing capabilities, and other technologies. The space provides staff with the room and the amenities they need to do their important work effectively and helps clients to feel supported and comfortable.

The new space also recognizes the important contributions of one special individual. Shelley Gellatly worked on the chronic conditions support program team from its very beginning and remained a part of the team once it became a permanent program. She was a strong advocate for a balanced lifestyle and was committed to helping her clients live healthy, fulfilling lives. She was also an active member of our community, coaching, teaching, and making a difference in the lives of others.

Sadly, Shelley passed away in 2021 after a hard-fought battle with cancer. To honour her memory and her enthusiasm, the chronic conditions support program team has dedicated part of their new space as Shelley's Corner. It will no doubt be a lasting reminder and inspiration to all who spend time there. Shelley's Corner serves as a reminder to both staff and clients of the importance of empowering each other to be the best, healthiest version of ourselves.

I thank the members of the chronic conditions support program team today for their dedication, their hard work, and ongoing commitment to helping Yukoners living with chronic health conditions to reach a healthier tomorrow.

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to respond to the statement.

The chronic conditions support program is an important part of our health care system, and I would like to thank the staff here in the gallery for the important work that they do.

Through this program, they provide supports for Yukoners living with a chronic condition. These client-centred supports include collaborative chronic-care and self-management support, and the program helps people living with a chronic condition, such as COPD, diabetes, and hypertension, and results in improved health outcomes for Yukoners.

We also want to acknowledge and thank Shelley Gellatly for her work, and we join in honouring her contributions to the community and the Yukon. We also thank all the staff who offer this important program for their dedication in helping Yukoners who need the support.

On the topic of the space, though, while it is welcome news that the chronic conditions support program is finally able to move into this new purpose-built space, and we are pleased to see it happen, there are some facts the minister left out. We understand that this space was actually ready last year for the chronic conditions support program, but their move-in was delayed. Our understanding is that, because of mold discovered in their facility, the government moved the Child Development Centre into this building, delaying plans to move chronic conditions support into there.

Now that chronic conditions support has finally moved in, the government has moved the Child Development Centre from this space to make room, and the CDC is now located in temporary locations in several spots throughout the city, and the government still has not announced what their plans are for helping them and when they will stop being shuffled around to temporary office space. My understanding is that the CDC has changed locations several times over the last year and that staff are separated among many locations, making it difficult for them to provide services.

While this is good and welcome news for the chronic conditions support program — and we are pleased to see this happen — it does raise questions about the future of the Child Development Centre. Regrettably, the important services they offer are scattered and housed in temporary spaces. The government has, so far, not been forthcoming about their plans for the future of the Child Development Centre when we asked about it in Question Period. I am hoping the minister, when she rises today, can tell us when a solution will be developed to help the CDC. Will their old building be renovated? Will it be demolished? What is the budget for that work, and when will it take place?

Is the government looking at leasing a space large enough to house all the CDC staff in one location, and when do they expect that they can move into a new permanent space?

**Ms. White:** We agree and recognize the importance of the chronic conditions program and those folks who are there to support Yukoners to live their best lives. We understand that the space at NVD Place was always intended for the chronic conditions program, but when the Child Development Centre

needed to find a new home fast, the chronic conditions program was put off to the side and made to wait.

So, we're relieved to learn that this important program has finally moved into its permanent home. This has been a long time coming. Shelley's Corner is the perfect way to honour the work and enthusiasm of Shelley Gellatly. I know her smile will be felt by many in that corner. So, we thank the team at the chronic conditions support program and congratulate them on their new permanent space.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** It's important that all Yukoners have the services that they need to lead healthier lives, and Yukon seniors and elders have the tools that they need to age with dignity and comfort in their own homes or communities as long as possible.

Far too often, seniors and elders wait too long before getting the help that they need or they aren't aware of some of the preventive health services that are available to them and the very important health services provided by this program and the dedicated nurses and professionals who work there.

That's why our government is working hard not only to provide these services through the chronic conditions support program, but also making sure that Yukoners are aware of them. As some of the members here may have seen, our government recently launched the healthier tomorrow campaign, which uses a combination of traditional and digital media to get the word out to seniors, to elders, to Yukoners and their families on the important services available through the chronic conditions support program — and that's what we're here to focus on today.

I'm very pleased to report that there has been a noticeable increase in the interest in the program since the campaign was launched. We have committed to create a territory where all Yukoners, including seniors, elders, and their families, have the support that they need for a healthier tomorrow, and that plan is working.

A few weeks ago, I rose in the Assembly to highlight the *Aging in Place Action Plan* and the work that is underway with respect to that action. We have made significant progress to help ensure seniors and elders can age comfortably in the territory, but we know there is still work to do. Our government will continue to work on supporting Yukoners by strengthening our services and communities to help promote, protect, and enhance their health, well-being, and quality of life.

I know that is what the goal and the focus is for the professionals who work in the chronic conditions support program. The chronic conditions support program is about just those kinds of supports. It's about helping Yukoners achieve a healthier tomorrow in a patient-centred, holistic, and compassionate way.

Thank you for all the work that the program does, thank you for reaching out to Yukoners, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Fuel-wood supply

**Mr. Kent:** So, last summer, the Yukon Wood Products Association raised the alarm with the Yukon government about the shortage of commercial firewood. Unfortunately, the Liberals didn't take those concerns seriously. The result was the massive shortage of firewood that we experienced this past winter, as well as higher prices per cord than ever before. Now Yukoners are starting to get concerned about what the situation for fuel wood will be next year.

So, can the minister give us any assurances that the Liberals have learned from their mistakes and that the fuel-wood shortages that we experienced this winter will be resolved in time for next winter?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I thank the Wood Products Association for meeting with us last summer and alerting us to their concerns. The Forest Management branch worked diligently with the Wood Products Association and with industry broadly. We worked with YESAB to get the Quill Creek project approved. It is approved, and wood came from there this winter and there is a supply of wood for many years to come out of Quill Creek.

We worked with one of our main suppliers in southeast Yukon. He has been cutting just across the border in BC, and we have been working to assist him in his applications with the BC government. We will continue to do that.

I checked in with the department after Committee of the Whole yesterday, and the note that I got back is that there is supply for coming years across all of our forest districts. I am happy to report that we are working on the longer term as well and that the work is ongoing, of course, but the situation is looking positive for the coming year and years.

**Mr. Kent:** We have heard concerns from both of the harvesters that the minister mentioned in the past while. We have been hearing from commercial firewood cutters across the territory that they are still dealing with back orders from this past winter. This is to say nothing about what will happen next winter. The minister mentioned it, and it was his solution that he touted last fall — to open up Quill Creek. Unfortunately, due to the process being so slow, that proponent wasn't able to access the wood until later in the winter and has now been shut down as of March 31. This means that much of the harvested wood from that area is still laying on the forest floor and cannot be accessed until next winter.

So, will the minister take steps to ensure that commercial wood harvesters can access this new area year-round to help address this backlog?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think it's typical — and the note that I have says that, between April 1 and September 30, we don't allow cutting in areas — for example, like Quill Creek — and the reason is pretty straightforward: It's because it's fire season. So, it's about protecting Yukoners.

I will check to see whether there's any opportunity to collect wood that has already been felled — whether that's possible — and I will check with my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, and just confirm the rationale for that — that it is safety. But if that is the rationale, I think it would be

prudent for us stand by that as we're coming into fire season now.

I thank the members opposite for their concerns. Of course, Quill Creek was not online at the beginning of the woodcutting season last year, whereas this coming year, it is. I understand that there is a right-of-way cleared to support small-volume harvesting operations that will start as early as October 1 of this year.

**Mr. Kent:** Minus 20 degrees and a heavy snow cover doesn't really tell the story of any wildland fire risk to us.

While I appreciate that the Liberals claim to be taking this seriously, the facts on the ground tell a different story. Their failures of last year led to increased cost for Yukoners, and commercial firewood cutters are telling us that they can't get access to enough wood to meet the demand in Yukon and that, yet again, we are going to be relying on wood imported from BC. This makes no sense environmentally or economically, and it will inevitably mean more unsustainable prices for Yukoners who rely on wood heat. This is the direct result of the inability of the Liberal government to provide an adequate supply of good-quality firewood to commercial cutters.

So, can the minister assure Yukoners that the actions he will take between now and next winter will result in real change, or will the Liberals dither again while Yukoners face another winter with unsustainably high firewood prices?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, what I will say is that we've always had wood coming from British Columbia and we will continue. Some of it — I agree — if it's coming from far afield, we don't want that, but the wood that's coming from just on the other side of the BC border along the Stewart-Cassiar Highway — that has always been there; that's fine.

I have had conversations, for example, with the Teslin Tlingit Council. They might wish to harvest on the BC side and they have asked me to work with our counterparts in the BC government. That has always been here in the Yukon.

With respect to —

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I think that is grateful encouragement.

What I will say is that we will continue to work to make sure that there is a wood supply. I am told that, across all jurisdictions, we have areas for harvest and we will look to do that.

Finally, can we please talk to our fire folks about the reasons for the periods of time when we say "No harvesting"? I think that is better than listening to members of the Yukon Party or even us as a government. We should take the advice of our experts.

### Question re: Affordable housing

**Ms. Clarke:** Salamat, Mr. Speaker. The housing affordability crisis is crushing the dreams of many Yukoners. People cannot afford a home. People cannot afford rent. Unfortunately, last week's federal budget left the Yukon behind. While Nunavut and the NWT were both given \$60 million each to help address the housing crisis, the Yukon was only given half of that.

Will the government lobby Ottawa to have us treated equally to help address this affordability crisis?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I want to commend our folks at the Yukon Housing Corporation for the work they have been doing. I think that, as we know — and we will have a longer conversation during Committee of the Whole debate on our budget about the amount of investment that we are putting into affordable housing.

I like to hear the Yukon Party now supporting affordable housing. We know that there were lots of opportunities before — when there was federal funding in place and those projects were cancelled, so that federal money wasn't used. I also am aware that the member opposite who is asking me the question wasn't part of those discussions, but that is what had happened previous to this government.

Again, we have had a great relationship with the federal government when it has come to our northern carve-out. I had gone through the budget. Yes, I see the numbers for this year, but I also think that there is more to that story when it comes to self-governing First Nations and what has been allotted, which makes up a large portion as well of our population and opportunities.

I think that it is best at this time for us to get into Committee of the Whole. I look forward to a vigorous debate and a large discussion on that.

I also have reached out to my counterpart, Minister Hussen — or I had asked my department to draft. We will be looking to meet with him and ensuring that we have good flexibility in the money we have and that we continue to have the good relationship we've had over the last number of years.

**Ms. Clarke:** It is clear that the Yukon is an afterthought to Ottawa. In the middle of a housing affordability crisis, they are providing our territory only half the amount that the other two territories are receiving.

Will the government stop making excuses for Ottawa and fight to get us the same amount of housing money as the other territories?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, what the members opposite are not telling you is there is dedicated funding to three territories. That's \$60 million to Nunavut, \$60 million to Northwest Territories, and \$62.2 million to Yukon. Now, out of that, what they're also not telling is that \$32.2 million did not go to the other two territories for hydro expansion. That's what we put our money for; that's the money that we got from the federal government.

So, the members opposite can make it seem like the federal government is somehow turning a blind eye to housing, but on the contrary, actually, another half-billion dollars over the next five years is going to self-governing and treaty First Nations for housing as well. That is a massive influx of money to First Nations who are self-governing. We have 11 self-governing First Nations here in Yukon. The challenge that we're going to have is to be able to work with the First Nation governments to make sure that we're planning properly and coordinating a bumper crop of money when it comes to housing from the federal government.

The members opposite can spin it any way they want, but the reality is we are aflush with federal support that we will spend.

Again, when the members opposite got federal money for affordable housing, they sat on it for years. We will not do that. We will make sure that we work with the First Nations. I will say as well, the Yukon Days and the Yukon Forum — these are the conversations that really helped the federal government decide where they're going to focus their attention when it comes to housing.

**Ms. Clarke:** Does the Premier think it is fair that the Yukon only got half the amount of housing money as the other two territories?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should listen to the answers. I just responded to that question.

### Question re: Midwifery in Yukon

**Ms. White:** Tomorrow will mark the one-year anniversary of the midwifery regulation coming into effect. Unfortunately, this means it has been one year since any midwife was able to practise in the territory, one year since women and birthing folks have been deprived of the ability to choose how they want to give birth, and one year since some families have had unassisted births at home — and we know there have been some close calls.

To be clear, there is nothing wrong with having your baby at the hospital, but that's not everybody's choice, and people should have just that — a choice.

The minister has said over and over — and I quote: “Our government is committed to providing regulated and funded midwifery services as a birthing option for Yukoners...”

If the government is so committed, why has it been a year since midwives were last able to practise in the territory?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the question and the opportunity to respond to it.

I think what is important for Yukoners to know — and many do, understanding the process — the Yukon midwives regulation provided a foundation which enabled us to engage with our health system and First Nation partners to build a safe and sustainable midwifery program. That program will be regulated, it will be fully funded, and it will be integrated into our health care system.

The passing of the regulations was not magic. It was one of the important milestones that we needed to pass in order to proceed with that process. Our implementation plan — which came after those regulations — and the model of care for regulated and fully funded midwifery services are based on the recommendations of local and national experts, significant research, and extensive public and stakeholder feedback gathered through the engagement process.

We have been very pleased to have been able to work with these professionals, to work with all the stakeholders, including the Yukon Hospital Corporation, to make sure that the program has been set up properly. The new program will provide Yukoners with additional choices, and I look forward to continuing my answer.

**Ms. White:** Again, it has been a year since anyone has been able to access midwifery services in the territory, and the minister doesn't seem to understand that it's her government's regulations that are also keeping midwives away from the Yukon. Right now, midwives have to be registered for at least one year in another Canadian jurisdiction to be able to practise in the Yukon, and the posted salary is still far below neighbouring jurisdictions. So, the government is expecting midwives to practise somewhere else for a year, come back to the Yukon, and accept a lower salary.

It shouldn't take a year to realize that this is an issue — enough delays. Because of this government, we have women birthing at home alone.

Not only is this failure of these regulations unacceptable, it's unacceptable that they were ever put in place with no real interim plan. This government is failing —

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please. No holding up a sign, please, visitors in the gallery. Thank you.

Leader of the Third Party, please continue.

**Ms. White:** This government is failing mothers and birthing folks. Will this government fix its mistake and set up an interim solution that isn't flying expectant people out of the territory?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The regulation and design of a regulated free midwifery program for Yukon families is an important shift in the health care system here in the territory. It is also incredibly important that Yukoners can rely on the regulation and fully funded midwifery services that will be available and have been based on recommendations from federal and local experts — absolutely critical. The new program will provide Yukoners with additional choices that they have asked for and the same high standard of care and access to safe, integrated, and publicly funded midwifery care that can be found nationally.

We acknowledge that establishing our midwifery programming, including recruitment — which has been the most recent hurdle — has taken longer than foreseen due to several reasons, not the least of which is the world pandemic. We have completed significant program development and are pleased to share that we are close to being able to launch this program.

The program requires the employment of two registered midwives. We are actively recruiting and interviewing a panel of midwives for the second registered midwife position. The first person was hired in December 2021, and this individual is also serving as the program clinical manager at this time.

**Ms. White:** So, the minister can repeat all of the benefits over and over again of a fully funded midwifery program, but to date, not a single midwife has practised in the Yukon for over a year. Pregnancies don't just happen in Whitehorse, but for years now, Whitehorse is the only place to give birth. Communities have been waiting for years to have birthing options closer to home. We all recall the Yukon Party's failure

to provide just that with the opening of the Dawson City and Watson Lake community hospitals.

The Liberals have had years to fix it, but here we are: no midwives anywhere in the territory and no birth options in communities — no plan. How many years does the minister expect it will take before all expectant people have access to midwives in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Both registered midwives, who will be initial employees of this program, will have hospital privileges here in the territory, which is essential to ensure that our midwifery care is safe, it's sustainable, it's people-centred, and it's fully integrated into the broader health system. Making this kind of a shift has not been an easy task. No government prior to ours has even considered it in any real way, and we anticipate launching the full continuum of full-scope midwifery services, from prenatal to postpartum care, in 2022. We look forward to offering accessible, safe, and regulated midwifery services.

I can indicate that one of the issues we have had with recruitment has been the salary available to registered midwives. The Department of Health and Social Services requested and obtained a waiver to offer a higher salary. I can indicate that, unfortunately, the Yukon Employees' Union objected to that rider, and conversations have to continue with them.

We are continuing our recruitment process. We, of course, are looking forward to launching this program and to having properly paid midwives here in the territory.

#### **Question re: Support for seniors**

**Ms. McLeod:** The inflation crisis gripping the Yukon right now is hard on all Yukoners, but seniors on fixed incomes are finding inflation especially difficult to deal with. The Premier says that he and his colleagues have been concerned about this since last August. It is clear that the Liberals have ignored this inflation crisis, and we see little to no relief in this budget for seniors in our territory.

Can the Premier please point to any specific items in this budget that are designed to help Yukon seniors living on a fixed income?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Everything that we do in budgeting is to make life affordable for Yukoners, whether that is our seniors or our youngest Yukoners; that is the goal of this government. We recognize that COVID has brought supply chain management issues. I think that's funny to the Member for Lake Laberge for some reason. It is not funny to us, Mr. Speaker. This is extremely important; it is not a joking matter. Everything that we do as far as budgets go is to make sure that we use the taxpayers' money wisely, and to do so, we have done a lot for every jurisdiction, making sure that all communities matter and all of our age groups matter as well.

I don't have enough time in Question Period to go through all of the different initiatives, but we have, in Committee of the Whole, talked with every department about what we do to make lives more affordable. It is really great to hear that the members opposite are now urging us to do more for seniors in our rural communities, because we know that, when they were in

government, that was not necessarily their MO. They wanted to have all of our seniors come into Whitehorse to a facility if they needed extended care. We have changed things around. We can now have acute care turned into collaborative care — a massive, massive injection of cash to do so — to make sure that our elders are supported where they live, which is the most important thing that we can do: Keep our elders in the community as long as possible.

**Ms. McLeod:** I only asked for one thing, so if the Premier would like to provide a list, then great.

We have suggested a number of actions to the Liberal government and unfortunately they have dismissed them all. We will continue to offer ideas to this Liberal government to help Yukoners through these difficult times.

The pioneer utility grant, PUG, is designed to help Yukon seniors and elders with the cost of heating their homes for the winter. With fuel wood, propane, electricity, and home heating fuel all skyrocketing in price under this Liberal government, here is another question: Will the Liberals double the amount of the pioneer utility grant to help seniors and elders get through this difficult time?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We see it all the time with a political party that has been proven unreliable — talking about some of the old initiatives that the Yukon Party may have done and making it seem like no alternative has been put into place. That is just simply not the case. What we just did as well as far as inflation goes is reduce the cost of home heating. That is going to help our seniors for sure. We have made historic investments in all age groups around the Yukon. We have cut the small business tax rate for our businesses. We have added money for early childhood development. We have raised the minimum wage. We have doubled the medical travel.

As members opposite snicker as we talk about all the things that we have added money to — and they mention one thing that they used to do. Again, we are answering the question, but the members opposite —

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

#### **Speaker's statement**

**Speaker:** Order, please. The member has the floor. I am having a hard time hearing him.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** You can tell when you hit a nerve, Mr. Speaker.

We are also still paying the price for the Yukon Party's inaction on housing. We just talked about that today, which affects our seniors as well.

The good news for Yukoners is that we are making historic investments in housing. Together with our partners, we have supported hundreds of new homes, and we will continue to do that in all of our communities. We have massively increased lot development. We have identified land for Yukon's community development trust. We are bringing people together around housing. We are bringing people together in collaborative care and also in wellness.

When we move the pages forward on *Putting People First* — again, investing in our seniors.

**Ms. McLeod:** I guess that seniors will have to take that as a no.

Many seniors still own and live in their own homes. One of the programs that helps to make this affordable is the homeowners grant. The homeowners grant reduces the amount of property tax that you pay for your principal residence. Eligible individuals 65-plus can receive up to 75 percent of the property taxes owing on their residence to a maximum of \$500.

Will the Liberals consider increasing this amount to a maximum of \$1,000 for eligible seniors until the inflation crisis is over?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We're not going to necessarily listen to the members opposite only when it comes to what we're going to do for our communities. We're going to listen to municipalities. We're going to listen to First Nation governments. We're going to continue to go out with our liaisons into the communities and find out, from our communities, important goals. That's what we've been doing for five years. Every single page of our budget reflects the fact that we're trying our best to make lives more affordable for Yukoners. If you take a look at comparisons to other jurisdictions, we are in a good place right now. We are paying attention to our seniors. We're paying attention to housing. We're changing the narrative when it comes to how we do health and social services.

Again, when the Yukon Party was in power, they built hospitals in my community and in the Member for Watson Lake's community without a plan. They ran an acute care model at that time. We have revolutionized how we do health care and we're going to continue to do so, which is putting money into our most marginalized individuals, all the way through to our most healthy individuals, in every single community. We're going to continue to draw down on mental health supports in our communities where the members opposite have failed. We're going to continue to expand on lot development and social housing where the members opposite failed. We're going to continue to make sure that every single page and every dollar that we spend is going to help make lives more affordable for Yukoners.

#### **Question re: First Nation School Board**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** With school council elections coming soon, there have been a lot of questions about the schools moving to the new First Nation School Board. For schools that voted to move away from the school council model and toward the First Nation School Board, it is still unclear what that transition will look like. We have heard from some of these school councils that there has not been much support from the Department of Education.

What steps has the minister taken to ensure that the Department of Education has supports in place to assist with this transition to fall under the new First Nation School Board and to help those school councils wind down their operations?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm very happy to stand and talk about the new First Nation School Board. Together with our partners, we are truly writing a new chapter in education for the Yukon and building a brighter future for the territory.

I'm very proud of the work that we have done with our partners to establish the first Yukon First Nation School Board. We certainly are working with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the new interim governance body to work through all of the work that needs to be done to have the First Nation School Board come into effect at the beginning of the next school year.

We have a number of very capable folks who are working on this alongside our department and are working with our school communities to answer the questions that are on the floor today. I am excited to continue the work that is underway. We have a new interim executive director for the First Nation School Board, a member of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

I am happy to continue building on the answers as we go forward.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The next big step for the creation of the First Nation School Board is the negotiations between the interim board and the Department of Education around the preliminary funding formula for the new board and each school. These negotiations will affect the funding available for all Yukon schools.

Can the minister tell us: Have these negotiations started?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am happy to continue talking about the First Nation School Board and where we are at. I mentioned a few moments ago that we have the Interim Governance Committee in place to move forward with governance and funding arrangements and other matters that will have to be worked on as we move closer to the next school year. The committee includes a number of very capable folks: Dr. Alyce Johnson, Erin Pauls, Jocelyn Joe-Strack, Mark Wedge, and Melanie Bennett. This is our interim governance body that is working on all of the matters that will bring us to seeing our first group of schools go under the First Nation School Board.

We look forward also to having official elections for the trustees in November 2022 and to continue working on ensuring that we have a successful transition.

Again, these are historic moves. I am so excited about the new chapter that we are writing in education in the Yukon, and I am happy to continue talking about this today.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We have been told that the final financial arrangements with the Department of Education will be negotiated in time for the beginning of the next school year. This means that these fairly major negotiations will become effective at Yukon schools and they need to be completed in the next three to four months.

Can the minister confirm that they will indeed be completed by August, and since these negotiations will affect the funding available for all Yukon schools — even the ones that remain under the Department of Education — will the minister commit to involving or providing information to existing school councils about the financial negotiations?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am excited about the work that's underway. I feel very confident in the Interim Governance Committee alongside very, very capable folks within our Department of Education who have supported the work to

happen. It truly is a new era that is emerging in education in the Yukon and it is work that I'm extremely proud of. I note that the schools that have chosen to go under the First Nation School Board are the St. Elias Community School, Johnson Elementary School, Watson Lake Secondary School, Ross River School, the school in Old Crow, Grey Mountain Primary School, Takhini Elementary School, and the school in Beaver Creek. Those are the schools that are transitioning to the First Nation School Board. Of course, there's a tremendous amount of work that is underway. That includes establishing a funding arrangement. We're very, very focused on ensuring that all of the work is done in a timely manner to be ready to transition these schools to the First Nation School Board. I'm looking forward to that being a successful endeavour.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Motion No. 302

**Clerk:** Motion No. 302, standing in the name of the Hon. John Streicker.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Government House Leader:

THAT the membership of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges, as established by Motion No. 9, as amended, be amended by:

- (1) rescinding the appointment of Annie Blake; and
- (2) appointing Emily Tredger to the committee.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'll just speak very briefly to this motion. I want to thank MLA Blake for her contribution to the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. It has been for sometime now that the Member — sorry, pardon me, Mr. Speaker — the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — her involvement on the committee. I would like to thank her for that and just acknowledge that the Member for Whitehorse Centre has been sitting in as an alternate, and this would be to just formalize the membership of the committee.

*Motion No. 302 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

#### **Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

#### **Department of Economic Development**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** With me today are the officials from Economic Development: Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey, who I would like to thank for coming in to support me; and Beth Fricke, who is our director of Finance.

Before I get into some prepared words, I would just say that these are two individuals who, along with the team of folks numbering about 64 now in our department, are owed a big thank you from Yukoners for the good work they do. We are in a very favourable position after the last two years, and they were two very difficult years.

The conversations that took place over the last two years were difficult conversations with many folks. People were in very difficult times in the private sector, and it was a mix of real action as well as real strategy and implementation to make sure that we could meet their needs.

Deputy Chair, I am pleased to rise today and table the Department of Economic Development's operation and maintenance and capital budgets for the 2022-23 fiscal year. At the Department of Economic Development, we work to create opportunities for Yukoners to have meaningful employment, and we offer resources for new and existing Yukon businesses to thrive and expand.

Statistics Canada's GDP numbers show the Yukon's economy grew at a blistering 5.2 percent in 2020, while Canada's GDP shrank by 5.2 percent over that year. The Yukon's economic growth rate is, again, by far the fastest in the country. Despite the onset of COVID-19, the Yukon's population has continued to grow, reaching a new high of 43,568 individuals at the end of September 2021. Average weekly earnings are up and retail sales are still strong and rising.

There are now three operating mines in the Yukon. Unemployment is low and the technology and innovation sector continues to grow. The department remains focused on growing

and diversifying the Yukon economy, while keeping our methods sustainable and environmentally responsible.

We provide economic opportunity across the territory by working with businesses, communities, and First Nation governments to support their identified needs. Recent projects approved for funding include the Watson Lake ski club for \$143,000, and that was to build a train park and a new ski jump at the ski hill — Mt. Maichen Ski Hill. Kryotek Arctic Innovation was provided \$100,000 to field test and optimize a software system that senses approaching wildfire. Evidence of this field testing will allow them to move the product to the next stage of development. Carmacks Development Corporation received \$25,875 to complete an assessment of several owned infrastructure and assets to prepare for upcoming economic opportunities. Cody's Lil' Critters daycare received \$10,187, and that was to make various improvements to their leased building to become operational for a safe daycare centre. Once operational, the daycare will provide opportunity for parents to return to work who did not have proper daycare previously.

Again, in our mandate, we outlined the series of goals and accomplishments vital to the Department of Economic Development, including developing an innovation strategy to create opportunities for local entrepreneurs, creating a mineral exploration fund, and working with the non-profit sector to recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

To meet these expectations, in our operation and maintenance budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year is \$26,721,000 with a capital budget of \$1,106,000. Just over \$4 million has been allotted to Corporate Services to keep the department's programs running successfully. This includes the deputy minister's office, Finance and Information Management branch, Human Resources branch, and Policy Planning and Communications branch.

The deputy minister's office is responsible for ensuring that the departmental goals and objectives are met, while contributing to the government's overall goals and objectives. A budget of \$669,000 is required for this work. With a budget of \$1,063,000, Finance and Information Management provides financial oversight, budgeting, day-to-day financial transaction processing services, and other administrative support services. The Human Resources unit has a budget of \$294,000 and provides human resource services to the areas of staffing, job design, classification, labour relations, organizational development, human resources planning, and other human resource management services to the department.

The Policy Planning and Communications branch provides a full range of policy development, communications, and public relations functions as well as support for legislation, regulations, policy analysis, strategic planning, and legislative sessions. Policy Planning and Communications will benefit from \$1,977,000 to support this work, among other activities, this fiscal year. The branch represents the Yukon in a number of trade negotiations and discussions with other jurisdictions. Among these is the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* negotiated by all 13 provinces and territories and the federal government to address barriers to trade, investment, and labour mobility in our country.

As chair of the Committee on Internal Trade for 2022, the Yukon is helping to guide to conclusion negotiations for the inclusion into the CFTA of provisions related to the trade in cannabis and financial services.

We are also chairing the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table, a table that is tasked with identifying regulatory barriers to trade within Canada and working collaboratively among jurisdictions to reconcile those differences to the benefit of goods and service providers, investors, and consumers across Canada.

Again, through our work in these negotiations and at these tables, we are reducing and eliminating — to the extent possible — barriers to the free movement of persons, goods, services, and investments within Canada to enhance trade, investment, and labour mobility opportunities for Yukoners and Yukon businesses. By participating in these conversations, we are advocating for open and efficient access for Yukoners and Yukon businesses to markets across Canada, making it easier for them to grow and expand.

The branch, along with the Business and Industry Development branch, is also engaged in ongoing discussions to determine the future of the Skagway ore terminal. We continue to work with industry here in the Yukon and the municipality of Skagway to identify both short-term and long-term options for tidewater access, recognizing that Skagway is the port of preference.

The Department of Economic Development, again, supports the growth of the private sector through the Business and Industry Development branch. The department is making \$2,088,000 available to the Business and Industry Development branch this fiscal year. This includes \$320,000 committed to transfer payments that support various chambers of commerce throughout the Yukon. The branch promotes and facilitates the development of Yukon's strategic and emerging industry sectors through projects that benefit the Yukon's economy. The branch also administers the business incentive program and assesses projects for eligibility under the economic development fund. The business incentive program provides rebates on eligible Government of Yukon contracts promoting Yukon hires and Yukon-made goods and services.

The Business and Industry Development branch also builds connections with Yukon businesses to increase exports, support trade agreements, and attract investments and talent to the territory. The focus for attracting investment to the Yukon is the mining sector. In addition to the chambers of commerce, the branch also oversees transfer payments, including the Yukon Mining Alliance, to support the industry and attract investment. We also support the Yukon Chamber of Mines for the Yukon Geoscience Forum, Yukon Mining and Geology Week, and Roundup.

Mining activities have continued throughout the pandemic and have helped to ensure that Yukon's GDP continued to grow when many areas around the world were seeing a decrease. We promote the Yukon as a world-class mining jurisdiction, adhering to strong environmental, social, and corporate governance practices. These funds will allow the Business and Industry Development branch to continue this important work.



I will just now quickly move to immigration. Our budget allocation of \$757,000 will allow the immigration unit to continue its work. This year is shaping up to be yet another significant one for immigration to the Yukon and will help to bolster our growing economy while taking pressure off businesses that are struggling to find staff. The immigration unit administers the Yukon nominee program and the business nominee program. The Yukon nominee program assists employers in finding employees through both the skilled workers and critical impact workers streams when local workers are not available.

Once a nomination has been approved, nominees can apply for permanent resident status. The Yukon nominee program is in partnership between the Government of Yukon and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, also known as “IRCC”. This is especially important because of the low unemployment numbers and lack of available staff for many businesses throughout the territory.

In 2021, the Yukon nominee program utilized its entire annual allocation of 300 spaces for the first time since the inception of the program. In 2021-22, the immigration unit saw a 200-percent increase in the number of applications to the program. Because of this high demand, we have secured an additional 40 spaces for 2022. We have also announced a temporary suspension of the advertising requirements for businesses seeking foreign nominees through the program. This change will be in place until June 30, 2022 to help support Yukon businesses in urgent need of workers.

The business nominee program works with potential international entrepreneurs to invest and set up a business in the Yukon where owners actively participate in the running of the business. This strategic use of immigration programming can help us to meet the Yukon’s future economic and community development needs.

In our mandate, we committed to developing an immigration strategy that will help to guide how we address labour shortages throughout the territory. The immigration unit is working with our Policy Planning and Communications branch in the development of the renewed immigration strategy. The Department of Economic Development is in the process of developing this strategy to ensure that our immigration programs are modernized and responsive to the needs of Yukon businesses seeking employees and foreign nationals moving here for work.

Our immigration unit is also an effective resource when helping on world issues, with the situation again in Ukraine being a case in point — or the situation in Afghanistan that we talked about previously. Canada has announced support in response to the evolving situation in Ukraine, including implementing measures to quickly issue travel documents to help Canadian citizens, Canadian permanent residents and their immediate family members in Ukraine to get to Canada as quickly as possible, should they wish to do so. The Department of Economic Development fully supports these efforts and recently launched a Ukraine family support desk and is ready to help Ukrainians who want to come to the Yukon.

The Department of Economic Development also supports market-driven media production in the Yukon. Media development is a valued contributor to our economy and plays a significant role in showcasing local talent on the larger stage. This fiscal year, Economic Development has identified just under \$2 million for the media development fund. Media development provides funding to help Yukon content creators make their sound and media productions a reality. Additionally, these media productions provide employment opportunities to locals and showcase the Yukon to other parts of the world.

We recently announced changes to how we will fund media projects. Four new media funding programs, including administrative business guidelines, were announced on January 10, 2022 to support the production of professional film, television, and digital media projects.

The key changes, which are consistent with national funding agencies, were requested and supported by industry. So, we have simplified the administrative processes for the media programs and reduced red tape. The budget to support these new programs is \$1.160 million, so \$1,160,000, which is an increase of \$500,000 from the previous year. We also are currently working to relaunch our sound funding programs in a similar way to meet the evolving needs of the industry.

Moving on just quickly to Regional Economic Development, for the next fiscal year, we’re looking to allocate \$4,372,000. Of that total, just under \$3 million — \$2,950,000 — will be directed toward the community development fund. The community development fund assists in projects that provide long-term economic and social benefits to Yukon communities. Again, I would just touch on the ski club in Watson Lake. The investment there of \$143,000 is just an example of some of the things we do. There is \$200,000 to Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in for the construction of a playground and community greenspace; another \$36,975 to the Ross River Sportsman’s Association for improvements to their gun range; and almost \$75,000 to Little Salmon Carmacks to complete an architectural concept design, climate resilience assessment, and greenhouse gas mitigation and assessment for a new cultural centre — so, just a bit of a snapshot of what the folks there do or support.

Through these and other projects funded through the CDF, we are supporting events and initiatives that provide long-term sustainable economic and social benefits to communities across the Yukon.

The Technology and Innovation unit of Economic Development plays a key enabler role in promoting an entrepreneurial culture that attracts and supports start-ups. The department has committed just over \$2 million to technology and innovation programs for 2022-23. The branch has continued to support the knowledge sector through partnership with the innovation ecosystem to deliver on programs, such as YuKonstruct’s 12-week training program, called Startup Bootcamp; Tech Yukon’s launch of the North of AI artificial intelligence program; investment readiness workshops for entrepreneurs and angel investors through a partnership between Yukon University Innovation & Entrepreneurship and Vancouver Spring Activator; Yukon University Innovation &

Entrepreneurship's innovation grant; and Yukon Innovation Week and our Hall of Innovators; as well as co-sponsoring of the Yukon research internship program and continued support for Yukon University's IncubateNorth program to provide space, tools, and services to help market-ready start-ups grow faster.

The Technology and Innovation unit also funds the Yukon Innovation prize through Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Yukon University. Again, according to the 2020 branch program review, the Yukon's technology industry has been growing, and the technology industry represents approximately 3.7 percent of the Yukon's GDP. As compared to other sectors, it's actually quite impressive just where we're going with technology as compared to complete other sectors that have been foundational for us previously.

Yukon entrepreneurs are being noticed outside the territory as well. DISCOVELO CEO Scott Keesey was recently named to the Future of Good 2022 list of 21 New Founders to Watch. That's a fantastic company and set of values that they work with.

The Government of Yukon will remain focused on developing our local entrepreneurs and their ideas and keeping Yukon modern and relevant in a constantly evolving society that emphasizes innovation more than ever.

The final branch I will discuss is the newly added Labour Market unit. Again, we're allocating \$6,432,000 to provide more effective support for employers. Education's Post Secondary and Labour Market unit has been separated into a labour market development component and training component. The labour market component has been moved to the Department of Economic Development and will be known as "Labour Market Development." This will help the unit to leverage Economic Development's existing relationships with employers and allows our government to provide better access to services by centrally locating employer supports.

This move is an important part of how our government is working to tackle the labour shortage. The number of job vacancies in the Yukon was about 1,300 in the third quarter of 2021, and the job vacancy rate was at about 6.6 percent. Labour shortage is being experienced throughout all of Canada, and the national job vacancy rate in late 2021 was the highest that has ever been seen across the country. It is clear that the work of the Labour Market development unit is greatly needed to address this labour shortage, and the unit will continue to administer its existing funding programs, which include Building UP, which provides funding support for organizations that strengthen the labour market, and Staffing UP, which provides funding support for employers seeking assistance to find, hire, and keep workers.

Deputy Chair, the programming managed and delivered by the Department of Economic Development provides clear and tangible benefits to Yukon and its industries. In February 2020, there were 1,310 active businesses in the Yukon. While this number did decrease following the months when the initial impacts of COVID-19 were felt, the department took swift action to mitigate these losses. By December 2020, the number

of active businesses reached 1,312, recovering to pre-pandemic levels.

I will leave it there and open it up to questions from the opposition.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We on this side of the House would like to welcome the officials as well this afternoon. Thank you to the minister for a good briefing on all the programs. We also agree that the last two years have been very tough around the world as we tried to deal with COVID, so I will go right into the regional relief loan program.

You can apply for a loan of up to \$100,000 with zero percent interest. This came into effect on February 24, 2021, with an intake for the month of March that was eventually extended to the end of June of that year. If you repaid the loan on time, 75 percent of it was repayable and 25 percent was forgiven, but if you don't hit that repayment deadline of December 31, 2022, which is coming up, you will owe the full amount plus interest.

As CEMA has just lifted and life is semi-normal, has the minister considered extending the payback time for this loan beyond December 31, 2022, without penalty, and perhaps allow businesses to adjust a little bit?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would like to thank the member opposite for the question. The total funding that we received for this program — and it was money that flowed from the federal government through CanNor — was \$3.9 million. As of September 29, 2021, we had 62 applicants who were approved for \$3,450,000. I think what I can do on this one is probably come back, because we administer this through a third party. What I would have to do is just take a look. First, to answer the question, we have not contemplated any extensions or changes to the scope of the program to date, but what I will endeavour to do is get a briefing from the department on an update of where the third party is, because I think that we will probably reach out to them, and I think we may have some pertinent information for you.

I have a list here. So, we have the repayment to date — just to put on the record — is \$251,307.84. That is the repayment to date on the loans that have been provided. The total amount forgiven — and that is three separate tranches or three separate companies — comes to a total of \$35,000. So, the remaining balance is \$3,159,894.16.

We will be in a position, once we have a chance to get a report from our third party — which is dāna Näye Ventures — we will have a better understanding of what they are hearing from their clients, and I am certainly comfortable to come back to the House and give you an update on that.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Along with that, as this program is stated as "regional", can the minister give us a breakdown by region and by sector as to the allocations of the funds that are the \$3.9 million? And if you would like to return that, that is fine as well.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** You know what? Because we have a fantastic detail team — I would love to tell you that I stayed up last night preparing this spreadsheet for the member opposite, but our director of Finance, who always looks through all of these different lenses and perspectives — I am prepared.

We will just quickly go through so that we have it on the record for today — the total amount. Under accommodation and food services, we have \$960,000 that was allotted through the program; administrative and support and waste management and remediation — \$55,000 in loans; agricultural, forestry, fishing, and hunting category — and to Hansard, I will bring this to you afterward today for cross-reference — we have, in the third category, \$15,150. We have: under arts and entertainment and recreation, \$140,000; under construction, \$377,000; under information and cultural industries, \$100,000; under manufacturing, \$180,000; under mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction, \$160,000; other services category, which is sort of a broad mix, \$91,335; under professional, scientific, and technical services, \$353,500; under real estate, rental, and leasing, \$240,000; under retail trade, \$274,217; under transportation and warehousing, \$460,000; and wholesale trade, \$40,000. Again, going back to our list, the total in that allocation comes to \$3,446,202.

I will just quickly go through by region or community. The communities that access this are: Carcross with \$40,000; Carmacks with \$100,000; Dawson City with \$355,000; Haines Junction with \$320,000; Keno City with \$30,000; Old Crow with \$40,000; Ross River with \$80,000; Teslin with \$100,000; Watson Lake with \$70,000; and Whitehorse with \$2,311,202 — for that same total of \$3,446,202. The communities that I have omitted in my response are areas where there were no applicants for the loan program.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The Yukon business relief program offers a non-repayable grant. Could the minister give us a little bit of information on how this program works and if the program was fully subscribed?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The Yukon emergency relief program has supported Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations directly affected by restrictions under the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, CEMA. The program focused on funding eligible fixed costs for businesses, non-recoverable financial commitments, and incremental expenses incurred by non-governmental organizations for things such as events that were cancelled or significantly altered due to our COVID orders that were in place.

In March 31, 2022, there were 27 businesses and five NGOs that had active emergency relief program files for approximately \$99,245. That has been approved for support again to date.

Additionally, the program had accepted applications up to March 31 and then again two weeks after the state of emergency was lifted. Applications and all supporting documents were to be submitted by April 15. The COVID-19 pandemic has, of course, affected our economy, so we have provided the necessary supports to Yukon businesses and non-governmental organizations to cope with impacts of restrictions that were put in place for the safety of all Yukoners. The relief program targeted those businesses and organizations directly impacted by CEMA orders, which were lifted on March 18.

I think that gives just a bit of background on the thoughts and work.

As well, we have our Yukon business relief program — I have a couple of other notes here — and it ran from the onset of the pandemic — our other program — through to September 2021. This program helped Yukon businesses cover their eligible fixed costs. That was really the first work that we did. That program ended up providing \$12,800,000 to over 500 businesses. The accommodation and food sector services received 43.6 percent of that total funding. Funding went to businesses in every community.

We can come back with a breakdown of all of our programs. Just for the record, we had the Yukon business relief program and the emergency relief program — the two that I just spoke about — and, of course, we have the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program. We also had our paid sick leave rebate, which we have continued, and a regional relief and recovery fund, which we touched on first. Within that, we have a breakdown of every sector. We also have it broken down into broad community allocation. Again, for that first fund, the Yukon business relief program, we did see uptake in absolutely every community in the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** You mentioned the Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program, which topped up wages with \$4 per hour up to a maximum of \$20 per hour for 16 weeks. It could be extended once, up to 32 weeks. Was this program successful and did it have a good uptake? Was there any kickback from the employers? I understand that it is employer-accessed for the employee, so were there issues with that part of the program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The Yukon Essential Workers Income Support program was over — almost \$5,500,000 was allocated across pretty much every sector. When I look at it, there might be one or two sectors — one was mining and quarrying, and that is because we were in a situation where the wages within that sector are quite high, and there were some educational services, but, really, it was taken up across a number of different sectors and through many communities.

Again, just for the record, it provided a wage top-up, up to \$4 per hour, to essential workers until February 2021, and we paid out \$5.4 million — for the record — of which the federal government provided \$4.3 million and we provided the rest. That was to more than 2,000 workers employed by 160 businesses.

If we look back on it, our perspective would be that it was a successful program. I think that sort of depth and scope of reach is significant when you take into consideration — in my opening statements, I talked about the 1,300 businesses that we saw — and we saw that pre-pandemic level of businesses surpassed over the last couple of years — more businesses than we had before. Again, understanding that we had 160 businesses that were supported by this, I would say that we feel good about it. We think it was something that worked.

Probably, some would say that it could have even carried on and extended longer. Of course, many front-line workers have gone through lots of challenges, and it was really about respecting them and the risks that they took. In the early stages when we were all in a position — we were very fearful about what was happening, I think collectively. We were all trying to

stay safe and all of us here — whether you were in Watson Lake, Old Crow, or here — you were walking into grocery stores and the people who were on those front lines, as an example, were there every day and continue to look after us and provide us our essential goods. I think that it was a strong program.

There were very few situations of pushback. The members of the opposition — I think we worked very collaboratively, where some workers had reached out to their MLAs and identified the fact that there was hesitancy from their employer to take a program on. I think, in a lot of cases, that was maybe due to a lack of understanding about how the program worked or just the lack of interest for whatever reason. In those cases, we had folks reach out to just say, “This is a program that exists. We think this is something that could work. We know that you have employers who would like to see this.” Actually, we had some pretty good debate — the Leader of the Third Party and I — about how this should run and who should drive the opportunity. In the end, I don’t think that we came to reconciliation on our philosophy about it, but we did work together. I did that with other MLAs to make sure that those folks who were not getting the initial supports they should have gotten inevitably did.

The Leader of the Third Party touched on the fact that, if it was driven by the employee, we wouldn’t have had those problems. Of course, my counter to that was from a standpoint of providing the money and the administrative work that we did. The number of touch points that the department had over the last two years was exceptional. I think we have had 5,000 different interactions with either an employer or an entity in all of these programs.

In the end, I hope that answers the question. I think that we got some of those hesitant employers on board. I hope that, once they were on board, they felt they were doing something that was good for their employees. I think their employees appreciated it.

The other question that was asked — if I remember correctly, just for the record — we looked at: What was the percentage of individuals who could have received — if you look at that \$4, how many maxed out the top-up? I think we went through that as well, and we put that on the record during the supplementary debate. In the end, the total number of employees was 2,845, and about 59 percent used that total top-up. That amounted to 1,678 folks.

As you go through it, you could see 20 percent was sort of in the \$3 to \$4 range, just over 11 percent in the \$2 to \$3 range, and then 7.4 percent in the \$1 to \$2 range. Less than \$1 was only two percent. It kind of gives you a sense of the folks we were supporting. There have been changes made to the things like minimum wage and other things since then and during that time period. Again, we feel that it was a strong and effective program.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The economic development fund supports projects and initiatives that provide long-term sustainable economic benefits to Yukoners and to the communities. There has been a report of a number of businesses that are frustrated with the new economic development fund

and the reported frustration range from a belief that the government is directly funding businesses to compete with existing businesses to a perception that there is an unclear or arbitrary approval process.

Can the minister outline if he has heard concerns from Yukoners or the Yukon business community, and what adjustments may have been considered to the new fund to refine the scope based on any feedback that he may have heard?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** For the folks who are following this debate today, I have just a little more information. The economic development fund provides funding for the broadest possible range of initiatives while reducing the administrative burden on applicants.

With the introduction of this new fund on April 1, 2021, the range of eligible activities was expanded to include — and, as the member opposite sort of touched on, I’ll expand on this — capital expenditures and implementation activities. The economic development fund now includes capital costs up to 50 percent of that cost in response to private sector feedback obtained during the consultation process. The economic development fund is a cost-shared fund, and applicants must demonstrate the economic impact of the EDF’s contribution.

The Department of Economic Development is pleased to consider all applications under the fund and we encourage all interested businesses to apply. All economic development fund applications are reviewed and assessed to ensure that they meet fund eligibility and evaluation criteria.

In that earlier statement opening up, I touched on which team takes care of that for us. The program enables businesses to make improvements through a capital purchase in order to enhance competitiveness. We will also consider supporting capital investments where the applicant can show that the project has real potential for positive long-term impact on the broader Yukon economy and not solely to an individual business. All eligible businesses are welcome to apply and are subject to eligibility screening and project evaluation.

When we put this together, we had a number of economic development funds. With our team in Economic Development — we touched earlier on what our policy team does. What you will see, if you are following this, is that we modernized essentially every fund in the entire department over the last number of years. I touched on the sound recording, which is coming to a conclusion, and then we have the work around our immigration strategy, which is very close to being completed. As well, there is our innovation strategy, so that is a tremendous amount of work. We could go back and talk about how long these programs were in existence. Even the community development fund was tweaked early on in the last mandate.

I want to state and make sure that folks are aware that we went out for consultation on our economic development fund. The changes that were made were directly in response to the advice from the private sector and business community. An example would be the Yukon Chamber of Commerce. We took that and we made the changes to the program.

As the member opposite said — I think that we are having a very friendly debate today. There are some businesses — that is correct. But really, I think that we’re talking about — I might

be wrong. I might not get every e-mail that comes into the department, but I definitely directly received an e-mail and a response, and there has been an exchange back and forth from one business. There might be two. In reading that comment about a capital expenditure — and it was one of our first big tranches that we rolled out. There was a feeling from that company that we were providing an unfair advantage to another company that worked in the same field as them. It was good advice from that individual. As soon as I received that complaint, I sat down with the deputy minister and talked about how the decisions are made and to make sure that we are making decisions for the greater good of the economy and not giving someone an unfair advantage. I requested that anything in the future of this magnitude — any decision of this magnitude of allocation of funds — would have to be seen by the deputy minister. I trust the deputy minister I get to work with. We've worked together closely for a long time, and I think that any deputy minister who is in that role should have the expertise to take a look at it.

I felt that there was a really strong argument made by that individual, and I felt that we wouldn't want to see a similar decision made in the future. The change was that, when you are in that range — it was \$100,000. I said that, if we're in that range, to please make sure that it goes to the deputy minister to sign off on it before the decision is made.

But the other thing that I want to just stress is that the Department of Economic Development, over the last couple of years, did a really significant job and was a leader in the country because — folks get uncomfortable probably hearing this in the public service — we took risk. We knew that we might get it wrong. We believed that we could get it right, and we did the best due diligence that we possibly could in a short period of time under immense pressure.

Those early days were Saturday mornings — I'll never forget — with half an hour allotted to the best and brightest business people in this territory calling to share with us how they were going to lose everything that they built over multiple generations. When you have that sort of arena to work in and that construct, you must trust the people around you. You must make strong decisions. You have to get the support of your colleagues. I had the support of all my colleagues when I went to the Management Board table — we had the support of the deputy ministers, the Department of Finance, and the Premier — and we trusted our people. They worked long hours and they put their heads down and did amazing work.

We lucked out in that, when we go back and reflect on the last two years and all of this work, I'm giving you examples of one or two things in 5,000 interactions that we might have — should have — done better on. But, overall, the department knocked it out of the park. In this case, I just want to touch on that.

We have tried something new. The private sector told us how to do it. We trusted the private sector in how we built it. We probably could have done better on at least one application out of all the applications that we've had. We made a change in our governance model — another piece of decision. We likely will get something wrong again on these funds, in the eyes of

those out there, and, if we do, we will respectfully listen to them. We will not be defensive, we will take advice, and we will make necessary changes where we have the opportunity to do that and will continue to be focused on serving the overall economy at large and the private sector in how we deliver our programs.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thanks for that explanation. I was kind of surprised to hear that people below the deputy minister have an okay cap of over \$100,000 or close to — that is a good adjustment to make, if I do say, because it could lead your department into a lot of trouble. The perceptions are out there, so be aware.

I am going to move on to immigration and sponsorship of refugees. Can the minister tell us how many people came through the Yukon nominee program in 2021, and how does this compare with previous years?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We touched a little bit earlier on this. In 2021, we used all of our allocations. We have a bilateral agreement with Canada under IRCC — Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — and then, when we have an individual who comes through and who becomes an employee of a local business through the nominee program, that person — we have a trilateral agreement. Part of the trilateral agreement — I just want to touch on this, and the Leader of the Third Party and I usually discuss this topic — is really about ensuring that the individual is treated appropriately and that their rights are adhered to, and that is the trilateral. In the bilateral with Canada, we are allotted 300 individuals. We ran through the two streams that I talked about — the nominee program and the business nominee program. For this year, we have now — and we were pretty close, I think, the year before. I can go back and see. As the member opposite asked what it looked like, I think that it was 260, if I remember — in that range — in 2020. It might be higher — yes, 300 spaces.

In 2021, the Yukon nominee program utilized its entire annual base allocation of 230 nominations for the third consecutive year. We had our base of 230, and then on top of that, we used our other allocations. This year, as I stated at the start, we have an extra 22 allocations that we are going to use. We can bring back some numbers for the member.

Between, just alone, which is really important — sorry, in 2021, IRCC again, because we had used that base, and we got up to 300, because Yukon received 40 additional base spaces on top of that, so available for 2021, and then in January of this year — so this is important to share with you — of 2022, at the end of last fiscal, going into this year, to February, 58 new candidates have been approved — just in January and February. That is 47 critical impact workers, six skilled workers, and five express entry, which are high-skilled. That represents a 200-percent increase compared to 2019, so it gives you a bit of sense.

For our numbers, I will request that we do 2020, 2021, and 2022 broken down, and I will make sure that we provide that in a submission to you, and you can take a look at where our numbers are, when it comes to this, just so it's clear.

We have seen continued growth. What is important to say on this is that, it has always been — the two big countries of

origin are — it has always been the Philippines. I have discussed that in Question Period with the MLA for Porter Creek Centre. Then we have seen the country of origin switch in the last couple of years, and that has been — we've seen from India, and we have also seen students.

I think we are seeing that shift back, and that is because we are seeing federal programs now having more flexibility. We see a lot of — as India has been the country of origin, we're seeing those individuals take different programs, and they are going to urban centres across Canada. Now I think we are going to see a change where there are more folks from the Philippines.

What I will say is that I think all of us in this House have great respect for the amazing job the Filipino diaspora has done to enrich our community, but there's another reason that we're really trying to work as closely as we can with the Filipino community, and that is because there is — the Filipino community — that diaspora is so large and the community is so well-established that we are in a position now where, in many cases, the community wants to bring friends and family. Because they want to bring friends and family, they want those individuals — they want to give them a boost when they come, so they are open to having those individuals live with them in their homes. Under the current situation, because we are under housing pressure — no, I think we're in a less vigorous debate now than in Question Period — we know that this is a national issue, and every city in this country is under that same — under levels of pressure. The conversations that we're having, we're saying that, look, if we can make sure that friends and family first is where we go, they're going to have an easier ability to move into our community, they're going to have an easier time transitioning into the Yukon, and they're going to have a good, appropriate, and supportive environment. I think that's the other thing I would just share with the House, because that's our thinking at this time. We're going to try to make sure that we're very strategic with the community.

I made that commitment with the community, for the community — making sure that we take advice from the community. I just received — there are requests for more discussions around that.

With that being said, we'll come back. We'll give you those allotments. We have seen steady growth, and yes, we are at that point now where we're reaching full use of our allocation for our Yukon nominee program.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I look forward to getting that report, because it sounds like the allocation amounts fluctuate. If we're subscribing so quickly in two months, it's going to be a run in the next few.

The minister just mentioned the huge influx from the Philippines. Of course, we're all aware of the Filipino community in Yukon. In 2019, the Government of Yukon and the Government of the Philippines had been collaborating on a memorandum of understanding to improve this system of recruitment and employment of Filipino workers. We know that a new agreement was just signed last month. So, can the minister please describe how this agreement will be implemented? Are we getting financial compensation from Canada directly for this new MOU that is being put in place?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would just like to start by stating that, during Question Period, someone in the opposition had asked if I would provide the document publicly. There are two things I want to share to be very open. We signed virtually, so when we signed it, one document was formally signed. The labour secretary was in New York at the time, had just left Toronto, and I was in Vancouver, so we signed and then mailed each other the original copies — or couriered them. I just signed off this week on the other copy. Then we will make sure that we get permission, and when we have permission from the government — then it is something that I feel absolutely should be shared. What we have talked about in the House is very consistent with the language that is in the document. Really, there is an interest from the Philippine government to work with us. On March 18, we had that opportunity to do the work.

The key parts of the MOU improve the ability for Filipinos to be identified and recruited through our process. That is one thing. There is that constant back-and-forth. That comes down to our ability to go back and clarify the interaction between the Yukon nominee program and the Philippines for a pre-screened and vetted pool of qualified Filipino workers. When people are applying, there is the entity in the Philippines that can provide us with their team and labour mobility. They can look at that information. Sometimes there can be a bit of a language barrier as well. They can go back and vet the resumes and see that. That is one important thing.

Also, what we are hearing from the community is that, when people are coming to Canada, in some cases, they had to go through an orientation program. Sometimes they were getting asked to go through an orientation program that they shouldn't have even had to go through. There seemed to be a mix on the Philippine-government side. Also, we wanted to make sure that the orientation they did before they came to Canada was very unique for the Yukon. So, that is an opportunity. We can build that out. We will probably use it in a video medium — that is what we are thinking — and that will be provided so that everyone will have gone through this process before they come. That can talk about everything from the culture of the Yukon — it can talk about our beautiful negative temperatures in April — you name it. So, all the things you need to think about before you come to this beautiful place we call home. That is a key piece.

Also, it supports the safety of Filipino nominees coming to the Yukon through requirements for the Yukon employers. So, making sure that everybody who comes completely understands their rights as an individual coming here and how they can go and seek help if there is some challenge that they are having with an employer. We think that is very important. It was very encouraging to hear from the consul general that they have never had a complaint from the Yukon to their office. It is not to say that we don't have challenges. Like I shared with the Filipino association here, please let us know — please have people come and reach out to us so that when we are doing our check-ins — which is part of our work in our tripartite agreements — that we make sure that people are being looked after and treated respectfully. Then there are processes that we can use here, if we don't see that, but that is another key point.

It formalizes the Yukon-Philippines cooperation on labour mobility and the Yukon nominee program through the creation of a joint committee. As we have that committee in place, I can come back to the House and report on that — but, again, having representatives from both Yukon and the Philippines there. It also waives existing fees applied by the Philippines to Filipino Yukon nominee applicants. My understanding is that there were fees — I think that it was about \$2,000 — and it would be applied primarily as a fee for people who were coming, but it was really something that got applied normally for temporary workers. But our nominees are not folks who are going through a nominee program. We are getting that fee, and I think that was being put on them and, in some cases, I think we would see situations where the employer paid that as well. That wasn't really applicable when you go through the policy. We flagged that, and we have had that fee removed.

That is the early part of this, but I think that it is also the work — we are in the process now of negotiating implementation guidelines, so I can bring the guidelines back and talk about that when they are ready and speak to the committee and let folks know what the opportunities are there — if it is just government to government or if there can be representatives from the private sector or from the community as well.

That is the sort of genesis of this work, but we are also now hoping for other conversations, and the things that I — you know, I have looked at specific areas — I don't want to get too far ahead of myself. I believe that we have gone out and talked about two or three areas where we really need help in our economy and for workers.

What we've talked about are really innovative ways of delivering education between multiple institutions, and that's something that we will come back to. There are ideas that we have. I have brought my colleagues into those discussions and there is a real interest in that. I can say that, in British Columbia while we were there, there was a very significant conference that took place for health care workers, and it was really about adoption and recognition of foreign credentials and how you can do that. Those are all the things that we're constantly thinking about as we move forward.

That is kind of where things are now. There is lots and lots of opportunity here. This is going to be something that will grow and blossom in perpetuity as this community — I think there are about 3,500 people from the Philippines who now call Yukon their home. I was in Dawson on Saturday morning speaking to a leader in the community there who is another individual from the Philippines who has made Dawson their home. I think everybody here representing a community in the Yukon could reflect and give us an example of somebody from the Philippines who has come to their community, made it a better place, and has been critical in having certain organizations and businesses continuing to move on. We are lucky that this has happened here in the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** In that dissertation, I didn't actually hear whether the Government of Canada was involved in any way in helping us to ensure that these people are settled.

The other one was: Is there an application fee that these people have to pay? If they are denied, is that refundable to them? Are we involved in that process, or is that still the border issue?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, there is no fee associated with this process. To be very open, this has been a Yukon-driven undertaking. We have to follow the guidelines of immigration in the country, but we have not looked for or discussed with Canada this work. This has been led by the Yukon. No other province or territory has this done. Other countries and other provinces are reaching out to us to ask if they could look at this as a model. Other countries are asking to have the same relationship. But we have not done that. I think that's kudos to the folks in our immigration unit for the work they have done on this.

Again, there are no fees associated with this process.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** We are aware — and the minister has mentioned the Ukraine family support desk that was launched due to the war in Ukraine. Can the minister give us a little more detail on this initiative and how it's going to work? I do know that he mentioned travel documents and all the actions that the Department of Economic Development is taking to ensure the safety and the assistance to people from Ukraine who want to come to the Yukon. As he also mentioned, our housing situation is pretty bleak — whether it's the nominee program or bringing in people from a war-torn country, these are big tasks. How is the department handling those situations?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will start by saying kudos to the Member for Porter Creek North. A fast actor identified this situation, publicly identified that there needs to be stuff done early on, and then received also — I saw one very nice and kind letter from an individual from the Ukrainian diaspora who lives here and was commending that. I just think that it is important to be noted.

Again, the Yukon absolutely condemns what has happened in the strongest possible terms — Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. These actions are a blatant violation of international law — these actions — horrible what we've seen — on Ukraine's sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country and on the Ukrainian people's rights to determine their own future.

Shortly after the invasion began, we very quickly — on our side — wrote to the federal Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship minister, Sean Fraser, to express the support for the strong humanitarian response by Canada and to offer our support to include Ukrainian refugees in existing immigration programs. The first thing that we felt was — if you have to build new policy, especially between the territory and the country, Canada, that's an undertaking. How do you use something that's in place already? That was our initial option. We looked at our existing programs that we were involved in for refugees. We looked at other jurisdictions that were also using something similar. We felt that we needed to get a coalition of the willing.

It can be adversarial in here and we are back and forth, but I think that overall, collectively as an Assembly when we work together here, we do some pretty significant stuff for the population we have.

Very quickly — first actors in this country on those discussions about trying to look at these programs that we had. We reached out. We gave some solutions on what we thought we could do. We then very quickly hosted a meeting that took place within days of that — I think it was within 48 hours, as I remember. I did the call in the middle of the Yukon Forum. I took a break at the Yukon Forum at the lunch, just before we started in Carcross. We spoke with Nova Scotia and we spoke with Newfoundland as well, and we got support to see if we could do that.

As the member opposite has touched on, on March 7, we launched a Ukrainian family support desk to help Ukrainians seek residency in the Yukon and Canada. We are working to connect Ukrainians with federal government's employment.

We have had an overwhelming amount of support from people in the Yukon — the member is correct that housing pressure is there — but it has been incredible. A lot of it is just: "We will take a family to move into our home", "We have a family cottage, it's winterized, and we will take a family", "We have a business that is tourism or seasonal but, come September, we will take 10 people or 12 people." It has been extraordinary.

We don't have the numbers yet of how many people will choose to be here or how many people within that community will also bring people. I think it's important to say kudos to the Leader of the Third Party, who, as always, during those discussions at the Elijah Smith Building on a blistering day, was right into it. She was running the PA system, organizing and supporting people that first time we came together. There were also other members from the opposition who were there. It's good when folks come together on these important causes and look for solutions and support.

I'm not as concerned about the housing piece in the interim because of the overwhelming opportunities that people have offered to provide.

Coming into budget debate today, I asked for updated numbers, and the team already had them there. As of April 12, the Ukrainian family support desk has received 95 inquiries, including 22 offers of humanitarian support, transportation, housing, and translation. There have been 19 offers of employment and 15 Ukrainian citizens seeking jobs and relocation to the Yukon. Those are the numbers that we have right now.

On March 17, the Canadian government announced the Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel. That will help Ukrainians and their families come to Canada as temporary residents for up to three years while also providing the opportunity to work or study during that time.

Yukon strongly supports Canada's sanctions against senior Russian officials and their institutions that we have seen. When we talk about that process of preparing to bring refugees here, I think that within levels of government — you are preparing and wanting to see if Canada will work with us on our first program, and they quickly rolled out a program that would work for them. But I think the other thing that was much appreciated was that the federal government — as far back as January — started to deploy very specific infrastructure into

multiple locations bordering Ukraine — things that were needed essentially to make sure that we could move folks when appropriate from Ukraine into Canada. I think that today, early this morning, getting ready to come in for work and having a coffee, there was discussion, of course, where the Canadian Armed Forces are now being deployed as part of a transportation solution for Ukrainians. Then we have seen the infrastructure like biometrics for identification and certification and, as well, other consular services that were moving into place in January. That is where we are at right now. That is the desk work. That doesn't mean that it is the only piece of work that we are dealing with.

We have had a number of organizations locally that do this work. They know this work. They understand the challenges for anybody coming into a country from a situation that is war-torn — the trauma. We offered mental health supports early on to the families because we were in a situation where people hadn't slept in days because they couldn't get a hold of their sibling — they didn't know where they were. We are aware — and are listening to subject matter experts to understand — that when you are dealing with settlement services, you are going to be in a situation where you need to have the right safety nets in place for folks.

As well, questions have come up that I have received a bit of communication around. How are we going to look at our health care system? Can you waive a three-month period?

So, some of those pieces we are still working through, or understanding what Canada is doing, working with my counterparts in government here, such as the Minister of Health and Social Services. We have been in dialogue since day one about what we have to contemplate that we will need for folks when they arrive.

It is complex. I did ask officials in a briefing in the last couple of days to bring us up to speed. I have said to the Ukrainian community, "If there are questions that need answering, please continue to reach out." I think that for all of us, that initial shock brought rallies and people there, but I think that it is really important to stay vigilant, consistent, and supportive into the coming months. This has turned out to be — we hoped it wouldn't be, but it is — a very significantly hard and long journey. It will not come to an end quickly. That is where we are at right now.

We are working closely to understand how the programs will work. The desk simply was an ability for us to focus questions and comments to one centralized place where we can collect the data, have folks there and our team at immigration. We used existing resources to do that. It wasn't new resources. It really gave folks a sort of one-stop shop when they're trying to deal with the Government of Yukon so that we can disseminate those requests for information and provide it to the necessary departments across government.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister. He answered my next question, which was how many people were utilizing the new support desk.

With the commercial and passenger rail service that has been discussed many times through the years — an alternate route for goods and services between the coast and Whitehorse,



should the Alaska Highway be incapacitated for some reason — has there been any progress on this? Who are the partners that are involved?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Speaking of rail, there are two different conversations that have occurred over the last number of years. One was this conversation about the A2A rail and interest in the Alberta-to-Alaska rail line. For a number of reasons, that project has sputtered out.

Our role in that was that we provided information, like every government. There were other governments that were investing money. Potentially they — certainly, the Alberta government had one of their MLAs very involved and had reached out to us and wanted to do weekly or biweekly calls about progress on that project. But, inevitably, it was a situation where they were trying to put a bunch of pieces together.

Some of the things that I would share with the Assembly were, when you look at the work they were doing, you would think about things like land planning, for instance. That was the first thing — you're looking at trying to build a rail line through the Yukon north of Carmacks, just south of Pelly, all the way to Alaska, potentially even affecting what was going on with Dawson land planning. You probably should go and bring yourself up to speed on those conversations. You need to go and speak to municipal and First Nation leaders in the potential communities that would be affected.

That was kind of the work that we did. It was really high-level work. It was public service work. It was any project that would come to the Yukon that was talking about significant investment and looking at information, and of course, we work on behalf of this public body, so that's the work that we were doing. That has now seemed to slowly come to an end.

When we talk about our mandate commitments and we talk about where we are in the platform for the election and where things are, really, that pertain to the White Pass & Yukon Route railway — we have spoken with White Pass officials — the officials from Economic Development have — and said, "Are you open to discussions about that line and to revitalizing it?"

In those discussions, we were told that yes, there could be interest in that. Over the last couple of weeks, we have not been happy with the news that we have received about our summer travel. I think, to be open to the House, our focus, at this point, is that summer activity before we would jump into a longer term.

What we have been made aware of, over the last number of years, is that there have been different owners of White Pass. So, I'm going to focus on the White Pass conversation. So, there have been different owners of White Pass. The last configuration or syndicate that owned White Pass reached out — Cobalt, a great Yukon company, did a lot of work on refurbishing some of their cars but also some infrastructure work and rail work for them. They were investing, it seemed, quite heavily and quickly after their acquisition from the previous owners.

One of the things that we were made aware of is there is sort of an obligation — well, there is an obligation, not "sort of" — there is an obligation around tenure and ensuring that the

easement that you have on rail infrastructure leads to your ability to keep that infrastructure in working order.

We're looking at the fact that we're always trying to figure out different ways to reduce emissions. We're always trying to take into consideration that we want to have a vibrant mining sector. We're always taking into consideration that critical minerals are a key to our global future and dealing with emissions. All of those things and understanding that when we think about Skagway as well, the brilliance of that rail line and the previous use of it by mining companies was the fact that you actually had a very efficient way to move goods, and you also — you reduced that traffic, at least at points — that traffic congestion that we saw later on. So, we had mining, of course; we had trucks later on using it, but in the summertime, even this summer, with the bumps that we've had around tourism, you're going to see really extensive traffic between the Southern Lakes and Skagway. It's always difficult if you could contemplate that potential amount of new truck traffic.

That's the pieces that we've thought about. Again, what I would say at this point — my direction to the department will be: Let's put on hold a longer term vision, because, one, there's a brand new deal that's about to close. One of the biggest infrastructure companies in the world is now taking ownership of the White Pass infrastructure. The company, Blackstone — I think part of what we'll be doing is, number one, having a discussion with them: What is your intention? What is your vision for Skagway? They have infrastructure all over the world. Is there an interest? That will be part of it.

The other thing is there are legacy concerns around the tracks and the rail. That's what has been shared to me in my meetings with Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I think that has to be contemplated — what remediation still has to happen and what does that mean? Then on top of that, the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes also, who represents that riding is — a lot of people have made that area their home, and they did it after a time where there was consistent rail traffic.

So, there are all kinds of different views and perspectives by Yukoners — let's say between Carcross and Whitehorse. Those are all things we have to contemplate.

Do I think that this is a conversation and a file that should be looked at? Absolutely, I think it should. Is it complex? Absolutely, but it is something that has some good opportunities in the future for the Yukon. Right now, my efforts in my other portfolio with Tourism have what Economic Development has — really focusing on the now and what the relationship is with White Pass. As we see the conclusion of that acquisition or investment into the greater syndicate, then we will sit down with Blackstone in the coming months, and that will give us a sense if there is an opportunity within this new group to have a collaborative and future partnership when it comes to rail in the Yukon.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for that update — very interesting.

Now, with respect to exploring the new mineral exploration fund to assist junior mining companies with money to begin exploration work, is the money applied for a grant, a

loan, or will it be given in tax credits? Is a feasibility study ongoing? Complete? And when will it be ready for market?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** On this topic, I am going to give a few points of background, because for those outside of the sector, they may not have as much exposure to this type of concept or this topic.

The department has done preliminary review of a number of fund models since the mandate commitment to create a new mineral exploration fund. This came from — over the years, we do — the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources provides over \$1 million. It has gone up in some of the tougher years, and I think it's at about \$1.4 million — something like that. I will leave it to the minister to talk about that. It started under the NDP government many, many years ago and then continued to be supported in successive governments. It's a good program.

We hear from across the country that it makes good sense. It leverages money from others to match funding to go in and do early exploration. I think it has really been successful in giving us a number of our significant finds. When you think about something like — if I remember, without notes here — the Coffee project, which has just gone through the regulatory process. That was early-stage money that Shawn Ryan would access through one of his entities — GroundTruth — you know, Ryan would need one of his companies at the time, one of the entities, to go out and find this.

Then, of course, the growth you would see — then a company like Kaminak takes over, they fund it, and then it gets acquired for a half-billion dollars by Gold Corp., then Gold Corp. gets acquired by Newmont, and then, all of a sudden, you go through this new journey, and then a project kind of comes to a place where it is on the way to being developed.

The fund, though, is a different vehicle to do similar work. The place that does this best in the country is Québec. Québec puts tens of millions of dollars into their fund. They capitalize it, in some cases, through pension money and government funds. That is how they have done it. That is not something — I will put on the record before Question Period — that we have contemplated at all. We have looked at different fund models.

What we have done is that we have gone out with an RFP. The department is preparing a contract — a feasibility study to determine how the fund model could be structured that would effectively address the needs of the industry, and an RFP has concluded. We have reached out to the other territories, and I think that is an important piece of information. The RFP closed last week and we are assessing the proposals. The reason that we have reached out now to the other two territories on this is because — in order to make a fund viable, you have to have enough deal flow, meaning that you have to have enough opportunities, because what you are essentially doing is that you are taking money from this financial structure and you are allocating it — maybe you're matching — we are going to look at what that looks like. Really, what you are trying to do is incentivize exploration. The model in Québec is that they actually invest and they get a return on that money, and in some cases, it is a grant. Those are all the things that we are looking at to see what would be the best model. But we have also

reached out and asked our counterparts if they would be interested, because we have sat with subject matter experts on it and they said that three, four, or five opportunities a year may not get the interest because you need two things. If you are going to bring in private money, the private investors want to know if there is enough opportunity for them to get a return and, at the same time, folks who want to use the fund have to know that there is enough money in the fund to use it or at least that there is enough money in this to make it viable. So, there is kind of a push-and-pull. We have reached out to our counterparts.

The other thing that I would share with the House that is happening and that we are also going to have to closely watch is that — the Yukon has been talking and industry has been talking about it for a long time and the department has been talking about this — we have seen the opportunity with critical minerals. We were watching this way out, and people were working on it and we were having this discussion.

Two things that we've talked about — ESG — the filters, the metrics, the perspective that one looks at to invest — environmental, social, and governance — we feel that we have those things covered in the Yukon, and so does the Yukon Mining Alliance and so does the sector and so does the investment world and so do the major mining companies that are now here like Rio Tinto and Newmont, the world's biggest gold miner.

On the flip side, we also know that we have a real opportunity on critical minerals. The other idea is: Does that fund allocate a significant portion of what it has toward that type of work? Those are the things that we're trying to figure out. To be transparent with the House, I thought that we would have an opportunity to do this work previously. British Columbia — there was direction or advice from the AME, the BC mining entity and NGO, and they had asked at one point for the BC government to think about this. We waited and we talked to BC government officials, and we said that there's such a close relationship between British Columbia and the Yukon when it comes to mining. Many, many of our companies have offices in Vancouver and some have offices in Vancouver and in Whitehorse. It made sense to be able to have that relationship. Within that, we spoke to the leads in their department of mining or natural resources, and they just never moved on it. In the platform, we put it there — the decision was made. If this is going to happen and if we're going to do the due diligence, we're going to have to go it alone at this point — at least get it going. Then once we sat down beside our experts, we did our due diligence. It was like okay, well, what does this look like? That's where we were told that we might need more deal flow.

At this point, the RFP is closed, and we're going through to see if there's appropriate submissions. We're going to keep our folks in Northwest Territories and Nunavut apprised of what is going on. As I said, the other thing that I was about to say and will say is that we have to watch — Canada just announced last week a \$3.8-billion investment into critical minerals over eight years. So, all of a sudden, like many things we've done — early childcare — we were first actors and all of

a sudden the federal government is moving on it and saying that they want to invest in it. Maybe this is serendipitous; we'll see how it works. We'll go through the work that we've done and maybe there's even a way to work with Canada to capitalize a fund like this. I'm not sure; it's very early days.

We just had the federal minister here, but I think that there is a lot of opportunity for us. Of course, as it is my responsibility, I will come to the House and keep the House apprised as we meet certain thresholds of work on this fund.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I am not sure if I heard from the minister whether there was a feasibility study. If there is, when will it be shared?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We have done a lot of early work. In the last mandate, we did some work with a notable Canadian law firm to look at different models. I think we would consider that due diligence. On this project, we did an analysis of funds that are out there in this sector. That was our early work and then that helped us to frame out the scope of a request for proposals. That request for proposals was listed and just concluded last week. Now we are analyzing those proposals to see if they have met the scope. If they meet the criteria, they continue to go on with the work that we have been doing.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** There has been much talk about a flexible field house complex that is to be complete and used for the 2023 Canada Winter Games if our bid is successful. Can the minister update us on the talks happening with respect to all the monies for the Canada Winter Games bid and the progress on projects such as the field house?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that it is important to note, just within the structure of the areas of responsibility — I think that I will leave this to the Minister of Community Services to take the lead on the broad discussions of that. I wouldn't want to get in his way on that. That is where there is a constant dialogue happening around the needed infrastructure. Of course, it has been an area of focus sometimes in Question Period.

The field house — the first thing we did — we had sports organizations reach out to us and identify this field house concept. They felt that this could be a great fit for the Yukon.

As of last spring, we were in a situation where — I think that we have a very active population and there is always opportunity for more infrastructure for sport activity. When you talk to folks — whether it's the people who play soccer or people who play basketball or you name it — they will always say that there is a real challenge to try to get gym time and sports time.

Also, folks who are in the world of softball — of course, we have a very strong organization that runs softball. We have held world-class events and they also were looking at different models across the country where there were these indoor facilities. That really was the genesis of that coming into place.

I will share that, with the convention leadership in the community — the Yukon Convention Bureau and others in tourism — the other potential opportunity was around how to host a dinner with more than 365 or 370 people. That has been a real challenge because you get to a certain level of convention and you are maxed out — you can't.

Of course, we continue to need more hotel rooms and new hotel rooms, but at the same time, we have seen investment and more investment coming into that sector, but we need space. So, could you pull this together?

We had a concept. Folks brought that to us.

From there, what we did is that we started our due diligence. We went through a series of different steps. We had members from Community Services and Economic Development fly to Alberta to look at a very similar project that was in Red Deer, Alberta. We have reached out to Prince Edward Island where there is a very similar structure that is built there. We have looked at a structure just like this that exists in Saskatchewan. We have talked to folks in British Columbia about this.

Things that came to mind — durability, feasibility — feasibility to take into consideration: If you have multiple things happening in the space, what is the time? What is the cost to move from one sport to another sport to an event? What does your O&M need to look like? What does your staff need to look like? What is the R-value of the structure? What are our energy costs?

Those are all of the things that we have been doing since last year because we felt we needed to be very informed as we're moving toward a decision. At the same time, the Canada Games submission and application has been, of course, put in and there is deep work into that.

Where we are at is that we feel that we have a strong set of facts and data. We are still understanding what the Canada Games needs. We haven't made any final decisions on any of those pieces of infrastructure yet. That is essentially the work we have done since May of last year.

I think that the department has done good work. We are trying to figure out, based on the all the due diligence we have done, what is the best course of action with that and what are the costs for it, and there have been different costs as well that we have seen. As we move forward, I can come back and update the House.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Thanks for that update on the considerations of the costs and, of course, the O&M that would be left with us.

Still on a sports theme, the Yukon University is very interested in developing a varsity sports team. Of course, they would probably need a helping hand with the calibre that we would need to compete nationally and even internationally. Has the department — or is the department — do they have a role in helping with this initiative and ensuring that we do have a solid program in place in our university?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This is a great topic. It is near and dear to my heart. This is something where we think that there is a big opportunity as a government supporting Yukon University. Just for clarification, I think that the mindset and scope of sports competition in this would be more of — with the potential to play at a national level, but you're looking at potentially entering into either the British Columbia or Alberta college association level. Some of the things that we have done are — I know that I have sat down and had this discussion, because it has been identified as an area of responsibility for me, as well

as with Community Services. I sat down with the president of Yukon University to have some high-level discussions. The department has drafted a scope of work for a request for proposals for the project, in collaboration with Education versus Community Services, but with Education, Yukon University, Sport Yukon, and the Aboriginal Sport Circle.

The department has contacted the Alberta Colleges Athletic Conference to discuss joining their conference and to make them aware of the project. It's early stages. The RFP is going out in the next two weeks for that work.

While I'm on my feet, this is what I will share with you. We are losing great student athletes from the Yukon every year. We have talked about our first player who has gone on to play professional for the Whitecaps, but we are losing dozens of players for basketball, as one sport, who are continuing to move on to different universities right from coast to coast. We're losing soccer players; we are losing volleyball players, and many of these youth, and many I have spoken to directly, would love to stay home. In some cases, the youth come from small communities in the Yukon, and having good family support and being able to stay here will be a strong recipe for success in their academic and athletic life.

We also live next to a state that has extraordinary investment into sport. We have a reciprocal agreement on tuition with the State of Alaska. You have big centres like Fairbanks or Juneau or Anchorage where student athletes are playing in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Las Vegas at that level in sport, whether it's football, basketball, or volleyball. You have all of that playing out, and a lot of those individuals — after they finish high school, if they don't make it to play division 1 or division 2 in the NCAA or division 3 in the NAIA, they stop. I think a lot of those folks could be potential students at our institution, where we are always still looking to bolster our numbers, and we have these really specific opportunities in research and indigenous governance, in our trades programs — you name it. We have this great institution, the first university in the north of Canada, and we have this opportunity to bring and encourage folks to come. I think our belief is that sport could be a real carrot.

We also have — which we have talked about here — world-class athletes in our community — cross-country skiers who go to the Olympics. We have folks who compete in biathlon. We have all these different athletes, and we have great support from our community organizations. Our thought is that nobody walks into something like a sport program not understanding that there is a potential cost with that, but we also rally in this community around that. We have a great airline in Air North, which always looks after our sports teams. There are ways, logistically, to look at this. That was some of the thinking, as we put this forward.

I can tell you that some of the sport leaders who are out there — just two weeks ago, one of our teachers in the Yukon sent me an e-mail and said, “Wow, I have these two or three people...” — two or three individuals — it was young men — “I have two or three of these young men, and wow, I don't know if they'll move on to play elite sport somewhere else in Canada, and one of them is interested in trades, but wouldn't it be

amazing if Yukon University could give that individual that opportunity to go and play and do something they love, help them become a better individual, a better leader, build their core skills as a human, and get an education at the same time?”

This is something that has been pondered a lot at that institution over the years. It has not been on the radar as much, but the other thing I think I will say to the House is, when you join these conferences, that doesn't mean you have to have an institution involved in every sport. This is — in some cases, you might only have to join two or three different sport groups, so you might be able to say, “Look, we're going to play football, soccer — we're going to play volleyball or basketball, and we're going to have cross-country skiing. That's what we're going to do at this institution.” I think that we have shown, as Yukoners, that we have amazing athletes who can do that. It just adds another level to what's happening there.

Of course, at the end of the day, it's the board of governors at the university that has to ponder their priorities. They just finished their strategic planning. We have to have the right due diligence completed, but I know there are a lot of folks who would be here to provide their support and helping hand. That's a bit broader overview about the thinking, and we'll see what the response is to that RFP that's going out to the public in the next two weeks.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. Van Bibber:** As the minister knows, Yukon agriculture producers aren't able to sell in BC or Alaska. The issue relates to not being part of a quota. The producers are not specifically given an exemption from quota, either.

Is the minister doing anything to resolve this problem for Yukon agriculture producers?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This work falls under the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources under the Agriculture branch. In my previous role in that work, we had discussions, of course. We worked with the president at the Agriculture branch to reach out to the egg producers of Canada. We also spoke with the Federation of Agriculture and spoke with folks within that.

In the discussions pertaining to likely the proponent that you may have had discussions with — folks in that world, the lead farm — our dialogue has really been around trying to figure out good financial mechanisms that could be used in capital investment. That is the discussion I have had with folks who are leaders in that industry. It has been more around — there are some loan programs that we have.

Again, I will leave it to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to have discussions on that topic.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I thank the minister for his responses today and to the officials for being here to help. I will now turn the floor over to the Third Party.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague from Porter Creek and look forward to the conversations that we are about to have today.

I was on the website. I don't think it is any surprise to anyone that I find the website nearly impossible to navigate. Where I used to know things used to be for the nominee program, including the tripartite agreement, I can't find those things anymore. The first thing I want to talk about — other than my criticism of the website — is the important announcement that the minister made earlier this year about removing the restrictions for the nominee program in order to be able to support Yukon businesses. I wanted to start with that conversation, knowing that the nominee program, as highlighted by my colleague from Porter Creek North — the minister said that it was fully utilized in 2021 with 300 nominees coming in. Have there been any discussions with the federal government about extending those numbers for this year?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think it was two parts. One is around some of the requirements that we waived — which was really around advertising — and then it was about allocation and if we have more. I don't think that I was as clear as I should have been in my previous opposition questions.

The Government of Yukon administers two immigration programs in partnership with IRCC and the business nominee program. Our government is utilizing its immigration program to meet the identified needs of Yukon businesses, both urban and rural. In October 2021, IRCC conducted a reallocation exercise for all jurisdictions, and the Yukon received 40 additional base spaces. Previously, we had 300, bringing the total allocation available to 340. The number that I think is important to hear is — between January 1 and February 22, 2022, we had 58 new candidates that have been approved. I think that's quite key.

Partially, what we were trying to do — we've heard good feedback from employers concerning that ability to waive and try to move as many folks in. We talked about that a little bit in the House previously, but that was on February 10 and we announced the temporary suspension of the advertising requirements for businesses seeking foreign nominees through the program. This change will be in effect until June 30.

So, really trying to fast-track the employers everywhere we could — because when you look at where we're at, that was a decision based on a macro view of the Yukon labour force. We're consistently at about 1,300 jobs open monthly. That's before we've gone into some of the seasonal work — and understanding that some employers are not posting the jobs. We know that we've had consistently, year over year, the highest participation in our workforce based on our population. We also have known that we've had extremely low unemployment. At this point, people are just — I'll give you an example. At a sporting event just the other day, I bumped into a contractor

saying: "Please, I just need somebody who can do baseboard work and putting up some trim, and I will pay them \$50 an hour."

We need to have workers, and I think that you are hearing that across the country. People want to pay good wages, and in some cases, folks don't have an interest in working in particular sectors. We also have seen across the country a move out of those areas, so I think that we will probably have some philosophical debate about that. Anyway, that is sort of where we are at on both of those pieces.

I am not aware, at this point, and I will be very open — there hasn't been a noticeable increase in applications since we waived — it was something that employers said — so we haven't seen a lot, but you know that we are also having a very dramatic start to the calendar year in our allocations. We have not been reaching out for new, increased allocations at this time.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. It was mostly just recognizing the current job market. Everyone is looking and I appreciate that. It is a good time to be an employee, so I think that is a good thing. I'm just making sure that this program could answer that. Even that small expansion is important.

I am not sure if the minister and I have had this conversation, but I recognize that it is viewed as an economic development program by the Yukon government, but I view it as an immigration program when we have people who are applying for service industry jobs and who have degrees from their home countries. It is really a foot in the door, which is why, within six months, you are supposed to apply for your permanent residency, and once that is received, people are able to do other things. I think that this is really important.

It is also why I think that it is important to ensure that nominees, in the positions that they are in, aren't being taken advantage of. It has been a long history to get us to this point now — where those checks are being done in a different way. So, again, I congratulate the department in making sure that we are taking care of people, because I think that our responsibility is to the employees who we bring in from other countries. Not to say that we don't have a responsibility to employers, but there is definitely a power imbalance there.

So, previously, when I could find the documents, I knew what the base rate had to be — the salary that was being offered to nominees. Just as a point of reference — I found a news article from 2014 — minimum wage was definitely not in these points, but they just talked about how the starting wage for quick-service restaurant workers under the Yukon nominee program rose from \$11.75 to \$15 per hour. I know that it was held at \$15 per hour for a long time, but our minimum wage has gone past that now.

So, what is the starting wage now for nominees within those contracts?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will try to do two things for the member opposite. I will bring back a document that does two things: I will get the highlights of the framework on the trilateral so that you have that, and I will also get the pay scale, as well, and provide that back to you in a legislative return if that's okay.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. I know that there is a program — and I'm struggling to find it — that, in a community, you can have more than one employer. I know that it was a new program.

Can the minister give us an idea of how effective that has been? Is it filling the gaps in those rural communities that we hoped it would? Has it been successful?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's the Yukon community program, and that was launched in 2020. That's a new stream for the Yukon nominee program to provide flexibility to employers in rural communities where seasonal and part-time work is a fundamental part of the local economy and essential for local economic development.

Up to 50 candidates can be nominated through the program enabling them to work in one of the participating communities of either Dawson City, Carmacks, Carcross, Haines Junction, Watson Lake, or Whitehorse. Between June 1, 2020, and January 25, 2022, only four candidates have been approved through the program — two in Whitehorse, one in Dawson City, and one in Haines Junction.

I want to touch on a few things with this program. First, I think that it's important to know some of the drivers of this. In many cases, it was — in Whitehorse, sectors like the hospitality sector where they were in a tough position in that they might not be able to offer 40 hours, but if they partnered with another organization, they could provide full-time hours. That was one thought.

In a community like Carmacks — which, to table for the House, it was one of the business leaders that was driving that discussion.

They have multiple businesses all under the same umbrella. They wanted to try to make sure that an individual might work in a hotel and then go work in a retail store, but the way it was structured within our program, this model would work well. So, that worked — the same thing with Dawson. That's sort of at the private sector side; that's where it came from.

Under the policy conversation, what we were seeing across the country was the federal government reaching out to municipalities, and they were doing this. When they looked at the Yukon, they said that, because our one larger city did not have an economic development strategy and department within it, it did not meet the criteria for the Yukon to have an allotment like this. Our team went back to IRCC and said, "Okay, you can't not..." — you know —

Earlier today in Question Period, there was a question about fighting for the Yukon. Of course, we went back, and we're like, "No, that's not appropriate. We need a program that can support our communities." The negotiation and the push that — my vigorous conversation was outside of a restaurant in Watson Lake in the parking lot with the federal minister, in the middle of another chamber meeting, saying, "Yeah, no, we need this. You're not leaving us out of this, and we need it tailored toward our programs, and our communities are having a really hard time with staff."

So, that's where that came from. The team just said we have two more applicants who are coming through right now.

That's where the policy conversation came from. I think it's important as well — and we've talked about this, and I think the member opposite and I talked about it: Does this lead to a situation where folks in that environment do not have the same level of support, or does it lead to maybe not the most appropriate situation?

I can tell you, on Saturday morning — I touched on this before — I talked to one individual who came to the Yukon through the nominee program and was saying to me, "Please make sure that program does not..." — and then the deputy minister and I had a conversation with one of our tourism leaders, as well, on Monday night, and in both cases, folks said, "Please, this is a good program."

The case on Saturday morning was: "I have family members. This would be perfect for them to come and take this. It's a great opportunity where they could work for multiple employers in a small community." That's where we are at right now. I think we will see this as a program that can really help Yukon businesses and provide great opportunities for people in the nominee program.

Again, when you look at those dates, we started it right in 2020 in the spring. That was a tough time. I think now we will really have an opportunity over the next couple of years to see how this will — if this program can flourish and if it can meet the needs of both the individual who is moving here and the individuals who are providing the opportunity to them.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that.

Yesterday during Question Period, there was an exchange between my colleague, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, and the Minister of Community Services about paid sick leave. Understanding that the paid sick leave program has been extended until September, I wanted to know what the plan was post-September.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm just going to give out a bit of information about the program. As of March 31, 2022, there were approximately 1,490 people who have received \$2,227,112 in paid sick leave through our rebate created in March 2020 in response to COVID-19.

Our phase 1 of the program that ran through to March 31, 2021 paid out \$663,294 in rebates. Our phase 2 program, which was April 1, 2021 to September 30, 2021, paid out \$446,000. Phase 3 from October 2021 through to March 2022 has processed \$1,119,000.

The retail trade sector is the largest user of the program at 23 percent of our funding to date. Health care and social service sector — that includes daycares — is just over 22 percent of funding to date. Construction has been about 15 percent of funding to date, also significant users to the program.

So, I think what we've been doing all along is just trying to monitor and adapt our programs. It has been our mantra. It's what we have done, and that's what we're doing.

What are some of the things that I can see in that? Well, I'm seeing that phase 1 had some really strong numbers. We're seeing phase 3 with some really strong numbers. I think it's fair to say that we don't have the really difficult health risks that we had in the start, but I think everybody in the Legislative Assembly today would say, under the current situation with

COVID — and that's why we extended it — some of you know somebody who is sick. I think that's fair to say.

When it comes to what our current situation is around COVID-19, we're monitoring and adapting that program. That is one stream.

The second thing you touched on was the exchange yesterday. Look, in Question Period, there is only a short period of time for that exchange to happen. Through the agreement between the government and the NDP, that led to some good work that has been done around the topic, and I think that the member opposite would agree — as a person who also was a small business owner, who probably had two or three staff — I can't remember how many staff the member opposite had at the Canada Games Centre — before a decision is made to figure out what the model is, there has to be consultation, and so that is the work that has been committed to.

In my role as Economic Development minister, I agree that we have to do that discussion to lead us to understand what the impacts are. Bigger employers provide, in some cases in the private sector, some sick leave provisions. What has been contemplated in the work, as I understand it, is 10 paid sick leave days. In this case, we have had the government backstop it, and I think that has provided a great opportunity. I will say anecdotally that we have had different things occur, as well, where, in this program, which was built for a particular reason, we have had folks reach out to us and say that, you know — employers — "I think that people are using the program and maybe they are not being as straight up as they should." And we have had employees reach out to us and say: "I had this thing going on in my life, but my employer told me to take the time and just use the sick leave from the government."

So, one of the things that we have discussed is that we need to have a deep dive to understand exactly how this is working, because we have this model right now. What does that mean? We don't want employers or employees — we want this to be something that is there for them. It is a safety net, and it is something that is appropriate. And then I think that what is happening is that it is a really strong, honest conversation with folks in our community, including the business sector, to say: "Hey, what does this model mean to you?"

In my role with this department, I take into consideration a number of factors that are at play. We have talked about inflation. We have a global scenario when it comes to inflation. Yesterday, we saw the Bank of Canada trying to work that through the central bank and they have increased interest rates. What does that mean for the private sector and small business folks who may be carrying debt that they incurred over the last two years? There are so many factors. Those are all things that we have to contemplate when we are talking about what a sick leave program will be.

So, at this point, we're going to monitor. We're going to continue to watch it as we go to September. What we have done all along is that, if that information leads us to say that the program should end or the program should continue, those are all things that we have done in a very agile way. But I think at the same time, there is a bigger discussion that has been amplified in many different lenses by everybody in this

Assembly around: Is there going to be sick leave? Is the sick leave provision, in the future, 10 days? Who should be covering the cost of it? That's where the rub has been.

All I can say is that, in my role today, what I say to my counterpart is there is still fragility that is in place right now. There is fragility around the private sector. They have borne lots of different costs because of inflation, because of COVID. That has to be taken into consideration. We have to make sure that, whatever the model is, it's something that is going to be good for the employee but good for our economy, because inevitably, you have to ensure that business is still there to provide that individual with a good opportunity and a good quality of life and a good job. Those are all the things that we're contemplating.

So, you're not going to get a definitive answer on what happens the next day after this program ends right now, but the same commitment — and the proof is in the pudding — we've continued to watch, monitor, and provided the right opportunities and supports as they have been needed from day one of this COVID process.

I know my colleague is committed to the work he's doing through consultation and post as part of that panel.

**Ms. White:** Although I appreciate the minister's stance, I'm more than able to have that conversation with the Minister of Community Services.

I guess I erred in mentioning Question Period yesterday, but really, ultimately, the question to the minister is: In his mind, is COVID over? Like, come September 30, is COVID done — no more COVID?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, I mean, I would again say — do I think it's done? Is it still on? What I will say is what I just mentioned. I think that today almost everybody in the Assembly could say they know somebody who is sick. So, today it's probably not done. I said that we will monitor and adapt.

One thing I've learned through COVID is that there is no solid set of facts around the corner when it comes to where COVID, as an infection, has grown. We know that. I think we have continued to make that commitment to folks that we would monitor and adapt.

Right now, actually, I am going to leave it there. I will let the Minister of Health and Social Services speak to that. I have some of the same information that the member opposite has. I am not party to any particular briefings by any epidemiologists forecasting what's there. I am getting the same information that the rest of us have got. When it's appropriate, the Minister of Health and Social Services will provide that to her colleagues, but at this time, I think what we are all seeing is that things are still challenging. That's what I know, and that is what we'll contemplate, and that's what our budget was built to do: to have some room, if necessary, for challenges — whether they are flooding or COVID — that we might see in 2022-23.

**Ms. White:** Ultimately, it's the same answer. No one has a crystal ball, but as the Minister responsible for the Department of Economic Development, which currently has the paid sick leave program for COVID, is he willing and able

to entertain the idea that, come September 30, if we are still in the middle of a pandemic, that the program will be extended?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Because it's an appropriation in the end, I can't say that I would extend it, because I have to go through a process, and there is a structure to that. I can talk to my colleagues. I can let them know what is happening. I can provide them with the data that's there. Those are all the things that I normally would do to try to get alignment before we have to go into a meeting for that discussion.

We have continued to watch and to monitor, and that's what we will do. In politics, you could say it is an easy answer, but in this, we have just gone through a track record. This team, on this work, we've had a strong track record on all our programs, on when to push, when to pull. Sometimes we were getting some critique on how our programs were running, but at the end of the day, I think we've continued to be there.

I will have to watch what is happening. We are going to have to watch the trends. If you went from the first one to the second phase, you would have said — if you saw me, if I came in at the second phase, based on what we saw in that decrease from phase 1 to phase 2 — if we broke it into three — we were looking at a declining use of the program. With full transparency, we got to phase 3, and we have spent almost as much as we did in phase 1 and phase 2.

It is a program that is being used. It's a program that is being supportive to Yukoners. It was the first program of its kind in the country. It is a program where jurisdictions that are much, much bigger had their policy teams and, in one case, their political folks reach out to us and say, "What is the template?"

We have led the country on this program. We built it quicker, faster. We have delivered over and over again. That is how I will approach it. It's always difficult. I would love to be able to say, "Hey, these are my options", but I think that the member opposite knows — has asked many questions over the years — that I can't in the House today say, "Yes, I will" or "No, I will not." What I will say is that our department has done a great job of providing good data and good recommendations. I have continued to take them and will continue to look at that approach to decision-making as we get into the latter part of this year, moving toward Q2 and Q3.

**Ms. White:** I guess my expectation then is that the minister would advocate around the Cabinet table to extend the paid sick leave program. I think that this is maybe the answer I was looking for — that yes, if we get to September and the pandemic is still raging, the Yukon government won't leave people high and dry. Maybe he can just affirm that he will advocate for that. Maybe he won't advocate, and he can tell me that as well.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, that is what I think I mentioned in my last response. I said that what I tend to do is talk to my officials. They provide me with the data. The data then, when necessary, gets put into a Management Board submission. I review that. There is a set of recommendations usually for the group of people around that table to make. I sign off on the package, and then I would advocate, probably even previous to that work, to make sure people are aware. Then at that table, if

I am bringing something forward that I think there should be a decision on and that is where we are at that day, then yes, I would normally be speaking in a positive manner, i.e., advocating toward a decision that then gets made in that confidential process. So, absolutely, that's what I do when I bring a submission forward.

Would I be advocating if I bring that forward? Absolutely, I would be advocating if I bring that forward. When will I bring it forward? After I know the data. When will I know the data? After I see the trends for the next couple of months. Where are we at right now? We're not out of the woods.

So, a lot of hypotheticals. We can go back and forth for a little bit longer, but I'm sure there are other questions you want to answer on substantial issues. I will keep you apprised of data as we go through, if you would like, and we'll see what that decision is as we get to September.

**Ms. White:** Agreed. We don't need to go back and forth anymore on it.

Something that has just been brought to my attention by a person who is heavily involved in the construction field is actually mass timber. It's interesting because we're having this conversation in the House these days about wood availability and the quality of the wood. The reason why I'm bringing up mass timber is because BC actually came out with an entire BC mass timber action plan. It's one of economic stimulus, actually. It's really interesting, and it's about the recognition that, in BC, they are no longer talking about cutting down legacy forests, but they're looking at a way to use smaller products in a more economic way. This might not be the right spot, in which case I will come back in either EMR, Community Services, or Housing, but has the minister taken a look at all into what's happening in the mass timber fields in British Columbia?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm going to go out a little bit on a limb. So, I have a little bit of visibility into this. The mass timber process — it's like a multi-floored building where you can, instead of using a steel structure building, you can use wood. BC is really pushing that to support their mill industry and their forestry industry, if I remember. I think it's a very innovative, strong approach.

We haven't contemplated that at this time. We do a lot of stick-built based on our zoning for multi-floored buildings. We have been innovative in the Yukon on that topic, but really, I think it's — without getting too deep into it — for them, they have a complete supply chain available. That's why that makes complete sense. Right from whoever is felling the tree, to the mill, to the delivery, to building this multi-floored structure in downtown Nanaimo, Vancouver, or Victoria — you could keep it in that complete ecosystem, which is that you're adding value along the chain the whole time.

So, the first part is — I know that it has been a storied history of sawmills in the Yukon. We do have some people who have still been entrepreneurial with it, and they have done a great job. There have been challenges, which we have discussed, around supply chain on access, so I think at this point we have not contemplated that, but the key now is just making sure that we support the minister. I was in that previous role,



and I know the challenges there. The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources came into that role in May of last year. I had been there already getting ready for the next season, so I know the challenges and where those challenges are with the minister.

I think that on this one, really, we have to get a very clear picture of where our wood supply is going to come from and that is what it is going to take, in order for somebody to make those investments into the next level — to really build — and I don't mean like a small, home-based mill. I am talking a bigger, functioning mill that can actually provide that. We are always trying to look at those opportunities. We have seen folks here who at one point were shipping, as well, into our smaller communities and the US and doing pretty well on it. But at this point, we have an innovation plan that is coming out — our innovation plan is taking into consideration a number of different industries, but — for the House — the mass wood strategy is not one of the things that I am aware of.

But you know what we will do — we will have the department, before we finish up, just take a look at that report from British Columbia and see if there are some good potential synergies, even in parts of it, and would there be — at a small scale, like a micro-system of doing that — could that happen, and what would that look like, and how could that help our economy? There are always great ideas from everywhere in the House, and that sounds like a very interesting one. We will ask the officials to contemplate that.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I think that the other part — the reason why mass timber is of such interest, actually, is because of its climate reasons. So, talking about buildings using less steel but also less concrete, so this building product is better for the environment. I had been approached by someone who said: “Do you have any idea where we can access additional funding, like green funding?” — just trying to look toward that.

That actually flows into the next thing. I had a really interesting letter. Actually, so did the minister. We got it on March 5 from a constituent. It was about agriculture possibilities. I know that we are talking about Economic Development, but it does tie in because the conversation was around — right now with the burn piles. We are literally just burning what could be a really valuable resource if it were chipped and actually put into fields. The Growers of Organic Food Yukon have supported this idea. Is this an idea that someone could bring forward to the Department of Economic Development to look at seed funding, for example? It would be a benefit to the Yukon Agricultural Association. It would be a benefit to the climate. Instead of having fire piles, we would have, essentially, compost.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Absolutely. Any concepts and ideas where there are economic opportunities, we will contemplate that at the department. Many different ideas from many different sectors come in. Secondly, if it does meet the criteria that is laid out — which is extremely broad — then we can help folks understand the application process, and we can also help them prepare an application. I'm not saying that they are going to be successful, but hopefully they are. We can walk through it with them. That's the thing. That's the work we want to do.

The innovation just continues in the Yukon in the sense that there are so many great, unique ideas.

I'm just going back to NRCan. There's a 2021 state of mass timber in Canada report. We will have a look at that.

On anything with forestry on some of these projects, there are FP solutions — I believe that's the name. They work hand in hand with NRCan. When I was in the forestry portfolio — I've worked with them on the private sector side. While in the Yukon, we leveraged additional money to take a look at something else with a number of local private sector folks in partnership with a First Nation. They were really good about providing seed money. I know the forestry branch would be aware of that. We can sort of shepherd over that conversation. There are usually good funds out there at the federal level — or the feds have provided to NGOs when it comes to that sort of work, especially when it comes to waste product — is what we would look at.

The concept at that time was understanding that, with all these trucks that were backhauling, there was nothing on the trucks coming out of the Yukon. The individual was looking at the price point because they were in the firewood business. When you walk into these box stores across Canada, they have bundles of kindling or firewood that you can get. The waste wood through what this individual was doing could fit that criteria and we went through the whole process. We had a local law firm and management consultant do a bit of work on it. It didn't look like it was a big enough opportunity — but stuff like that. That group, FPInnovations, and one of my team members then who is now in Economic Development helped to do all that work. We do have someone at Economic Development who does know that group really well.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you for the opportunity. I have a few very brief questions about the paid sick leave program.

We have been contacted by a business that applied to the paid sick leave rebate, and they were told that, because the application was received outside of the 30-day period from when the paid sick day occurred, they were ineligible. Can the minister confirm that there is indeed a 30-day limit for the paid sick leave program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are aware of that. I was just getting an update. We are in a situation where it is within the current phase of the program — I think it was a couple of weeks. The owner illustrated, at least in the correspondence that I have been made aware of, the challenges in dealing with a number of things within the business. They were building a strong case. We were searching to see if we could find the flexibility under this phase for it. We can get back. We were just trying to figure out if it was concluded or not, but certainly we can come back and figure out what the status of that request is.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that. The minister will obviously be aware of this. My colleague, the Member for Porter Creek North, wrote a letter to the minister about this a few weeks ago, and so I'm sure that it's working its way through the system.

But attached to that letter was an information sheet that was provided to businesses about it, and that information sheet made no mention of a 30-day limit. I was curious whether or

not the policy that guides this program itself includes that 30-day limit.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** When we come back to the House — we'll just cross-reference that to see if there was a gap in information or not. I think it's important to say that we're not trying to exclude people from the supports; we're trying to help and be flexible, as much as we can, to support people, because it's a program in a very challenging time. That's our lens.

In some cases, though, as folks know, when we conclude a fiscal year or we conclude the funding on the piece — or it's scoped out very strongly within the Management Board minute, which then turns into the architecture for the scope — that's what we have to do. Of course, we have to adhere to the policies within the government and be respectful of the direction that we've been given.

So, those are the things that we contemplate, but if we have flexibility and it makes good sense and we're trying to help people, that's what we're trying to accomplish.

**Mr. Dixon:** Is there a policy that guides this program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes. There is policy work that guides all of our programs that we have been delivering in the sense that, in some cases, we might have some more fulsome than others. But my sense is, in just checking, that we have a paid sick leave rebate program. I think, even on the website for the Yukon government, you can go through and it lays it out. At the very end on our website, it says: We must receive the application and supporting documentation within 30 days of the claimed sick leave period. So, that's what we provided to the public. That's what's on our site. There is a button there and a link for employers and one for employees.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, the minister answered my first question — that there is a parameter in the policy that says there is a 30-day limit. That's good. But my question was: Is there a policy for this program?

Normally, for the funding programs that exist in the Department of Economic Development, there is an explicit policy for each one. For instance, the community development fund has its own policy. Other funds have their own policies. That's what guides the administration of those funds.

My question is whether or not the paid sick leave rebate program has its own policy.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What we have are — you can call it a “policy” — program guidelines. That is what we use in these situations, and our program guidelines for this are that you may receive up to 10 days' wages for your full-time or part-time workers or, as a self-employed person, if you stay at home and cannot work because you are sick with COVID-19 symptoms, are required to self-isolate due to a public health order and cannot work remotely, or are caring for another household member due to the above circumstances.

The next piece is: What does this program not cover? Then it goes into that work. Then it asks how many times a worker can qualify for a rebate. Then it goes into — if the paid sick leave rebate does not fully meet your worker's needs — and then there are links there.

Those are the guidelines. I consider that as policy, and that is how folks are informed of it and that is what we have used to

make decisions. Again, we're trying to be as flexible as we possibly can, within our guidelines, to be able to provide appropriate supports in our program.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, there is no formal policy, but there is a set of guidelines and the minister considers that a policy, which I understand.

The next question I have is one about another instance where we have heard from a business that applied for the fund for a sick day that occurred in January. They received a response this week — a number of months later — and in that response, they were told that they would receive payment in four to six weeks — so, that would put them possibly into June — from when the original application went in.

Is there a timing standard that the department tries to achieve in the turnaround for these, and is that a normal experience, or is this person who has indicated this to us an outlier?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** If I can get back to the House — I just want to go back to it. The Oxford dictionary would say that a policy is: “a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by government...” So, that guideline is a policy by definition. We can go back and forth all day, but that is what it is; it is a policy. We have approved operating guidelines and the term used is interchangeable with “policy” if we want to go back and forth. So, let's correct the record: There is a policy; it is the guidelines. So, that would be a wrong interpretation by the member opposite.

Secondly, on a specific case, we are more than willing to help and we can certainly help out. We just need to be aware — I don't know if I should get into a very specific case here on the floor that was mentioned, but in each one of these cases, I am certainly comfortable with casework and I can go back and take a look at it to make sure, from January — this specific situation. I will see if I have any other work, and I can talk about just the claims times from Finance.

Usually, our claims are processed within three to four weeks. Again, there have been many claims since January 1. We processed more than 600 claims that have been approved this month. Earlier on in the questions from phases 1 and 2 — phase 3 of this program has allocated more money than the first two phases combined. So, please be patient with our team. They are processing a lot of claims. If there is something specific — I think all the members on the opposite bench would say that I always try to work and come up with solutions on behalf of the people they represent or folks they are championing causes for, and this would be no different.

**Mr. Dixon:** In the minister's guidelines, is there any expectation that an applicant would expect to receive payment by a certain amount of turnaround time?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There is nothing specific in our policy around the expectations. I think we have not seen any real challenges. To be up front, this is the first one that has been brought to me. Of course, we have been in a very difficult scenario, because we have had so many claims. I just touched on the 600 that we have provided funding for.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will take from the minister's answer that this is an outlier and we will let this individual business know

that is not the norm and that others who apply to this fund shouldn't expect that kind of turnaround.

Can the minister confirm that it is indeed BID that is administering this program? Can the minister give us a sense of the capacity that BID has to continue to administer this program vis-à-vis all the other duties those folks have to be doing?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think it's important to just correct the record. The member opposite said that I said this was an outlier or that I referred to it as an outlier. What I touched on was that this is the first time someone has brought this to me, so I want to be factual in that.

That area within Economic Development — BID — that you refer to — right now, there are two people working full time on this. I think that we will monitor this, as we have done. There seems to be a lot of activity right now because of Omicron. That is what we have seen. We will continue to watch that, but nobody has come in and identified in my briefings that there is a lack of capacity to execute. I think that we have allocated — folks have done a great job inside the department of taking on different responsibilities from time to time to make sure it has worked.

To be very open, the department has done a great job at the senior level to make those adjustments. Sometimes they make those operational changes, and I am not always aware of them, but I think that if we hear that there are a lot of applications that are not being processed over a period of time — there is a trend — and if I'm made aware of other situations beyond this one, I will be sure to reach out to our team and find out if there are adjustments that need to be made or things that we have to adjust to make sure that we can still deliver the program appropriately.

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

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

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

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

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

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$26,721,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$1,106,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$27,827,000 agreed to**  
**Department of Economic Development agreed to**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Health and Social Services — continued**

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just like to squeeze in a few questions before we hit the end of the day here.

I think I'll begin by following up on the issue of the bilingual health clinic, which we discussed the other day. I had asked the minister a couple questions regarding it. She indicated that there would be doctors there and that the model for them would be contract.

Could the minister indicate how many doctors they envision contracting at the bilingual clinic and what the dollar value of those contracts will be?

The other question I would ask the minister about is — the budget made reference to the provision of a chief nursing officer being hired and additional nurse practitioners. I would ask her what the role and duties of the chief nursing officer are — or will be, I should say — and how many nurse practitioners are being hired through this and where they will be located.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** With respect to the questions regarding the bilingual health centre, which of course we're very excited to proceed with, my recollection is that — certainly more than one physician. I think we're initially hiring two physicians — attempting to recruit two physicians — for the purposes of supporting the work and the patients' care at that health clinic. I can also indicate that, as I said probably the other day, that clinic will also be supported by other health professionals, including nurse practitioners and others. So, there will be options for care.

Ultimately, it is built on the polyclinic model from *Putting People First*, which means there are intended to be patient-centred wraparound services, including, in future, we hope, social workers and others who will be able to provide services to Yukoners.

With respect to the chief nursing officer, in fact, it is in this year's budget for recruitment of that position. We will be

working with the nurses association and the department officials and other partners to determine the best role and fit roles and responsibilities for that particular position and look forward to recruiting that position in the near future.

Yes, there are additional funds in this year's budget for nurse practitioners — again, I will correct myself, if incorrect — my recollection is at least three. We look that they would be available to initially support the clinic roles, like the bilingual health centre and other clinics across the territory — health centres across the territory. We would be looking to fill those positions — recruit for those positions — and have those individuals working, as best we can, in the places where there is the most need initially.

Nurse practitioners are an amazing resource for Yukon medical care. They are an amazing resource for medical care across the country. They are sometimes the only medical service available in rural communities or remote communities in northern Canada. In northern Ontario, Québec, and other places, nurse practitioners have garnered much favour because of their scope of practice and their ability to provide service for patients and clients — to give care, often including diagnostic skills, some prescribing skills, and the ability to order tests.

Those kinds of services are especially valuable in small, rural, and remote places in Canada where there is no regular medical doctor. They, of course, support medical doctors if they are visiting or if there is virtual care, but I am very pleased about the item in this year's budget for the purposes of dealing with nurse practitioners and increasing our array of staff of nurse practitioners, because they are such a valuable resource.

It is our government's expectation that nurse practitioners would be a valuable resource in every health centre across the territory. I would look forward to hopefully getting to the point where that is, in fact, a service that is provided for Yukoners. It will roll into the concept of a polyclinic, as contemplated by *Putting People First*, because nurse practitioners will often be the front line of service. We expect that, through the evolution of the way in which medical care is provided in Canada and across the territory, it may be that the first person you might see, once an assessment is made with respect to your care, is a social worker. It could be that the first person you see is a lab technician of some kind. It might be that the first person you see is a nurse practitioner. It might be, ultimately, that your matter is assessed that it should go to a medical doctor, if there are limitations, but nurse practitioners are an extremely valuable resource.

We have money in this year's budget to hire more nurse practitioners, as I have indicated. My recollection is that it's initially three, but I will look for that number and provide it to the member opposite or to this Legislative Assembly, because I expect that I will be on my feet again with respect to answering questions regarding this main budget, and I am very pleased to do so.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn for the long weekend.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.*

### The following legislative return was tabled April 14, 2022:

35-1-41

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — additional COVID-19 staff (McLean)

### The following written questions were tabled April 14, 2022:

Written Question No. 16

Re: Mayo reservoir project (McLeod)

Written Question No. 17

Re: Carmacks arena (McLeod)

Written Question No. 18

Re: request for bids to supply and deliver calcium chloride (Hassard)



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 68

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, April 19, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, April 19, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

**Speaker:** We will now proceed with the Order Paper.  
 Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would ask the Legislative Assembly members to help me welcome a number of individuals who are here today for a tribute for World Heritage Day. First, I would like to welcome — here on behalf of the Yukon Heritage Resources Board and a well-known and respected veteran — Red Grossinger, who is with us today. As well, from the Yukon government Historic Sites, Stephan Biedermann, Shannon Van Bibber, Nansen Murray, Gisli Balzer, and Rebecca Jansen.

So, let's give them a hand and a welcome for being here today.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of World Heritage Day

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the International Day for Monuments and Sites, celebrated as World Heritage Day.

Heritage is the representation and interpretation of our past, a lens through which to view our present, and a legacy that we pass on to future generations.

The Yukon has a rich and multi-faceted heritage, visible through many sites, historic objects, and commemorative items that tell our story. The *SS Klondike*, the *Yukon Rose*, the *SS Keno* and the *MV Sibilla* are emblems of gold rush era transportation. The Whitehorse waterfront is home to the healing totem and two installations from the Aboriginal Women's Circle and one memorializing the students of the Indian Mission School and the drummer statue honouring missing and murdered indigenous women, girls, and two-spirited individuals. Just outside this House stands the restored peace totem. Also, Harrison Tanner's bronze busts of iconic Yukoners dot the streets of the capital.

There are 12 national historic sites, 11 Yukon historic sites, 22 municipal historic sites, 11 national and territorial parks, and a range of other protected areas of historical significance. With First Nations, we have co-managed historic sites like Conrad, Rampart House, and Fort Selkirk.

This year's World Heritage Day theme is "Heritage and Climate", raising awareness of the challenges presented by our warming climate as well as the potential for heritage conservation to strengthen sustainable development. The

threats to cultural heritage in the north due to climate change are unique and pressing. Innovation is required to mitigate these impacts and to understand and interpret the possible heritage opportunities that it can reveal.

One of Yukon's most relevant heritage projects being done in partnership with six Yukon First Nations is the Yukon ice patches where each summer's melt reveals remarkably preserved ancient hunting tools and other artifacts. The fragile and fascinating specimens being revealed here have been preserved in ice since the time of their use by indigenous hunters and represent some of the best examples in the world of the technology and ecosystems of their time period.

The iconic Herschel Island Territorial Park is another location being impacted by climate change at alarming rates, with a loss of sea ice, longer ice-free seasons, thawing permafrost, increased storm frequency and intensity, warmer summers, and shifting vegetation communities. Here at this site, efforts are underway to support the conservation of the historic buildings at Pauline Cove.

I want to recognize the expertise and dedication of those who preserve, interpret, and protect Yukon's heritage legacies. Through your aptitudes and wisdom, you are helping to identify the heritage challenges that we face and the value of meeting them. You are defining the path that we take to responsibility and guide the future of our cultural discovery and preservation.

Thank you.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Monday, April 18 as World Heritage Day. Also known as International Day for Monuments and Sites, April 18 observes the importance of our diverse cultural heritage around the world and of preserving it for future generations.

Across the Yukon, you will find 30 sites registered under the Yukon Register of Historic Places. These sites are in some way connected to historic events and people or have cultural or architectural significance to the Yukon. Many are now well-known landmarks within our communities. Here in Whitehorse, we have the all-familiar log skyscraper, either as a rental home at some point or just a cool piece of history.

We know the Old Fire Hall and the Old Log Church here in town, and most of us who have travelled the highway have visited Watson Lake Sign Post Forest or checked out the Caribou Hotel in Carcross. Ironically, today when I was coming back to session, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Nugget was talking about a famous patron of the Carcross Hotel, Polly.

These sites are important to our history, and each holds incredible value to the community where it is located and to the Yukon. A number of our incredible landmarks are also considered National Historic Sites in Canada. Among these: the *SS Klondike*, Dredge No. 4 in Dawson, and the Chilkoot Trail. On an even bigger heritage scale, Canada joined the World Heritage Convention in 1976. Since then, 20 of our country's heritage sites have met the criteria to be included in the UNESCO world heritage list.

Our lone Yukon contribution to this list is Kluane National Park, and it is part of the World Heritage Site of Kluane/Wrangell-St. Elias/Glacier Bay/Tatshenshini-Alsek, which spans 97,000 square kilometres between the Yukon, northern BC, and Alaska. I may be a little biased, but I am fortunate to call this area home and I do think that it is one of the most beautiful places in the world.

I would like to thank all those who work to preserve our history of our territory. Many organizations work in tandem to ensure that historical buildings are kept in good repair and that our parks and natural sites are kept pristine. They work to ensure that our heritage and our culture throughout the territory is preserved, documented, and passed along to showcase through further generations. I would encourage all Yukoners to get out there and see some of these sites.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to World Heritage Day. Today, we celebrate the world's cultural heritage. Culture is identity, a way of thinking about the world around us that influences our behaviour. We celebrate the ingenuity of humankind when we look toward our monuments and heritage sites, but we also acknowledge the vulnerability of these sites and the efforts that are required to protect, preserve, and learn from them, especially in a time of climate change.

These sites around the world tell amazing human stories of the relationship to the land and environment, of great feats of determination and engineering, and of the human propensity for good and for evil. We have an incredible story to tell here in the Yukon. Dawson City and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation have been working hard to get the Tr'ondëk-Klondike a world heritage designation. Tr'ondëk-Klondike is one of the most legendary places on Earth. For thousands of years, this land has been home to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. Tr'ondëk-Klondike is a significant site in Yukon's history, Canada's history, and the world's history. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was the site of the Klondike Gold Rush, an international event that changed the land and the peoples of the north forever. This is an extraordinary story of survival and adaptation in a challenging environment — dramatic change in accommodations between cultures that continues to this day.

World heritage means more than preserving historic sites. The world's languages are our heritage, and many indigenous languages are at risk of being lost forever — and, with that, a loss of a people's voice and way of being. The Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have been working hard to preserve their language and culture.

From a project that started as an idea in the 1970s and that has really picked up momentum since 2013, we are so excited that the nomination dossier was accepted by the World Heritage Centre in March 2021. We are hopeful that, in 2022, we will get affirmation that Tr'ondëk-Klondike will become a UNESCO World Heritage Site and the world will get to understand just how important the Tr'ondëk-Klondike site really is.

This site has much to teach the world, not only about the adaptation of the past, but about the adaptation required to now preserve these important places from the very real effects of climate change.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Today I have for tabling three documents. The first is a CBC article from June 13, 2016 entitled “Yukon hospital bed shortage prompts minister to call meeting”; from the *Whitehorse Star*, an article dated June 6, 2007 entitled “Hospital's operation crumbling: ex-chair”; and finally, a *Yukon News* article from June 10, 2016 entitled “Whitehorse General Hospital is in crisis”.

**Ms. White:** Today, I have two documents for tabling. One is a *Washington Post* article, entitled “To find out where the covid pandemic is headed, look here: The sewer”, and the second document is from the Government of Canada's science.gc.ca website, entitled “Harnessing the power of wastewater testing to detect COVID-19 outbreaks”.

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

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### North Klondike Highway construction project

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Over the past two years, the Department of Highways and Public Works has been hard at work reconstructing one of the busiest highways in the Yukon, the north Klondike Highway. This highway, one of the only roads connecting us to our most northern and remote communities, is a vital link for industry and a well-travelled route for Yukoners and tourists alike.

This multi-year construction project is significant. So far, we have reconstructed 29 kilometres of road, replaced, upgraded, and repaired a number of culverts, and cleared vegetation in the corridor. We have also installed digital message signs to help make drivers aware of construction zones ahead and have started work on the replacement of the Crooked Creek bridge.

We are proud to be making this highway safer for Yukoners and more efficient for businesses that rely on it to transport goods and services. Just last summer, our government, along with our federal counterparts, announced additional funding through the national trade corridors fund to upgrade this road even further. In fact, once all is said and done, a total of 209 kilometres between Carmacks and the Dempster Highway intersection will be completely reconstructed.

Included as part of that reconstruction is the rehabilitation of two bridges and the replacement of another. What's more,



once complete, this reconstruction will allow us to remove seasonal weight restrictions for heavy trucks between Carmacks and Stewart Crossing. This will tie into future work ultimately with the north Klondike and the Silver Trail.

The department is also planning to expand the use of technology in the corridor that collects data on traffic, road conditions, and weather, all of which help to improve safety for road users. Further to this, we are planning the development of electric vehicle charging stations along this corridor to support the growing use of electric vehicles.

These important upgrades will take place over the next several years and will ultimately increase safety, improve driving conditions, and better connect the Yukon's resources to markets. They will also increase the resiliency of the highway to the impacts of climate change in the face of changing weather patterns and thawing permafrost. But what is most important of all, these upgrades will support over 800 jobs and provide our government with the opportunity to strengthen our relationships and collaborative principles with Yukon First Nations through the use of the First Nation procurement policy.

This year, we will complete an additional 18 kilometres of road construction and complete the Crooked Creek bridge project. We will also begin and complete work on the Moose Creek and McCabe Creek bridges. In short, the work we are doing on this project is good for the Yukon's economy and it is good for Yukon's communities.

I look forward to continuing this good work.

**Mr. Hassard:** I would like to start off today by saying that today is April 19, and if you are a contractor in the Yukon, your calendar for the busy construction season should be filling up quickly. As we all know, the season is a short one north of 60. So, it is imperative that you make hay while the sun shines.

Now, to the project being discussed today, it should come as no shock to anyone that the north Klondike Highway is one of the major highways here in the Yukon. It funnels critical supplies to central Yukon communities; it provides an outlet for mining companies to get their equipment to job sites; and, with the spectacular scenery and historic areas such as Dawson and the Silver Trail, it is important to the tourism industry.

That is why it is puzzling that no contracts have been tendered for the north Klondike Highway reconstruction yet. It is funny that the Liberals would bring this forward today as their ministerial statement. Just last week when I asked about procurement, I wondered about contracting for a number of projects, including upgrades to the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River, as well as a couple of important mining roads — those, of course, being the Freegold Road and the Nahanni Range Road. In 2016, the Liberals promised to tender all seasonally dependent construction projects no later than March each year. This marks the sixth year of the Liberals breaking this promise.

When will these contracts get out the door, or are Yukoners missing out on more projects this year?

Now, for the Klondike Highway, \$42.9 million in capital estimates is being set aside for this year. So, how much of that is actually going toward the north Klondike Highway? How

much of this is going to complete projects from last year, and how much is for engineering and design?

As well, the contract for the right-of-way clearing from kilometre 388 to 532 was in the neighbourhood of \$4 million. We wondered why this tender was tendered as one large contract rather than parceled out so that smaller contractors would have an opportunity to bid on it. This contravenes what was one of the goals of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy.

We are also wondering about the status of the Shakwak funding agreement and when we can expect much-needed investments in the Alaska Highway from Haines Junction to Beaver Creek.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the announcement says that the upgrades will remove seasonal weight restrictions between Carmacks and Stewart Crossing, so our question is this: How does this assist moving equipment to mining districts north of Stewart Crossing or shipping of ore south? We look forward to the minister's response.

**Ms. Tredger:** We are glad to hear this project is moving forward. These upgrades are sorely needed. We do have a few questions for the minister.

I wonder about completion dates. According to the minister, the last two years have seen 29 kilometres of road upgraded, so what is the expected finish date for the next 209 kilometres of construction that is planned?

I also have some questions about road safety. In past years, we have heard concerns about safety of vehicles passing through the construction zones. We have also heard about — and I have had personal experience as well — concerns regarding the route through the construction zones being impassable for vehicles, impassable for motorcycles, damage to vehicles from rocks and mud, unclear routes after hours without pilot cars, vehicles getting stuck, and so on.

What role will Highways and Public Works play in making sure that, during the construction work, people can safely travel the highway?

We look forward to the replies from the minister.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** For anyone who has driven through the Yukon, our territory has some of the most beautiful and scenic highways anywhere in the world, and they are maintained throughout the seasons to ensure Yukon travellers can drive safely across the territory.

The Department of Highways and Public Works maintains close to 5,000 kilometres of Yukon roads from Watson Lake all the way to Eagle Plains and the Northwest Territories border.

As we approach the spring, we also find ourselves once again in pothole season. Over the next few months, our hard-working team at Highways and Public Works will be working to fix potholes on highways across the territory and will start to brush highways, fix signage, and repaint highway lines.

Since 2019, crews at Highways and Public Works have brushed over 1,800 kilometres along Yukon highways, installed over seven kilometres of new barriers, and painted over 2,600 kilometres of highway lanes. During the winter

months, regional highway crews work seven days a week to keep our roads clear of snow and ice and ensure that sections with the highest traffic volumes are cleared first.

I thank the highway crews who have cleared our highways this past winter and have made sure that Yukoners can safely drive to all communities in the territory. Our government is also working to modernize our roads in the territory. Over the last 12 months, we have installed seven new fast electric vehicle chargers in the communities of Carmacks, Teslin, Watson Lake, Pelly Crossing, Mayo, Stewart Crossing, and Dawson City. These seven new charging stations expanded Yukon's existing electric vehicle charging network to 12 fast chargers. Yukoners can now travel between Whitehorse and Dawson City in their electric vehicle with a quick stop to charge along the way.

In addition, over this next year, we will add an additional seven fast chargers to the communities of Beaver Creek, Burwash Landing, Mendenhall, Faro, Ross River, and two more in Whitehorse, bringing the total network of electric vehicle chargers in the Yukon to 19 by the end of 2022.

As well, this past fall, the Department of Highways and Public Works upgraded the 511 Yukon website and launched a new mobile app. The new app includes GPS route mapping, route planning, advanced monitoring or route conditions, and a hands-free drive mode that reads critical alerts to drivers. Users are also able to view roadside cameras to see first-hand what the road conditions are like in many areas of Yukon before heading to their destination.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again thank the crews at Highways and Public Works for all of the hard work that they continue to do to ensure that highways and roads remain safe for travellers in the territory.

I look forward to seeing progress happen on the north Klondike Highway this upcoming construction season as our highway systems continue to be modernized, improved, and expanded.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: French immersion programming and capital plan for schools

**Mr. Kent:** Mr. Speaker, on the Yukon government's procurement website, there is a notice of planned procurement for the expansion of Selkirk Elementary School. The description indicates that the project is to accommodate the expansion of the French immersion program.

Can the minister tell us what the plan is for expansion of French immersion at Selkirk Elementary School? And will the minister also confirm that Selkirk will continue as a dual-track school that offers both French immersion and English programs?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you very much for the question. I have had opportunity to meet with the Selkirk school community, as I have with communities across the territory. Certainly, I've had some really great discussions with the Selkirk school community regarding the French immersion

program at the school. This is a very popular program in the Yukon Territory.

We are working with both the Selkirk Elementary School and the Whitehorse west school community to continue to provide French immersion programming. I'm happy that we will be accommodating all of our folks who are requesting this type of programming this year. We'll continue to work with the Selkirk school community. They are very committed to the programming that they are providing to Yukon students and we're happy to work alongside them.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the question was about the expansion — the physical expansion and the program expansion at Selkirk as well as looking for a commitment that the school will remain a dual-track school.

So, over the years, immersion programming at Selkirk has been steadily expanding. There are now two full French immersion kindergarten classes. Likewise, the number of kindergarten French immersion classes at Whitehorse Elementary has also been expanding, and this year, there are four French immersion kindergarten classes at that school.

While this expansion has been welcomed by parents who want their students to access French immersion, there remain a number of questions about where all these students will go when they finish elementary school.

Can the Minister of Education explain the plan for the future of French immersion in the Yukon and does the minister anticipate further expansion to French immersion programming at high schools to accommodate the increasing numbers of immersion students graduating from our elementary schools?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the follow-up question.

Again, French immersion is a very important aspect of our programming that we provide to Yukon students and one that is growing in popularity. It's a popular program for sure. We know, of course, that there are growing pressures in terms of where students go from the elementary school level. We're working with the French first. We have a working group that's working right now on developing a longer term strategy on French first and French immersion and all aspects of the programming going forward.

This is work that we're very much committed to. I had long discussions with the school community in Selkirk, and with other schools, and I'm happy that this work is going forward and we'll continue to work with our partners as this work progresses.

**Mr. Kent:** One significant thing that the Department of Education is relying on going forward is that francophone secondary students will shift from F.H. Collins to the CSSC Mercier French language school; however, that school is already almost at full capacity with 113 of 150 available spots already occupied. That means that the options for secondary school French immersion students are getting more and more limited.

Does the minister believe there is adequate capacity in secondary schools for the number of French immersion students currently in the elementary system?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I thank you again for the question regarding French immersion. It's an important aspect of the programming that we provide to Yukon students. We continue to always monitor the enrolment and to work with our school communities and partners to plan for the long-term needs and delivery of French second language programs in Yukon schools and French first, for sure, and work with the francophone community in that regard.

We work with the French second language advisory committee right now to create a vision statement and plan for French immersion programming in Yukon schools. This is very important work that is happening right now. That is the commitment that I made with all of our schools that are providing these types of programs and that will continue to work alongside them to ensure that we're meeting the needs of our Yukon students and that they are able to access programming.

We know that this certainly is an area of expansion, and we're looking at all the options that are available to us as we work toward planning for school growth.

#### **Question re: Consultation re school replacement**

**Mr. Dixon:** The budget for this year contemplates a new school beginning construction in Whitehorse next year. When we asked in Committee of the Whole about what consultation the minister has done so far, she said — and I quote: “I certainly have had a number of discussions with school councils across the territory. Every single one has included a discussion around infrastructure and need.”

From that quote, it sounds like the minister thinks that consultation has already occurred with school councils, but that's not the impression that many school councils have.

So, will the minister commit to formally consulting with affected Whitehorse school councils and the First Nation School Board before a decision is made about which Whitehorse school will be replaced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the work that our government has done in terms of planning for new schools. We are, together with our partners and with Yukoners, really rewriting a new chapter on education in the Yukon and building for a brighter future for the territory. Our young people are very much part of the next seven generations to come. When we look at capital investments, I am proud that we are planning for and building — starting a new elementary school this year with Whistle Bend and have over \$25 million in the budget for the Whistle Bend school.

We are committed to building a replacement elementary school in the City of Whitehorse and we are continuing, of course, to have those discussions with our partners. Again, we have \$200,000 in our capital budget for the 2022-23 main estimates for preliminary construction and initial design of an existing aging Whitehorse replacement school.

I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

**Mr. Dixon:** We were looking for a commitment to consult with affected school councils. I didn't hear an answer, unfortunately.

When the Minister of Highways and Public Works was asked about this in March, he said — and I quote: “I am not going to be providing the big reveal” and that he would be leaving the decision to the Minister of Education. He went on to discuss the possibilities being Whitehorse Elementary, Selkirk, Takhini, and Wood Street. Now we have recently learned that Selkirk school will see a significant expansion to accommodate growth of the French immersion program, so that means we can likely rule out Selkirk. The Minister of Highways and Public Works also seemed to dismiss Wood Street school because it is already, in his words — quote: “... a purpose-built school.” So, that means that it is down to Whitehorse Elementary and Takhini.

Will the minister commit to meeting with the school councils of both WES and F.H. Collins and the First Nation School Board for a specific discussion about potential school replacements before the government makes what the Minister of Highways and Public Works called “the big reveal”?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I want to start by saying, and continue to say, that we are very proud to be investing in school infrastructure in our territory and to meet the growth needs that we have. Yukon government has a five-year capital plan that includes school replacements and renovation projects to ensure all buildings are safe and suitable for years to come. I have spoken a number of times this Sitting about the fact that we are building new schools and that we have money available to start the planning of the next Whitehorse elementary replacement school. Again, it is long overdue.

We are building the Whistle Bend elementary school, which is the first new elementary school to be built in Whitehorse in a few decades, so I'm really happy that the Yukon Party is now interested in school infrastructure. It has certainly been a priority for our government. I have met with school councils across the territory. I have met with school councils within the City of Whitehorse. I am committed to continuing to do that and have those discussions with them as we plan.

**Mr. Dixon:** It is disappointing to hear the minister dodge the question and dodge the commitment to actually consult these school councils before a decision is made. We know that there is money budgeted for a new school beginning the next construction year. We know from comments from the Minister of Highways and Public Works that there is a short list; however, so far, the Liberal government has been unwilling to share much more than that. Earlier this month, the Minister of Education revealed to the Legislature that the decision was currently before Cabinet. That was on April 7 — over two weeks ago.

Can the minister tell us when she will be announcing which elementary school in Whitehorse will be replaced?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, thank you for the follow-up question. I am happy to stand every single day, if I need to, to talk about the great work that our government is doing in terms of investing in school infrastructure. This is not something that we saw from the Yukon Party government when they were in power. I know that they don't like us to refer back to the history here, but I think it's important for Yukoners to be fully aware

of the — I don't know what it was back in their time — but not very interested in building infrastructure for the growth of our schools. We are, and I know that the member opposite would like me to make an announcement here on the floor of the Legislature; I am not prepared to do that. I have made a commitment to our school community to work with them, to work with our partners, and to do things in a proper and right way with those folks.

That's a commitment I've made and I'll stand by that. The member opposite can continue to try to put words in my mouth, and I don't accept that, and I don't think Yukoners do, either.

**Question re: Waste-water testing for COVID-19**

**Ms. White:** Last week, Dr. Theresa Tam, the chief public health officer of Canada, declared that Canada is in its sixth wave of COVID-19. Yukoners have been through wave after wave of COVID and look to this government for long-term solutions to manage this pandemic. One of these long-term solutions could be waste-water testing. It allows communities to monitor for the presence of COVID-19 in their waste water before people develop symptoms and to assess the level of community spread. Public officials and communities can then make informed decisions in the absence of mass testing and reporting.

The minister has said before that this is not what their science recommends. The Yukon is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada not currently using waste-water testing.

Can the government tell Yukoners what science they follow that differs from the rest of the country?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I think the acting chief medical officer of health was very succinct in answering this question when it was posed at the most recent press conference. We have a number of tools in the toolkit, as far as making sure that we in Yukon can trace whatever strain comes our way, and we've been very successful in doing so.

They also talked about the data that's collected through waste-water treatment being a tool but not necessarily the tool that they're recommending at this time. Now, that may change. Based upon what Dr. Theresa Tam is saying, we will obviously still take our recommendations and take our direction therein for our policies from our chief medical officer of health.

I guess the question for the NDP is: Do they agree with our current chief medical officer or acting chief medical officer of health and our local professionals? The Yukon Party can scoff at that. We know that they obviously don't support and have been very critical of our own officials in the past, but we will continue, on this side of the House, to listen to the advice of locals — of Yukoners — who are paying attention to all of the information, whether it's coming from the CDC or other organizations as well.

**Ms. White:** I think the concern is that every other jurisdiction in Canada, except us and one other, uses more tools in their toolbox than we do here, and that's the problem. So, the Public Health Agency of Canada said — and I quote: "The most advantageous application of wastewater surveillance is in smaller communities ... There is a clear public health benefit

when it is utilized in northern, remote and isolated communities."

Our entire territory fits this description. The Yukon has faced outbreaks in long-term care facilities, at the Whitehorse General Hospital, and in many rural communities, but it's hard to know what's happening now with so little testing. Some Yukon communities are trying to implement waste-water testing for COVID-19 on their own.

If this government won't test waste water, will the government at least commit to supporting Yukon communities in testing their own waste water and then making that data publicly available?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I was just listening to Dr. Kancir on the media before coming down here today. I think one of the most important messages that Yukoners can take in is that COVID is ever-changing. Our health advice has been ever-changing. If anyone on the other side of this Legislative Assembly thinks that, for the last two years, we got one or two pieces of advice and we carried on with that, they simply just don't know what has been going on.

There have often been weekly pieces of advice coming from medical scientists, from medical experts, with respect to COVID. We have taken a measured response throughout this process. We have been guided by and followed science. For two years, we have avoided the most severe health and economic impacts of COVID-19, and we will continue to adapt.

We must be able to respond quickly. We must have health professionals who can respond quickly. We must have Yukoners who unfortunately in many aspects of their lives, live with uncertainty. Our strong leadership has guided us through the pandemic and kept our economy going. I look forward to speaking more about testing and COVID.

**Ms. White:** The minister's right; COVID is ever-changing, and that is exactly why every other jurisdiction in Canada, except for us and one other, is testing waste water.

Many Yukoners are concerned about how to live in this new COVID reality and what this government is doing — or rather not doing — to keep them safe from it.

With no mass PCR testing, no data collection for rapid at-home tests, no more mask and vaccine mandates, it seems that this government is just giving up managing the pandemic altogether. Waste-water testing could make a huge difference. This could even be done to monitor specific congregate living facilities, like long-term care, corrections, or even hospitals.

Can the minister explain why the Yukon is at odds with what is recommended in the rest of Canada and northern communities when it comes to testing waste water for COVID-19?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Waste-water testing, like a lot of testing, has evolved over time with respect to dealing with COVID-19 and continues to be developed. It may become a useful surveillance tool here in the territory in future.

The Government of Yukon is working with our partners, including the Public Health Agency of Canada, our First Nation and municipal governments, and our acting chief medical officer of health to determine next steps in the consideration of waste-water testing and a program here in the territory. The

process does not provide specific details about where there is COVID-19 or how COVID-19 is spreading or who may have been exposed. As such, waste-water testing has the potential to be a surveillance tool that can be used for early detection of cases at a population level but not necessarily providing the information, as noted by the question.

We recognize that waste-water testing is being used in other jurisdictions. We will continue to explore how it may be a useful tool here in the territory to respond to COVID-19.

**Question re: Macaulay Lodge site development**

**Ms. Clarke:** On March 16, we asked the government about their plans to develop the Macaulay Lodge site; specifically, I asked about the greenbelt lot adjacent to the building and whether the government had plans for it. In response, the minister said, “Again, there are no plans for that greenspace area...” However, the government documents on Bids and Tenders directly states that the property proposed for development encompasses a portion of the greenbelt.

Can the minister clarify if he was right, or are the tendering documents right?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The demolition of Macaulay Lodge is a fantastic opportunity to provide both Riverdale and Whitehorse with hopefully a medium-to-dense — it will repurpose Macaulay Lodge as housing for both mixed use, with either mixed density or high density.

The contract for demolition of the building has been awarded, as indicated previously. It is a great example of Yukon First Nation businesses using the tools and the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. The successful candidate included bid value reductions for being a Yukon First Nation business and hiring First Nation labour as well.

My recollection is that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation provided a statement on Macaulay Lodge two or three weeks ago, and he indicated at that time that there was an expression of interest that was provided and that all manner of options were open, but where we’re going is for mixed or high-density housing, which will provide both Riverdale and Whitehorse at least a partial answer for the housing crisis and provide for affordable housing.

I look forward to working with the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation on this valuable project.

**Ms. Clarke:** To quote from the government’s request for expression of interest documents, which detail the area being proposed for development, “The property encompasses 5 lots ... plus a portion of the greenbelt...”

On March 16, the minister said — and I quote: “... there are no plans for that greenspace area...” Both statements cannot be correct, so can the minister tell us how large a portion of the greenbelt will be open for development?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First, I think it’s important to talk about the order of operations for what’s happening here. Number one is that we’re in the middle of doing a demo on the property. There is a number of the infrastructure that is in place that has to be removed. Secondly, as I’ve said publicly, there was some concern of a potential historic hydrocarbon spill, and we’re

looking into that to make sure. From there, we’re moving toward looking at different design principles.

I stand behind what I said. We are going to look at different options. We haven’t even had a chance to look at those options yet. In many developments, what ends up happening in the City of Whitehorse is that developers have an obligation for a public land use dedication, a PLUD. I have talked to my colleagues who speak with their constituents, and people in that area feel very strongly about that greenbelt area. We believe that the current footprint of the building — and maybe in some of those other areas — not greenbelt — could be extended, but again, these are early stages.

I think members opposite are trying to pick away at something where really there’s nothing to pick away at. We’re just looking to be able to look at multiple options for high density. We have obligations to the community on consultation. We have to work with the City of Whitehorse, and those are all the things that we’re committed to doing and we will do.

**Question re: Fuel-wood supply**

**Mr. Istchenko:** Last week, we asked the minister about the fuel wood shortage in the Yukon. We know that several dozen loads are stranded in the Quill Creek area because the minister said that April 1 to September 30 is fire season. When we shared this with several industry representatives, it was pointed out to us that we are the only jurisdiction in the country that completely shuts down logging during the fire season, regardless of the wildfire risk.

So, will the minister work with the harvesters in southwest Yukon so that they can haul out the wood that is currently on the ground and ready for transport?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We will always work with local harvesters. I hope that this has been clear — that we appreciated it when they came to talk to us about concerns that they had. We hustled and we worked with YESAB to try to get the Quill Creek project through in the Haines Junction area. We were successful there. We got it permitted. I thank the wood producers in the area for the work that they have done over this past winter to develop the fuel wood there. I am happy to work with them and am continuing to do so, but I will also ask for the advice from the wildfire professionals, and I hope we all do.

What I said last week, and I will stand by it again, is that I hope that it is not a political conversation about what the fire risk is. I hope that we can talk to our wildfire professionals and have them tell us when the appropriate time is or is not, but at all times, we are willing and able to work with the Wood Products Association.

What I can say, since the question came last week, is that I did talk to the department. I asked them to please make sure to be working with the harvesters there and across the territory, and we’ll continue to do so.

**Question re: Opioid crisis**

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, in January this year, the Yukon government declared a substance use emergency in response to the dramatic increase in overdose-related deaths in the Yukon. Since then, the government has focused the vast

majority of its efforts on harm reduction. While we support effective harm-reduction measures, there needs to be an increased focus on prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

When the government announced the declaration of a substance use health emergency in January, they committed to increasing on-the-land treatment options. Since then, how many new on-the-land treatment spaces have been created?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am very pleased to stand in this House and speak about the declaration of a substance use health emergency here in the territory. It is absolutely critical. It is a call to action for all governments in the territory and for all Yukoners, in fact. I think that this is the first time that I have had the opportunity to rise to speak about the substance use health emergency, and I am very pleased to do so.

What I can indicate is that, despite some of the preamble of the question and the emphasis on enforcement, this is a health issue. This is a health problem.

The declaration of the substance use health emergency in fact, in part, was to redefine this as a health issue. We must work together. We are taking action. We have dedicated budget resources to the substance use health emergency. It, at its core, is a health problem. Our government is taking the most progressive steps toward substance use harm reduction in the history of the Yukon Territory.

Building on our 2018 opioid action plan, we have opened the first supervised consumption site here in the north to increase safety for those who use substances. We have improved access to social, medical, and mental wellness. I look forward to speaking more about the actions taken.

**Mr. Cathers:** I asked the minister a very specific question about addiction treatment spaces and she did not answer the question.

In addition to increasing treatment options and providing increased focused on prevention, government also needs to provide the resources necessary to the RCMP to ensure that they can target illegal drug dealers. While law enforcement alone will not solve this crisis, charging the drug dealers responsible for the sale of these toxic drugs needs to be a priority.

Why hasn't the government provided additional resources to the RCMP to ensure that those profiting from the sale and proliferation of these illegal drugs are held accountable?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Over \$5.5 million is in this year's budget to support the government's immediate response to the substance use health emergency. This includes more than \$1.1 million to enhance the supervised consumption site to increase access and support for people who are in need. More than \$850,000 will allow the safer supply program to be expanded to rural communities and to increase availability here in Whitehorse. Nearly \$1.8 million will support additional mental health and social services throughout the territory and is part of the increased funding for policing services this year. Almost \$300,000 will bolster the RCMP's response to the toxic supply of illegal drugs here in the territory.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister again tries to paint a rosy picture, but the facts show otherwise. Addictions services are not meeting the needs of some

Yukoners. Prevention is an afterthought for this government. When it comes to enforcement, the RCMP's most recent year in review shows that their funding over the past four years has not increased enough to meet demand on services.

A few examples from the RCMP report show that sexual assault is up 31 percent, robbery is up 25 percent, and trafficking offences are up by 90 percent. Their operational funding, on the other hand, has barely increased under this Liberal government.

Will the minister agree to increase funding to the RCMP to help them target the drug dealers who are selling these illegal and toxic drugs, charge them, prosecute them, and put them behind bars?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** This is, of course, a completely different question, but I am very pleased to be able to address it just the same.

Our government knows that many Yukoners are struggling with mental health and substance use issues. By coming together as a territory, we are working together to find solutions that will help ensure that every Yukoner has access to the supports they need and where they need them.

Once again, the members opposite have proven completely unreliable with respect to the facts regarding the RCMP. I would like to take the opportunity to draw attention to the fact that the RCMP have been working extremely hard. There have been their own public statements with respect to intercepting drugs here in the territory, intercepting weapons here in the territory, and, most recently, completing the investigations with respect to that in order to keep Yukoners safe.

In addition to that, we have been working closely with our First Nation partners with respect to their programs to address the substance use health emergency in their own communities. I am happy to mention the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and the programs that they have advertised, developed, and initiated to help their own citizens with respect to dealing with the issues of substance use. It is critical in the territory that we come together to deal with this and help Yukoners where they are.

**Speaker:** The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

## OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Mr. Kent:** In order to continue debate on other business, including the 2022-23 budget, the Official Opposition will not identify any business for Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

**Ms. Tredger:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the item standing in the name of the Third Party to be called on Wednesday, April 20, 2022.

It is Bill No. 304, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole, as the Chair would like to take part in the debate on Yukon Housing Corporation.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

### Yukon Housing Corporation

**Acting Chair (Ms. White):** Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I rise today to present the 2022-23 capital and operation and maintenance budgets for the corporation. Before I begin my address, I would like to introduce the officials who will assist me today: Mary Cameron, president of the Yukon Housing Corporation, and Marcel Holder Robinson, director of Finance and Risk Management at the Yukon Housing Corporation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to again share my appreciation and thank both the staff and the board at the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work over the past year and

for their dedication and passion to supporting more affordable housing options available to Yukoners along the housing continuum.

The corporation has been successfully working toward their five-year strategic plan vision to deliver housing solutions that contribute to healthy, sustainable, and inclusive communities. In the year ahead, the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors will begin work to develop the next five-year strategic plan in line with changing housing needs.

The government understands that to have healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities, Yukoners' need to have homes that fit their needs and that they can afford. The Yukon has faced many challenges and experienced a number of losses through this pandemic.

The current housing market brings an opportunity for an innovative and flexible approach to address those challenges. This focus has been a mainstay of the corporation's response to how they tackle housing solutions during the global pandemic.

We have seen unprecedented pressures in the housing market. Specific challenges include: increases in living costs and construction; disruptions in supply chains; and a shortage of labour. Also, our territory is battling a substance use health emergency during a pandemic, both of which placed additional pressures on the local social support and housing network.

As a community, we grieve our losses while continuing to do what we can to support those in need. People need a safe and affordable place to call home now more than ever. As spring returns to the territory and we learn to adapt to living with COVID, I encourage Yukoners to reflect on our collective strength and resiliency. Think about your individual abilities to encourage and support your neighbours and community.

Although, over the last five years, our investments in housing programs and commitments to housing have helped to fund the development or upgrading of over 600 homes, this year I am pleased to bring forward the largest housing capital budget in the last 10 years. We are dedicated to supporting Yukon families in their efforts to gain and maintain affordable and adequate places to live. We are guided by the three goals of the Yukon Housing Corporation's strategic plan: We are a trusted housing partner; we are renewing and rebalancing community housing; and we are strengthening our corporate stewardship.

In addition to the corporation's strategic plan, we are working on delivering on the goals and objectives of: the housing action plan for Yukon; the Safe at Home plan to end and prevent homelessness; the aging-in-place action plan; the recommendations from *Putting People First*; as well as *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy*. All the while, we are also focusing on key components in the *Our Clean Future* climate change strategy. These plans have many interwoven goals and priorities; however, at the centre are citizens and their well-being.

I would like to bring our attention to the Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing program, where the objective is to better support housing affordability and

availability across the Yukon and to more closely address the housing needs and successes of our vulnerable Yukoners. The community housing program is guided by four foundational goals: focusing on meeting housing needs and successful outcomes for our clients; balancing our client focus with fiscal resilience and responsibility; rethinking government's roles and responsibilities within Yukon's housing system; and, where practical, focusing Yukon Housing Corporation's programs on building healthy housing markets so that Yukon communities remain healthy, vibrant, and sustainable.

The implementation of the community housing program is working toward achieving the objectives in our various action plans. Examples include: working toward goals in the Safe at Home plan and *Putting People First* to secure housing through the coordinated access approach for those who have experienced homelessness or have other vulnerabilities; implementing actions within the housing action plan by rebalancing the role in communities to provide affordable rental housing and ownership options through the private market incentives for loans, like our rural home ownership program, directly to Yukoners; as well as providing rent subsidy programs like the Canada-Yukon housing benefit rental housing subsidy; and supporting the goals of the *Aging in Place Action Plan* by recognizing that the needs of our seniors in our housing are unique and focusing on client experience. We provide barrier-free units in our seniors community housing buildings and an accessibility grant for those wanting to age in place at home.

This budget shows renewed effort to support our community housing program in addition to our continued support of several housing development initiatives. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit, launched in November 2020, continues to directly support tenants living in the private rental market to help with housing affordability. We are proud to report an increased budget to \$1,005,000 to continue supporting over 200 Yukon households that have already joined the program since its start and to help them afford rent.

We anticipate the 47-unit community housing building at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street in Whitehorse will be now completed this summer. Providing more affordable housing in Whitehorse, this new build will be the first building to be allocated using our new mixed-income model. The mixed-use and mixed-income model approach adopted in much of Canada and the United States will enable social diversity and support better social outcomes through the intentional integration of Yukoners with different income levels, including vulnerable Yukoners who require supports.

As a highlight, the Yukon Housing Corporation's triplexes in Mayo, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse under the federal rapid housing initiative round one are nearing completion and will be ready for tenants later this spring.

These three projects will contribute nine units toward supporting affordable and accessible community housing options for vulnerable Yukoners, including a barrier-free unit in each triplex, with a focus on supporting First Nation women and children fleeing violence.

As we move forward with plans for new buildings in Yukon communities, we will work to ensure the mixed-income and mixed-use model works for their unique needs, while striving for our community housing program goals of fiscal sustainability, social diversity, and better social outcomes for Yukoners.

The Government of Yukon's 2022-23 five-year capital plan prioritizes the interests and needs of Yukoners. This year, we are excited to start and nurture new initiatives that will help Yukoners find the housing support they need while helping achieve the goals of our strategic plan, the housing action plan, and the foundational goals of our community housing program.

New capital developments in the planning and/or design phase this fiscal year include the design of a new supportive community housing project in Watson Lake, which will be operated on Housing First principles. This project is based on findings of the recent housing needs assessment, which identified a significant need for supportive housing. We will continue to work with the community for input on the project and have budgeted \$4.5 million for its construction.

There has been \$1.45 million allocated for planning and design work to support community housing needs in the communities of Teslin, Carcross, and Dawson. Finally, we allocated \$900,000 for the construction of a duplex in Dawson.

At the fall 2021 Yukon housing summit, we learned that a number of Whitehorse families were living in unsafe and precarious housing. The corporation quickly stepped in with support from the Safe at Home Society and NGO partners, through the coordinated access team, to identify housing that could be made available to meet these emerging and urgent needs.

As a result, 16 Yukon Housing Corporation units in Whitehorse were identified for immediate allocation by expediting health and safety repairs. Through working with community partners and using the by-name list, this ensured housing was available to families in need as quickly as possible. In continuation of these efforts, we allocated \$450,000 for temporary emergency housing to help support immediate housing pressures for emergency housing situations. We have taken what we have learned this last year and moved this allocation from what was previously budgeted under the deployable mobile homes program to now be ready for use for temporary emergency housing.

We are happy to have joined the Government of Canada and the City of Whitehorse in the announced funding support for the Safe at Home Society's supportive housing project this year. The Safe at Home Society was successful in receiving funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for a supportive housing project for vulnerable Yukoners, including \$10 million through the northern carve-out of the national housing co-investment fund and \$5 million under the City of Whitehorse rapid housing initiatives project stream. The Yukon Housing Corporation is further supporting this project through \$1 million in additional funding under the housing initiatives fund.

This project will provide 55 units of permanent supportive housing for vulnerable Yukoners, including units for women,



youth, and indigenous Yukoners, helping to alleviate existing housing and homelessness challenges in our territory. I think we can all agree this is indeed a first for the Yukon and a very creative and innovative approach.

While we're excited by the new initiatives coming this spring, we have not forgotten about our previous commitments. We will ensure that our existing housing stock is safe and accessible to Yukoners. We know it is important to build new housing, but as part of our government's commitment to a sustainable future, it is also important to invest in repairs and upgrades. Each year, we renovate and retrofit a number of homes in our existing housing stock to make sure they continue to be safe, adequate, and affordable homes for Yukoners.

We have budgeted \$3.8 million to support the renovation and rehabilitation of existing stocks. To ensure that our current stock supports Yukoners' needs, we have also allocated \$3 million to replace units that are too old to be economically repaired. However, it's important to note that we are not only working on our own units. \$1.6 million has been allocated under our First Nation energy-efficiency program, partially funded through the Government of Canada's low carbon economy fund, to support energy-efficiency retrofits in First Nation housing around the territory. This is an increase of \$419,000 over previous years, based on federal funding recovery. In addition, \$2.1 million has been allocated under the low carbon economy fund to help ensure that Yukon residents living in Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing stock continue to live in energy-efficient housing.

Our loans and grants programs will continue to bridge the gaps in Yukoners' housing needs, supporting them to buy, build, or fix their homes. In particular, the \$3.2 million for the rural home ownership program continues to help Yukoners buy or build homes in Yukon communities outside Whitehorse, where it can be difficult to secure financing from traditional lenders.

The home repair program — with three streams for accessibility, emergency repair, and home repair loans — has a budget of \$1.65 million: \$350,000 for the emergency repair grant, \$600,000 for the accessibility grant, and \$700,000 for the home repair loan and home repair subsidy.

The home repair program is available to all eligible Yukoners. I would like to bring everyone's attention to the fact that this program can also be used by seniors to make their homes more accessible as they age in place in their home.

We recognize that there is a higher demand to build housing. As such, I am happy to announce a budget increase of \$6.5 million for the developer-build loan for a total of \$8 million in 2022-23 to assist developers in increasing housing options for Yukoners.

In addition to direct provision of housing, the Yukon Housing Corporation also cultivates partnerships with the private sector to grow the number of housing options in Yukon communities. We have successfully completed five intakes of our housing initiatives fund, a community partnership program that supports increased affordable housing options to Yukoners across the housing continuum. To date, existing commitments from previous intakes will bring online approximately 470

housing units in our different communities. If we are to address Yukon's unique housing needs, it is crucial that our work is in partnership with First Nations, First Nation development corporations, non-profit organizations, and the private sector.

I am happy to report that we have budgeted an additional \$2.1 million for the housing initiatives fund this year, increasing our total annual budget to \$5.7 million to address the growing demand for affordable and high-density housing solutions.

Another partnership that we are pleased to continue is the municipal matching rental construction program grant, which will increase rental housing in the territory and provides more rental options for all Yukoners by supporting private developers in communities that offer a municipal incentive program. The budget for this program has been increased by \$2 million this year, for a total of \$3.5 million.

We started the year in 2022 on a grave note, as we declared a substance use health emergency. As a community, we grieve our losses while we try to continue to do what we can to support those in need. The COVID-19 Omicron has made it harder for us to meet in person, but the restrictions put in place enable us to move ahead of the curve. We must continue to be vigilant and act responsibly while we deliver housing solutions that contribute to Yukoners' well-being within sustainable and inclusive communities.

The Yukon is in a peculiar predicament. We are experiencing a housing boom and a housing crisis in parallel. We are excited by the number of residential housing permits, which reached an all-time high of 590 permits in 2021, while noting, on the flip side, that the average sale price of a house in Whitehorse also hit a record high, going over \$650,000. Simultaneously, Yukon's population has increased 12.1 percent to more than 40,000 since 2016. Although this population growth is exciting in one way for our economy, it is also directly contributing to the housing demand — as is the increase in our very own aging population, who are choosing to stay in the Yukon for their senior years.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, Community Services, and Yukon Housing Corporation are leading a joint effort on this front by working with stakeholders across the territory to increase lot availability, address homelessness, and support renters, landlords, and homeowners to ensure that more housing is available to Yukoners of all means.

We are excited to see what can be imagined by the housing developers as they apply on the expression of interest released for the development of Macaulay Lodge, which we spoke about earlier in Question Period today. As well, we are proud to work and partner with the Northern Community Land Trust society as they also move forward with a first-of-its-kind project in affordable housing — truly, for the Yukon, on the forefront of creative and innovative solutions to housing. This budget supports our commitment to a solution-focused trusted housing partner. It supports our work toward delivering on our new opportunities, which will lead to housing solutions that contribute to healthy, sustainable, inclusive communities to maximize benefits for Yukoners. This is evident in the work

that we do with our community partners in the implementation of the housing action plan for Yukon and the Safe at Home action plan to end and prevent homelessness.

The corporation's staff are passionate about working on housing solutions across the territory, and we continue to strengthen our corporate stewardship as we deliver on our client services and programs. We are proud of our employees and the work that they do for Yukoners. They take pride in working to find solutions to affordable housing as the Yukon population and economy continue to grow. With our partners, we will work to make sure that we provide the housing solutions that Yukoners need. We know that we are stronger together and that we can build healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities in the Yukon.

Again, I will just touch on a few other points and then we can move into some questions. I will again now provide just a bit of a detailed breakdown of the Housing Corporation's expenditures and recoveries to highlight the ways that we're helping Yukoners.

For the 2022-23 budget, \$20.2 million has been allocated in operation and maintenance expenditures to provide housing services to Yukon residents, and \$46.8 million has been allocated for capital expenditures to assist Yukoners in meeting their housing needs. Total revenue and operation and maintenance recoveries are estimated to be \$12.6 million. That's including recoveries from the federal government. We estimate that the total capital recoveries will be about \$12.4 million, including recoveries from the Government of Canada, while recoveries from loan programs are estimated to just be under that at around \$11.8 million.

I will just stop there and then we can get into further detail as the questions begin.

**Ms. Clarke:** I would like to thank the officials for being here with us today. There is an increase of \$6.5 million to the funding allocation for developer loans — from \$1.5 million to \$8 million. I understand that this amount was increased in anticipation of a number of projects. Can the minister please confirm how many projects are anticipated?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's hard to determine that number right now as it is a loan intake program, so we have had some discussions with interested parties, but, again, like any of these programs, it is hard to give a definite number until we start to see the applications begin to come in over the year.

**Ms. Clarke:** What are the conditions of this loan to be met by developers during the development phase?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Something at that level of detail within the scope and terms of the program — we certainly have no problem with bringing that back. I can provide it to the member opposite and give some detail on what that application looks like and the expectations that we have for folks who access that program.

**Ms. Clarke:** Are there specific conditions that must be met after development for a project to qualify — for instance, that they address affordable housing demand?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** As noted a second ago, getting into that level of detail — we certainly can come back and provide the applications, terms of reference, and scope for the program. The

member opposite can then review it and see the detail of what our expectations are.

**Ms. Clarke:** What is the maximum loan available?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's the same answer.

**Ms. Clarke:** Programs like the developer loan, the rapid housing initiative, and the housing initiatives fund have different affordability clauses. They require units to be available at an affordable market rate or to specific populations for a longer term. What mechanism is in place for monitoring to ensure that the terms of housing are complied with?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think there are two things that we have to consider because the member has just touched on a number of different programs. One would be if we are using third-party funding. If we are reaching out to the federal government in some cases — in the opening statement that I made — I would talk about very specific things. I talked about the triplexes. It might be specific for women or families fleeing violence. It could be about accessibility, so it's always tied to the federal terms if we are using third-party funding. That would be one thing that would then help us to define. Then, of course, we create programs on our own. In those particular programs, we might be trying to meet a certain goal. As the member opposite said, it could be affordability, or it might be a scenario where we are doing a matching grant because the municipality has an offset for affordable housing.

There is a plethora of different things that we look at doing, and then we have a TPA agreement. We would do a funding agreement with the individual. That could be an NGO, a First Nation government corporation, or even a private developer. In those cases, we would identify our expectations that we would then take into consideration. Of course, there have been many projects executed in the Yukon, in Whitehorse, and in our communities.

There's a commitment — essentially a binding agreement — between us and said party/client in order to ensure that the outcomes are met and that the outcomes are upheld.

I will just check with my officials to see if there is anything else they would like to share.

Again, under our transfer payment agreement terms and our loan agreement terms — of course, this is very similar to how government disburses funds for many different projects. We outline that. In many cases, we have to go back and have those agreements or frameworks and templates identified and supported through Justice, and then we have people sign off on them.

That's how we ensure — and I hope that I have given an example of, in some ways, how we have to look at the scope of program and how a third party, in some cases, defines how we build out — unless it has been something unique that we have built in-house and was supported by our board of directors.

**Ms. Clarke:** Are there controls in place to ensure the property does not move to above market rent amounts? Are there controls in place if the building is sold?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, back to that, these are binding agreements. Within that work, we do have the opportunity to audit and we can audit. There is a legal declaration that has to be made by said client.

**Ms. Clarke:** Did you say that a TPA is a binding agreement?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, I said that we identify, in our transfer payment agreements — which was the first piece — I talked about what our expectations are and our scope. I talked about the fact that we have a declaration that is signed off, and I spoke about the fact that the TPA is an agreement between us and the client who receives the money. So, I sense that there is some level that is there that binds. I will leave the rest to the Justice department. I mean, if you want me to disseminate what the legal liabilities are for somebody who does not follow through on a TPA after signature, I could follow up on that, but I will probably go to the Justice department and request a memo on that through the Housing Corporation and bring it back, if that is something that you are very interested in.

### Acting Chair's statement

**Acting Chair:** I will just remind all members that remarks are to be referred through the Chair.

**Ms. Clarke:** Thank you, minister, for that answer, and yes, I would appreciate that, please.

The government has taken away the down payment assistance program, which provided Yukoners access to a down payment loan for a home provided that they had financing from a financial institution. This was well-subscribed to, and it allowed help to those who had trouble coming up with a down payment. Has the minister considered reinstating this program to allow more Yukoners to gain entry into the housing market? Has the minister considered creating a similar program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes.

**Ms. Clarke:** What would be that program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I'm still considering.

**Ms. Clarke:** The government has changed the home ownership program to only be available to rural Yukoners. The first-time homebuyer program, which was once accessible to all Yukoners, has been changed to the rural home ownership program. This is of no benefit to individuals who are having trouble accessing the market in Whitehorse.

So, my first question is: Why did the government change this program to be available only to rural Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We did it because the terms of reference at the time were very consistent with the thresholds that were required for traditional lenders. There seemed to be a duplication in the fact that, if you could meet the terms that we had, you would also be able to meet the terms of the traditional lender, i.e., one of our major banking institutions.

Not quite the case in rural Yukon. In rural Yukon, what we've heard from municipal leaders specifically is that it's very difficult to be able to leverage the same way from an institution, partially because it's hard to get comparables to other — when people are looking to build new. So, what we've done is we have worked very closely — taking advice from municipal leaders, primarily — to look at increasing our ceiling on what can be leveraged from us in the rural home ownership.

But, just like the previous line of questioning concerning the down payment program, we're still looking at this. I have

talked to the president about it in our bilateral meetings, and we still want to make sure in every case that, if we have to look at a different model for more of an urban program that used to be in place but especially now, when we're seeing an increase in interest rates and likely more difficult for folks in the future — likely, I say — to be able to meet the requirements of traditional lenders, is there a role in an urban environment for the Yukon Housing Corporation? Those are all things that we're contemplating.

I think we're doing a good job with our rural program. We have been very agile in ensuring that it works for folks. I think we've talked before about the number of clients that we have seen.

I think we always have to be monitoring to monitor and adapt, the same way that we have done with the economic development programs, and that's what we're continuing to listen to folks who are here. There have been questions by the Third Party, and those have been focused on people who have reached out to them. We're listening respectfully to those comments.

With the housing market moving the way it is, it is very important for us to not get stuck in one particular way of doing something but to ensure that we are cognizant of the fact that this is an ever-changing landscape.

**Ms. Clarke:** Has the minister considered reinstating this program to help all Yukoners to gain entry into the housing market in the face of this housing crisis?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, I think that is what I just touched on. I said that we are constantly monitoring and seeing if this is a potential. I think that the word "all" has significant implications, so breaking that question into parts, are we looking at making sure that, if there is a gap, yes. Would I support the question with the term "all"? That would be difficult. That is why we are looking at different types of options within the continuum. Some people will look to purchase single detached, some people will look to purchase condominiums, some people will look to rent, and some folks will hopefully look at some of our new innovative programs. Some folks will look at affordable housing and some folks will be working with us on social housing. Certainly, there is a really broad range, but we are looking at every specific area at all times, trying our best to monitor with big growth.

Again, as I stated in the previous answer, yes, we are looking to see if it is needed in an urban environment, because we believe that the rural focus on that program is still doing a good job.

**Ms. Clarke:** How many applications has the government received for the rural home ownership program each year since it began? Also, are all applications approved?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Sorry, can I just get clarification? How many years back was the request for applications?

**Ms. Clarke:** I will repeat the question: How many applications has the government received for the rural home ownership program each year since it began? Are all applications approved?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** So, the number of clients and applications that we've received and that have been approved

is 18 — six in Haines Junction; one in Watson Lake; six in Dawson; one in Teslin; rural Yukon, not in a municipality, two; and one in Carcross. There have been seven builds, 11 purchases, with a total approved of \$6,307,399. The number of client projects that have been completed out of that 18 is 10. Those were completed — three in Haines Junction, one in Watson Lake, five in Dawson City, and one in Carcross. If you take into consideration how much of that money that was allocated constitutes those projects, that's \$2,870,399.

Of the projects that are still in progress, three are in Haines Junction, three are in Dawson, one in Teslin, and two in rural Yukon. Out of those, the breakdown is: One was a purchase and seven are builds. That would be the remainder of that initial number, and that would be \$2,937,000. If we wanted to break that down based on a monthly view for the program since it started, we had eight applications in August 2021, six in September 2021, 11 in October 2021, four in November 2021, nine in December 2021, eight in January 2022, and eight in February 2022. Of course, we have ones that would be looking toward our allocations of the budget for this year that would be identified in the new applications.

**Ms. Clarke:** Thank you, minister, for that answer.

With respect to the emergency home repair grant, there are a number of conditions that must be met by applicants before they are approved for this grant. However, repairs often must be made immediately, and the application process prohibits work to take place before final approval of the application. In some situations, businesses performing repairs are willing to invoice until funding comes through, assuming that a grant application will be successful.

Has the minister given consideration to making policy changes that would allow people to have work done in that emergency situation prior to their application being finalized?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that it is important, with any of these programs, to consider that it is a fine balance between making sure that we are looking after our clients, for Yukoners, and that we are accountable — both are very important to consider. Inevitably, we have Yukoners we have to be accountable to, and in our case — our third pillar talks about our work in corporate governance, which we have to take into consideration, and we have to follow the direction of our board. In some cases, of course, all areas within Yukon government inevitably have to be accountable to Yukoners but with the oversight of the OAG — the Auditor General of Canada. These are all things that we have to balance.

If we are taking into consideration the accessibility grant or emergency grant, the client can work with Yukon Housing Corporation to approve to have an advance requested by the contractor. In the first instalment, it could cover up to 50 percent of the project estimate; that is under our current terms. Otherwise, payment by the Yukon Housing Corporation is within seven to 14 days of receipt of invoice, which is usually below the 30-day payment due date.

We try to be as flexible as we possibly can. We try to make sure that if we are working with folks, we understand that they are under, in some cases, duress. When you are dealing with something in your home, I think that probably most of us here,

at some point, have had something like this happen, and it is always difficult to balance — trying to make sure that it is repaired and, at the same time, deal with that and live through that.

Again, a fine balance between accountability and ensuring that we are supporting our clients.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for that answer.

We have received notice that there are a number of individuals who are nearing the end of their three-year contract for staff housing in rural Yukon and are being asked to vacate their units. Unfortunately, in many cases, there is no other housing available for rent, sale, or in terms of lots in some of these communities.

So, my first question is: Is the minister willing to work with other departments to extend employees who are currently being asked to vacate staff housing but have no other option for accommodations?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think it would be good to clarify — not that I am “willing” to work. I have been, and I have been since I took on this portfolio last spring. Through my visits to a number of communities, meeting with both municipal leaders and First Nation leaders and with our housing staff — our housing family in many of our communities — we have been made aware of these situations. I am in agreement. If the premise of the question is that we need to have flexibility, I agree with that. There is an obligation that we have, as a government, in our communities to provide lots, and so we have to make sure that it happens. If we don't have enough options in those communities, then we need to be flexible. I can tell you that I have spoken with our team around situations in Watson Lake, Teslin, Carmacks, and others.

But I think it's important — if people are reaching out to the member, as you have stated — for them to follow the process that, first of all, is within their department. Whether they are teaching staff or they are health staff — first, they should clarify with their human resources folks how best to do it. Inevitably, it is a decision at the deputy minister level within said department, as I understand it. We are very flexible around those things.

I think it's important, though — for Yukon government public servants who are listening — that the other thing we are trying to do — in some cases, there were options previously, and people weren't making that commitment in those communities where they have lived for a very long time. In some cases, they were over-housed. What I mean by that is that maybe there was one individual in a multi-unit structure and there were other individuals who were on the Yukon Housing Corporation list and in need, but they didn't have an option or were under-housed, so we have to balance that.

We want to see folks make that commitment in those communities. We want to see, like many people do — if they are a long-time public servant in a community and the people in that community have welcomed them and supported them in their professional career and vice versa — and we also think that it is important for individuals to make that commitment. That goes to a few questions back when we talked about making sure that the right tools are in place for rural home

ownership and being able to leverage that, where it was more difficult previously. We want to see that happen. I think our housing market is quite strong. I know that, in some cases and in some communities, depending on the level and value of the asset, there could be challenges in a sale, but I think that what we have seen for the most part is a pretty live market that is available across the Yukon.

Again, we want to see people make that commitment. Are we flexible when we hear from their department? Yes, we are. Have we been doing that? Yes, we have, and it has been undertaken in multiple communities. I appreciate the municipal leaders who have reached out, brought us up to speed, and briefed us on particular situations. This gives us a better visibility to the uniqueness of some of those situations for the team, supporting us to make sure that we can extend those situations for folks in rural Yukon.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for that answer.

Will the minister consider working with other departments to look at their staff accommodation arrangements to ensure that no essential staff in rural communities face similar situations in the future?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, I think that our focus is not so much working with other departments. We identify demand in those discussions, but I'm looking for solutions with the private sector, development corporations, and NGOs. That is really where our conversations are happening.

Last week, we were in Mayo, and your colleague was there as well, the Leader of the Official Opposition. We were celebrating the opening of one project, but there are also other areas within that town that the team was taking a look at. We met with the municipality and we talked a little bit about what their thoughts were with their OCP and what was available. At the same time, we had private sector folks reaching out to us.

What we are trying to do in every situation, if possible — we know that there is a need in many of our communities for appropriate staff housing, and we know that there is a need for affordable housing and, in some cases, social housing options. What we are doing is looking at different entities that want to do a build, and then we want to have that discussion with them to see if we can de-risk. How we de-risk is by making some of the longer term commitments to be able to hold those units for government employees or for affordable housing. That is how we are looking at it.

I think that, for us, it's not so much that we would go out to the Department of Education and say, "We want you to build something with us", but it's more along the lines of internally saying what the needs are, what can be forecasted, and just help us to plan better.

Later this year — and we talked about it a bit. We have finished off our triplex in Watson Lake, and then there are discussions with the First Nation and there have been discussions with the municipality, I believe, with our team. That has all been done in a broader community, which was essentially a scan of what our housing needs were in Watson Lake, and we've done that in a couple of different communities. We take those data points — and, of course, that's partially as well — we're trying to understand what the needs are or the

demand that is being struck by the activities and the service delivery of the Government of Yukon. Then that helps us define our longer term planning.

That's how we're looking at things. We're trying to make sure that we can look multiple years out. As you saw, these five-year strategies were coming to a conclusion and then we have to do our next five years. I think everybody can agree that building homes with as many partners as possible is our only solution — what I've said since I have taken on this responsibility. We certainly are not going to be able to do it just as the Housing Corporation, but we look at it as "Many partners required", but also that is leading to tremendous opportunity — economic development opportunity and substantial opportunity for a number of organizations and private sector entities across the Yukon.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for that answer.

With respect to the Housing First project in Watson Lake, I understand that there was a decrease in this year's budget due to the completion of the planning and design phase in 2021-22. The construction phase is transferred to the northern carve-out program. So, my first question is: Can the minister provide a status update on the Housing First project in Watson Lake? I'm wondering what progress has been made of this project going to tender.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What we're undertaking this spring is two-part. We have almost completed our triplex. We thank our builders for the good work that they've done.

At the same time, part of the work that we have to do is a broader conversation with the community. We're looking at early May. I'll make sure that I reach out to the Member for Watson Lake. We're just solidifying the date. I did lock down a date this morning for that, but I want to make sure that it works with all parties involved. It is when we finish up here but not long after we finish up.

So, we are going to do an open house, and then we will move that carve-out money ahead for this year, which is really about the design portion that we would move forward. We would be looking at design this year. We are thinking, on the tender piece — I want to see what is said at that open house, but we would like to — I'll put it this way — have that tender out in June. That is when we would like to do it.

Again, we would be looking at design this year and then we would be looking at building out that project next year.

Just a little bit more information — and we were speaking about this earlier. That process that we undertake in a number of communities — in this case, it was essentially Watson Lake's housing needs assessment. What it identified was a need for supportive housing with the community of Watson Lake.

The Housing Corporation purchased the former lakeview property from the Town of Watson Lake, and we are currently under contract with Kobayashi and Zedda for design. We have had conversations with the Liard First Nation Chief and Council and with the Town of Watson Lake's mayor and council. We're looking to complete that and go to tender later in the summer.

What we're looking at is about a 10-unit structure, but again, we'll be looking at an open house and a dialogue to

answer questions with folks in Watson Lake, likely in early May of this year.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for that answer. My next question is: Can the minister provide further information on how this facility will be managed post construction?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are looking at a Housing First model. We have one, of course, that has been done in Whitehorse. I think that we will have more information that we will provide, because it is a multi-department undertaking between us and Health and Social Services. So, Yukon Housing Corporation — we are working through some of the agreement with Health and Social Services around this undertaking. A bit more detail to come, but we can say — looking at the model that has been undertaken so far in Whitehorse on Wood Street, with the existing structure that was built just a few years ago.

**Ms. Clarke:** Is there any indication whether this facility will be government-run or if there is an option for alternate management?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, it is similar to those previous comments. Look, I think that in any case where we can find a strong partnership in the sense of an NGO — in many cases, what happens is that there are organizations out there that do a really good job of this, and there are some organizations that don't. I think that we have been lucky enough to strike partnerships in the Yukon with a couple of organizations over the last couple of years that do a very good job of this type of work. So, again, looking in this case potentially to have — I believe that our same folks who are working within the Yukon — but I don't want to get ahead of myself, because that conversation with Health and Social Services is still underway, and we still have to build the structure. So, we have a lot of runway in front of us, but we are monitoring the model that has been put in place and that may be appropriate for this particular building in Watson Lake.

**Ms. Clarke:** The Jeckell Street mixed-use housing project: When is it anticipated that the project will be complete?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are anticipating July, which is the summer — not the spring, before I am asked by the Third Party.

We had a good discussion — our team today — and said: “Look, nothing gets a person into a more challenging situation than coming back and making sure that we have the right timeline.” There have been a few pieces — we were hoping for late spring. We are looking at July of this year for completion.

Then, of course, we have talked a bit about making sure we have a staggered entry, making sure that not everybody would be moving in right away, and that gives us the opportunity to give appropriate support as folks move in. It is a very diverse population that we are looking at for this particular building.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for the answer.

My next question is: What is the selection process for tenants, and have they already been selected?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There are different criteria in the sense that we have many different folks who apply for Yukon housing. We have tried to identify within Jeckell spots that would be family-oriented, accessible, seniors — then we have to take our underlying criteria for each one of those streams of clients and then prioritize, based on the unique scenarios within

those applications. That's how we approach it. It is going to be the same thing we do for all our housing. The only difference is that it's not just a seniors housing residence or not just for vulnerable folks fleeing violence; this is a mix of different types of clients, so we will apply the metrics that we normally do in order to prioritize each stream of clients. That's how we will make our decisions, and to date, we have not yet made decisions about which clients will be moving into that new building.

**Ms. Clarke:** If the anticipated completion is July 2022, what is the anticipated move-in date for tenants?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The first thing with any level of investment of this magnitude is that there is always work that has to be done with the builder. We are looking at July for completion. There will be a period of time after that. I can't give you exactly that time in weeks, but we will go back, and before we close up that arrangement, we will be looking at any deficiencies that have to be fixed.

The mindset is likely in the month of August, and then we are looking at about a three-month period, so you would have folks moving in potentially in August, but that could be — I want to state for Hansard that we still don't know until we understand — that there could be very little in the sense of deficiencies and that could speed it up, but we are looking at about a three-month period for staggered entry for the clients to move in. We are looking at a period of time after July when we will go back and forth with our builder to ensure that the commitments that were made in our contracts for that building have been met and that it's appropriate and safe and ready for our new clients to move in.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for that answer.

How many commercial spaces are going to be available in the building?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There are no commercial spaces in that building.

**Ms. Clarke:** The minister has spoken about the opportunities with the Northern Community Land Trust. The society has established office space, and we understand that they will be one of the new corporate tenants at the Cornerstone building. The minister has mentioned it as one of the key initiatives that he is working on since the housing summit. My first question is: Can the minister provide an update on how things are progressing in discussions between the land trust and Yukon Housing Corporation and if any core funding has been supplied to this society?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Sorry, that last little piece — I just want to clarify if it was how much has been provided to the organization so far. I just want to make sure, that last piece.

**Ms. Clarke:** I am asking about the core funding that has been supplied to the society — how much, if any?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** There is no core funding provided. There have been two tranches of funding. One was seed funding, which was \$20,000. That helped with some planning and was through our housing initiatives fund, which has both an early seed fund and it also has funding that can offset the cost of cap ex. Then in this last round, in HIF 5, they received \$1 million. Now we're working with them to just finish off

what we have to do to be able to look at an appropriate place for them to build out their project.

We think that this is a great undertaking. It is essentially made up of a lot of different professionals who are volunteering their time with expertise in architecture, engineering — that type of background. The Northern Community Land Trust has a plan to develop their first 20- to 40-unit affordable ownership development in Whitehorse over the next three years. So, this is something that we're excited to be working with them on. I appreciate the fact that these folks are taking time on the side to volunteer and contribute. We think that this model is very innovative in the sense that the idea behind it is — as it's built out, it gives individuals the opportunity to acquire equity in an asset, but at the same time, looking to cap the value or the sale value — or the sale price of the asset — therefore, continuing to keep it at an affordable rate, but giving people flexibility to entry and then hopefully taking that to move on to another asset in the future.

I will just state that if we're going to get into really minute details about what the agreement is or how long they have to hold the asset or a number of those questions, as we did with question one or question two today, I think it will be best for us to provide that in a written summary versus the information that we have with us today.

**Ms. Clarke:** Yes, any information would be very helpful and appreciated.

My next question is: We understand from discussions with them that one of the keys to the housing trust being affordable is to acquire free land for their development. Can the minister indicate if he has been working to arrange for free land to be provided to the housing trust, as they require?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Yes, we have been working alongside them. This is a similar model that we're looking at that we have done with Habitat for Humanity. This is similar to the discussions that we've had over the years and discussed with Vimy — that sort of model.

Of course, I cannot pre-empt a process through Management Board, but we have been working closely with them to ensure that their structure and governance model would be adequate and, at the same time, looking at different spots that we believe would be suitable for the magnitude, style, and zoning of build that they are looking to undertake.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for his answer. To make that happen, will the minister be developing a program for free land to be provided to organizations? Or does the minister think that free land would be provided on a case-by-case basis?

As well, has the minister been working with any other organizations on any free land for affordable housing?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** At the current time, no, we're not looking at a new program. We're looking at the same form of land allocation that was done by the member opposite's colleagues — no different. This is the same process that was undertaken by the previous government for Habitat for Humanity, and this is the type of process that we would be looking to continue at this time. We're not looking to build a new program.

**Ms. Clarke:** The budget speech said — and I quote: “More than \$11 million is included to incentivize residential construction for projects like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision expansion in Copper Ridge...”

Can the minister provide an update on this?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are in discussions with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. We anticipate that we will be receiving a detailed proposal from them. I know we have been in discussions with them already. We haven't defined the exact number, but I think it's also important — we're pleased to be able to support our local housing partners and small and large housing developments.

What we are talking about is our grants and loan programs. Yukon Housing Corporation works with First Nation governments and First Nation development corporations on any number of projects, so not just Kwanlin Dün First Nation. We are working with Kluane First Nation, Selkirk First Nation, Kwanlin Dün — as we talked about — Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, and Na-Cho Nyäk Dun First Nation on funding for energy efficiency in new and existing stock.

We are working with Liard First Nation in the broader community on the design, which we spoke about just a couple of questions ago. We are working with Da Daghay Development Corporation on the River Bend in Whistle Bend affordable housing and continuing to look at that partnership. It was started a number of years ago under a previous government, and we have continued to do that work.

We are looking to continue to work with Chu Níikwän on next steps for the Copper Ridge West subdivision. I know that there is an interest there and a number of lots — we are looking, of course, to see — I hope that the members opposite see that as a good thing and that they will be supporting the passing of this element, but also the passing of the budget, so that we can look at the largest capital investment into housing by the Yukon Housing Corporation in the last 10 years.

I thank you for that question. We believe that it is important. I think that the member opposite — I think — believes that this is important and solid work. We are looking forward to finalizing the details with Chu Níikwän, which is the development corporation arm of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

**Ms. Clarke:** How much of the \$11 million has been accessed?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are debating this budget now, so we are still waiting to complete the budget, and then we are in talks. I think that it is important to know — I will pull out here — I know that the Kwanlin Dün First Nation sent me this document. There have been some comments that members of the Yukon Party made on social media, and they just wanted to verify — and they sent me this from September 2, 2011. This was when the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Yukon partnered on residential land development, and this goes back, of course. The member opposite would not have been in government, but members flanking on either — members who are here, who are currently in caucus, would — and this was when there was a letter of understanding that was signed, and this would enable the Yukon and First Nation to work together

on potential residential land opportunities on Kwanlin Dün settlement land.

The quote that was here — quote: “The Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Yukon share a common goal in supporting the sustainable growth and development of Yukon communities”. This was the Premier of the day. “Both governments recognize the need for affordable housing and the demand for developed residential land within the City of Whitehorse and the surrounding areas.”

The concerning part is that here we are; we are following through on this, but we are a decade after this commitment was publicly made and this was supported.

I have a bunch of documents here that we can go back to about this. What we are trying to do is — we believe that as well, but the only difference is that we want to try to get that work done. We think it’s important to support Chu Níikwān in this endeavour. Once we have the budget passed, we will be able to get into a more detailed dialogue with them on an agreement so that they can be supported in some of the work they are looking to do.

**Ms. Clarke:** The minister just said that discussion is going on with this program, so what are details of the program?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are looking at existing programs where we can allocate. In my second or third answer today, I talked about the fact that we can provide very minute details into how our programs are working. We are in discussions. There is an interest. There are lots of similar relationships with First Nation governments.

Champagne and Aishihik — under the previous government, there were conversations that happened where we detailed at that time priorities around that and infrastructure work. At this time, we are in discussions. Again, you can say — the discussions started, I think, 10 years ago, and they have continued. We are now looking to action their interests. I think once we finalize those discussions, it will be an appropriate time to get into detailed discussions.

The member opposite would agree that, for me to now lay out all the details of an ongoing discussion and negotiation previous to the passing of this budget, it would not be appropriate. I will continue to support the work of the Yukon Housing Corporation in that dialogue, and I will be excited to stand with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Chu Níikwān Development Corporation when we have concluded — if we conclude — that work and if that is supported through the governance structure here in the Yukon.

**Ms. Clarke:** I just want to clarify, because the minister said that the discussion has been going on for 10 years. So, again, I just want to ask if he could share some of the details of that program.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think there’s some confusion. I just read a statement that was made by the Leader of the Yukon Party that individuals who are currently in caucus with the member opposite would know the details. I don’t know the details. On September 2, 2011, there was a statement made by the Yukon Party and Kwanlin Dün about developing residential land. I have another article that talks about this on September 6, 2011. What I can tell you is that there seemed to

have been a dialogue between two levels of government with an interest in this. What I’m focused on today is the existing programs in this budget. I have only been in this portfolio since last spring, and we’re having a dialogue with Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

I would say that you want to know the details of that program — we’re using programs that we have here. We’ve committed to showing and sharing the terms of reference, which is all information that’s public. In this specific scenario, we are currently in dialogue. I think — what I would suggest — and I think it has happened already — is members from the Yukon Party should reach out directly as well to Kwanlin Dün. I know there has been some concern. There were some statements that were — I was made aware of — some content that could have led to some ire that was on social media, and certainly some folks — I had somebody reach out to me, and I think members opposite maybe had the same. I think that this activity is happening in Copper Ridge.

I know that the Kwanlin Dün development corporation and the chief and council are always open to hearing from all members of the Assembly. I will leave it for them to speak, if they feel they want to get into details about dialogue, but I can tell you where we are at; we are speaking and answering questions to this budget. There are funds in this budget that I would like to see allocated toward enhancing the number of lots that we have in the Yukon. I think that working with self-governing First Nations is a unique part of the housing continuum that we can focus on. I think that the Yukon Party, as per the statements that were made publicly 10 years ago, believe the same as stated there.

I believe that the newspaper article from the *Whitehorse Star* written by Chuck Tobin on September 6, 2011 highlights that. I look forward to bringing more information to the House once we have concluded an agreement. Other than that, I think that we are running up a tree here. Probably there are more important questions that the member opposite would like to ask me.

**Ms. Clarke:** Well, thank you to the minister for that answer. I am going to move on.

Other than the Kwanlin Dün First Nation project in Copper Ridge, are there other projects that are being considered?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This goes back to the original conversation exchange that we had today. There are numerous projects, I believe, but I don’t know the number. There are a number of projects. We have loan programs and we have grant programs. We publicly announced our housing initiatives fund phase 5, so there were a number of programs identified there. Depending on applications — to be specific, I know that there has been a dialogue, which I just touched on, concerning Kwanlin Dün. I have had other First Nation governments reach out and share high-level information about their interests. We have also seen support through departments like Community Services, pending the exchange of information from government to government on the priorities of both First Nations and those departments.

I think that there are a lot of programs. I can say to the member opposite that we have stood up publicly and said that



if there are First Nation development corporations or governments that want to partner with us to help us with solutions for housing pressures, we want to sit down and have those conversations. We have been very open about that. We have also said that to municipalities. We have said that to the private sector entities that we have had the chance to speak with, so I think that there will be a lot of different programs. I think that you can see that.

What I would state for Hansard, which is really important when we talk about these programs — one of the things that I did upon coming into this role was to look back at the last 10 years. I wanted to know what the investment looked like. To be fair — and I say this with a bit of fun — there are lots of times during Question Period when the member opposite would say, “You’re not investing in housing” or “There is a lack of affordable housing”, so I wanted to pull the numbers out.

What you will see, if you take a look at the last 10 years — if you go from 2011 back when those comments were being made by the previous government about their commitment to coming up with solutions for housing — if you go from 2011 to about 2017, that is when you see it. So, that is sort of like that previous government’s whole mandate, and then in the early year — say year 1 or year 2 — of this government’s first mandate, what you’ll see is more money being spent on O&M, not on capital. So, the previous government will like you to believe that, yes, we like to build, but really, it was being spent on O&M.

Then what you will see is this turn. You will see this change at 18 months — sort of 12 to 24 months — of: “We have a plan” and “Let’s start building.” Then what you will see is the change where the capital again takes a jump and starts to be, in 2018-19 — in our actual budgets, not just mains but the actual — and then you will see 2019-20 with, again, more capital, but only by a couple of million. Then, in 2021, you will see the delta is \$10 million. You will see \$19 million for O&M and \$29 million for actuals on our capital expenditures. Then you get into 2021-22 — and, of course, we will see with those the finale — but you will see the Supplementary No. 2, and then you see a jump from \$19,907,000 — so I would say \$20 million — to \$42 million. So, you’re seeing an absolute — well, it’s a double in expenditure. Then you see this year — that year at \$20 million again in O&M, but you’re at \$46 million.

What we’ve seen over the last number of years is extensive investment in housing — something that was not seen previously — in the previous mandate.

So, when the member opposite asks: What are the other projects? Are there other projects? Absolutely. There are a lot of projects because we’re partnering with a number of folks. This is unprecedented investment at this level of diversity in the private sector and other levels of government and, again, supporting NGOs. We know that it’s required.

I want to thank all the people at Yukon Housing Corporation because this is a tremendous amount of work. All you have to do is look at it.

Back in 2011, when the commitments were being made around these partnerships, there was \$16,446,000 being spent

on capital. This year, we’re projected to spend \$46,773,000. So, there are a lot of different projects that are there.

We are very accountable and transparent in that we provide that information publicly as we make decisions within our programs. We just want to get that support from the members opposite on this budget so that we can get building and deal with the housing pressures in front us.

**Ms. Clarke:** The minister said that there are lots of projects, but I am sorry — I have not heard a project mentioned. I’m going to ask again: Other than the KDFN project in Copper Ridge, are there other projects that are being considered?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** For clarification, from which specific program? As we said in our opening statement, we had a lot of different programs. So, maybe share with me which program specifically would you like me to talk about for applicants or potential. Then, based on that, the team here can pull it up. I’m more than happy. If it’s a program that we are looking to capitalize through this budget but we haven’t yet seen all the applications, then we’ll have to get to that later in the year. So, which program or programs specifically does the member opposite want me to touch on for projects?

**Ms. Clarke:** I’m going to refresh for the minister. I was talking about the budget speech that said — and I’m going to quote: “More than \$11 million is included to incentivize residential construction for projects like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision expansion in Copper Ridge...” So, I’m asking: What other projects are being considered?

I am going to move on, and if the minister is going to answer, thank you for that. But I’m going to move on because there are still a lot of people who would like to ask questions.

Can the minister please provide an update on the Normandy project, and is there a timeline for completion?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, the Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the development of a wider range of housing options for Yukon seniors in line with the *Aging in Place Action Plan* and to help address the housing crisis. We’ve talked a bit about this housing continuum. Yukon Housing Corporation has committed \$3.5 million to secure 10 units in Normandy Manor, which is important for folks to be made aware of — it’s a private seniors residence — in order to meet the needs of seniors who want housing with supportive services, such as meals and hospitality service, but do not require full-service or long-term care.

When Normandy Manor opens, the 10 leased units that we have leased will allow the Government of Yukon to offer a broader, more cost-effective range of housing services for Yukon seniors.

At this time, we are looking at the date of completion for the project to be November of this year.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for his answer. Can the minister please give an update on rural Yukon community housing projects that are currently being planned or constructed?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will just go through a mix of different pieces. I will start with Beaver Creek and White River First Nation. Right now, the key work that’s being undertaken — in the 2019-2020 budget, the Housing Corporation provided about

\$107,000 of funding through our First Nation partnership program to both Kluane First Nation and White River First Nation to improve quality of housing. Through our First Nation energy-efficiency program under the low carbon economy fund, White River First Nation has been allocated \$344,250. That has been allocated, but we are still in discussions with them around finalizing the agreement.

Under Carcross/Tagish, in the Tagish area — in February 2022, our team went and met with key representatives in the community. The Housing Corporation completed a needs assessment, which is important for folks to understand and to be aware of.

Under the rapid housing initiatives fund, in Carcross, we have \$2.47 million that will be invested to create 10 new single-family homes for the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. These homes will be targeted for elders and families and will consist of seven 2-bedroom units and three 3-bedroom units.

In our 2019-20 budget, the Yukon Housing Corporation also provided \$107,000, just like we did in the Kluane area. Right now, we are looking at progress of construction with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. We have two units, both affordable units, which are from our HIF 1 program. In that particular area, we also have one through our HRP grant program that we provided in Annie Lake. When we were talking about rural home ownership, we did talk about that one purchase that happened in Carcross as well.

There are a few different pieces there. I will get into some of our rental pieces as well. In Carmacks, with the community of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation through the housing initiatives fund, in completed construction, that \$107,000 that we talked about with the first two communities is pretty consistent right across all of our communities. They are pretty active in Carmacks. With our housing initiatives fund 1, we supplied support for four units. In our housing initiatives fund 2, again, there were four units, all with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. There were also four units in our HIF 3, so a total of 12 there.

A number of pieces — and in our HIF 5, I'll come back to it, but I think that even in our last piece that we did — housing initiatives fund 5 — there was \$800,000 again for eight new homes in Carmacks. That was with the development corporation versus the First Nation.

In Dawson City, with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation under the housing initiatives fund, this has kind of been a mix. We have had both NGOs and some people in the private sector, so in our housing initiatives fund work, I will state that we provided \$107,000 through the First Nation partnership program, but also, we saw the private sector do one affordable unit, and then we saw the Klondike Visitors Association in 2019-20, which was eight units. Those are completed, but in progress for construction projects, we have another local individual who is building an affordable unit and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, with our housing initiatives fund, for 10 units.

I was there about a week ago and things look like they are progressing well on those projects. There was about \$900,000 — just to put on the record — that we are supporting for those 10 units. With the housing initiatives fund 4, the Klondike

Development Organization did two units, and that was in 2021-22. So, these are agreements — project concepts — that we support as well.

Then we have a bigger project that we are looking at in Dawson. We are partnered with the Klondike Development Organization to engage the public on the best housing use for the Yukon Housing Corporation's land holding — the area is known as the "Korbo lot". Again, we continue to use the information from this engagement to inform future construction plans on this site and work with the community to plan for the project on this property. We would like to be doing the design on that. I had a good conversation with the mayor about a week ago and then had an opportunity to meet with the KVA to get a sense of what is needed both with longer term housing options as well as in the future — maybe some temporary options as well.

We are also investing with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and we have — through the low carbon economy fund to improve efficiency — and that was a total amount of \$344,250 in our TPA, but we have allocated — I think to date, so far — \$172,125.

Moving on to the community of Faro, we have put out some funds for our home repair programs. Of course, folks in Faro have that opportunity to apply to our programs. I plan to be there in early May and to have continued discussions and make sure that people know — as we will hopefully have this budget passed and supported — that we will be able to provide some funds there.

Haines Junction is very active. A number of things have happened. Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, who we have worked with, have created 20 new homes for CAFN individuals and families who needed housing. They are working through that project. Some of that is being done in — even though it's a community partner, it is being done in Whitehorse, and we commend them for that. They are really taking into consideration that they know that they have citizens who are living in Whitehorse, as well as Haines Junction, and other smaller communities in that particular area.

This project is going to be built at 195 Olive May Way in Whistle Bend. It includes five separate town homes, each made up of four separate units, including one-, two-, and three-bedroom homes and accessible units. Again, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations will be investing about \$1.4 million into the project and receiving about just over \$6 million from CMHC's rapid housing initiatives fund round 1 and \$600,000 from the Yukon housing initiatives funding — our fourth intake. So, again, a very significant investment there. Just going back to cross-reference, in Haines Junction and then just received in our HIF 5 — housing initiatives fund — \$1 million for another 10 new homes that they're planning to be building in Haines Junction.

As well, I should note that there was, combined, about \$560,000 for new homes in Whitehorse and two new homes in Mendenhall — just because we're talking about that area — as well as another home in Dawson City.

Moving on to Mayo — through our HIF, I would just announce that there is \$640,000 for eight new homes in Mayo,

in partnership with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. That's in our HIF 5. Previously, which of course the Leader of the Official Opposition and I were there, and I know when we passed on kind remarks on behalf of the Leader of the Third Party, who had a number of things to balance and wanted to be there, but celebrating the Yukon Soaps project, which again was two more units. That comes from our housing initiatives fund 3 program. Again, we're continuing to have discussions with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun as well.

Moving on to Old Crow and working with Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, in progress right now are seven units. Again, that's through our housing initiatives fund 3. As well, under the low carbon fund, we have been working — we've had \$344,250, very similar to other partnership agreements, and just about half of that we have put out as well.

Moving on to Pelly and Selkirk First Nation with the housing initiatives fund — and it's under progress — is four units with Selkirk First Nation. I believe they're on hold, and they are just re-evaluating in that particular project.

Moving on to Ross River, we have allocated just under \$350,000. We have allocated there and we're working through — that's for the low carbon economy fund. I know we've reached out to the development corporation and others letting folks know that we're willing to work together on these projects. I'm just making sure — I just want to cross-reference our other funds that we've put out.

Moving on to Teslin and working with Teslin Tlingit Council, the HIF 4 construction project — five units with the Teslin development corporation. All five are affordable units. They are working with us on the finalization of that in Teslin.

Moving on to Watson Lake, it's important to note that we also, just in this HIF 5 — we allocated \$1 million for 15 new homes in Watson Lake with Liard First Nation but already, building that's in construction — private sector entity — seven units, seven affordable housing in our housing initiatives fund 2. Again, three units that are under progress with Liard First Nation and our housing initiatives fund 2. For our project funding but toward concept, that early stage that we've talked about a little bit today — six units, all affordable — with Bergeron General Contracting with the private sector in Watson Lake.

I think I will hold, because the question was more about the communities. There is quite a bit of information concerning our work here in Whitehorse and with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council on all of those projects, but I'll just leave it at that.

It sort of gives a bit of a snapshot about the very significant work that is being done across the Yukon in all our communities to support affordable housing.

**Ms. Clarke:** I thank the minister for those detailed answers.

I have one more question, and then I'm going to hand it to the Member for Kluane for just one question. Can the minister please provide an update on the Vimy project, and is there a timeline for completion?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Our discussions are still ongoing. Their lead on their project has just reached out in the last bit to sit down and talk about the progress on the Vimy project.

At this point, what it comes down to is that they are solidifying their governance model before we go toward the design/build. They have looked at a number of different models. Our finance folks as well as a number of our senior team has continued to meet with them. I think that, at one point, there were meetings happening almost every two weeks. We haven't talked a lot about it. I have been waiting for some more questions in the House, but we have really walked through this and tried to de-risk and de-risk and be supportive over the last four or five years.

This project was of interest many, many years ago. I think that the former Yukon Party Speaker had led that before coming into politics. It was discussed then, and we have held a lot in Whistle Bend for a number of years as the potential location. We have gone back on a couple of occasions and requested to extend the hold on that lot for Energy, Mines and Resources.

I think that we are getting to a good spot. We are working with Health and Social Services. We agree with the methodology that Vimy is talking about in the sense that this is a really important part within the housing continuum. We think that folks can be in that supported environment with their friends, and that will delay, in some cases, when people would be going to more government-run, -supported long-term options. Again, when we wrap up here next week — I know that I talked to my advisor today and said that we will set up our next meeting with those folks to chat with them. They have good support and expertise — and we have supported some of that work previously. They hired Colliers and have a well-experienced project manager and management team helping them, and there are some local folks with Colliers who are doing that work.

We are getting there, but we are trying to make sure of things before the project gets built. This goes back again to supporting our clients but being accountable to Yukoners and having our policy stand the test of integrity so that we are in a position that this can be built and undertaken and can be sustainable. Those are the things that we are keeping in mind. A lot of work has been done on the Vimy file. We are looking forward to 2022 and where we get to with that team of tenacious and committed folks who have spent so much time working to get this important project in place for seniors in the Yukon.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I want to thank the officials who are here.

I have just one quick question about the St. Elias seniors. That building was built due to the senior advocates many years ago going after their MLA with a petition to see it through to fruition. The government of the day built that building. The society was in that building for many years, doing their thing. The minister is up on this file. I know he knows everything about this file.

All of a sudden, during the pandemic, they were evicted from that space. It was hard enough during the pandemic when seniors were lonely, but seniors have a lot of issues, and that was a place for their advocate to sit with them and deal with

ordering drugs for them or helping them with the pioneer utility grant applications. They were promised that they would be back in there by last November, and it seems like every time they are just about to move back in, there is something else — insurance or “This isn’t good enough” and “That’s not good enough”. They were in that building for many years. They held luncheons twice a week. I have been to many functions in there. I was a champion bowler for a little while in there with a couple good seniors.

I am just wondering: How long is this going to take? I don’t think it is fair to the seniors and it’s not fair to the community.

That’s my question. I want to thank the staff for their time today and thank the minister for his responses.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I am going to apologize to the member opposite. Last summer, I had the fun of following some of the opposition members through the Kluane region. I will be very open with the House. I reached out to the member opposition, who I know has championed this situation, and I called him to say that I think we have this thing solved, and I know how frustrating it has been for folks there. But we’re still in the same situation, and I want to apologize to him and to his community for that.

The St. Elias Seniors Society — I will just give a quick bit of background. They requested office space and the use of common space in the corporation’s seniors residence in Haines Junction. Over the past year, the Yukon Housing Corporation has worked to ensure that the building is up to code for these purposes, including for group gatherings.

It is fair to say, from what I know, that there have been some folks and tenants within that building — I think that the majority of folks are very supportive of those activities — not everyone, I think, is what I have been told. So, we still have to respect — even if it is just a couple of folks — their thoughts about these activities. But, again, I am not trying to build more barriers; I am trying to figure out how we can work through this.

I am pleased to say that we have identified an office space for the society and designated dates and times for the society to use the common-room space to host meals, social activities, and health and educational clinics for their members. We are working — as the member opposite alluded to — with the society to finalize the licence of occupation to ensure that terms and conditions of the use of the space supports both the society and the residents. The society is in the process of obtaining insurance and, once secured, has agreed to move forward with signing the licence of occupation. We continue to support with interim health clinics for the society and their members in that common space. We look forward to finalizing the partnership with the St. Elias Seniors Society.

I think that I will leave it at that. I think that it is important that the member opposite gets that on the record. I want to say that we need to support the organization and get it done. I’m sorry for the frustration, especially for folks who are a driving force in many ways to get that built and who just want to do good for their community. I will leave it at that. As the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation would say, there have been many conversations about this, and I am committed to getting

this solved, and I’m sorry that it is taking longer than we had hoped.

**Acting Chair:** Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. Tredger:** I first want to start by thanking the officials. I, as always, really enjoyed our briefing. I am going to ask a couple of the questions again to have them on the record, but I found the information you provided really helpful. I’m really excited to be here talking about housing today.

I’m going to start off by asking a question about the lots that are for sale — as land is being developed in places like Whistle Bend — and the decision to sell those lots at market value rather than at cost.

We have all talked lots about how housing prices are out of control. This is a huge barrier to people trying to get into the market through building. Could the minister talk about that decision?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I can but not in great detail. The conversation concerning the lot-pricing methodology — look, there is a greater decision that gets made about it at the Cabinet level, but I think that we have been in a structure for quite a long time where Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services have had a dialogue and then Energy, Mines and Resources inevitably defines how it is done. It has been a long conversation. I can go back to remembering the Member for Lake Laberge sitting two seats down a long time ago, having a discussion and answering probably the first time there was ever a delta put in place that identified how that structure was done. In city council with the former member, Mr. Doug Graham, he and I looked into this a lot. There has been that piece put in place where development costs were taken into consideration. I know that in my former role, that is kind of where it has gone, and then they look at a market valuation.

All I would say is that, wearing my Economic Development cap, you have to not look at any devaluations. What our concern is here is that we don’t want to devalue anything, but at the same time, for us at the Yukon Housing Corporation, we are focused on letting Energy, Mines and Resources folks build out the work that they do, supporting the minister. At the same time, we are looking at the housing continuum and other ways to potentially make land available that meets the needs of other folks.

With that, we are still working with private developers as well. I think that this will be a real test — looking at two big projects that we have talked about. One is 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and

Rogers, which inevitably will be units versus land development and lots for housing. We are hoping it will be something that will be deeply driven by the private sector. The next one would be the tank farm, which we have talked about a little bit. That now has to go through the master planning process, and then, from there, we will look at what that's going to be. That will give us a bit of a different indication about the cost of developing lots.

It will certainly give us something to compare versus what we have seen over the last number of years, which has been government-led. You would probably have to go out toward Mary Lake or Spruce Hill, which were done by the private sector. There might be a little area that was done by a few folks in Porter Creek, but other than that, it has been government-led. That's my knowledge. I don't have a lot more than that. We are trying to focus on affordable options for individuals.

**Ms. Tredger:** I would like to turn to seniors for a little bit, starting with the wait-list. How many of the people on the wait-list are seniors? While I am asking about the wait-list, can I ask about the number of families who are on the wait-list as well?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Right now, we are at a high point on our wait-list. We are at 493 folks in total. Eleven are from the YG employee wait-list. From our senior to non-senior breakdown, 203 are seniors and 279 are non-seniors.

When we look at the seniors, just to give you a little more detail on that, 179 of them are in Whitehorse. Lots of communities don't have any. Dawson has 12, and Watson Lake has six folks, and then there are sort of one or two for the rest of the dispersion.

**Ms. Tredger:** A concern we have talked about before is security in seniors buildings. I have heard from seniors who have expressed feeling unsafe or distressed over the condition of where they live. They talk about having lots of non-residents in their hallways, unfamiliar people in the building, and things like elevators not working. Some of these specifics have been addressed in certain cases, but the overarching problem continues. I am wondering what kind of long-term plans there are for that. I am wondering if the Housing Corporation has met with seniors in the seniors buildings to hear their concerns and if any actions are being taken to address security concerns.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** One of the key pieces — we do have a partnership with the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition to hire a seniors engagement specialist, and that is until 2023. This person can provide one-on-one support, which is going to be helpful.

The Third Party, I think, has reached out — a couple of members — to me around a number of different issues — lighting, security cameras, concern about a number of those items that you just touched on — individuals entering these spaces. There are a key number of those things. I think that we are going to lean on our senior engagement specialist, but where we are at — and we have met with our team — when it comes to cameras — and I also will just put this on the record — we have to go through a process with the Privacy Commissioner and get sign-off. We do that with Highways and Public Works, and that is some of the work that we have to do.

I think that we see the value and we trust the value and I think that we need to have those cameras in place in our common areas in our seniors buildings. That is going to be really important. We have to go through a process, and I can say that I am pushing, because there has been good advocacy here from many members in the Assembly.

When it comes to — you know, there have been a couple of things. The Leader of the Third Party had reached out to me — which is odd, but anyway — and the president, I have to say, was extremely efficient in checking, looking, and identifying problems that were at 600 College Drive and getting photographs back to me and showing the member opposite as well.

But, look, there are other concerns, and it was hard to pull people together to have those conversations. It is a commitment that I made. There are a number of buildings downtown where people have reached out and said: "Can you come and have a discussion with the folks who live in that house — in these houses — in these buildings?" We have heard lots of things. We have heard that, in some cases, there are seniors who have adult children who are still counting on their parents for support or their parents are supporting them in some way, and then sometimes these folks get up to things that they shouldn't be in those buildings. We have to be aware of that. I think I have worked with members of the House to understand when we have had problems where, from a security perspective, does a key get in the wrong hand and should we be reaching out to the corporation to have locks changed? These were all the items that were there, and so, I think that, long term, we are looking at how we are going to deal with this process over time.

I think there is somebody, maybe, who the member opposite has worked with, and I brought this letter today. I was asking if this individual might have been here and it was this letter that I received on March 28 from an individual — I will just say that. That individual was a former safety officer and has worked around housing a lot and has flagged the fact, as well, about how we are going to deal with — what are our policies going to look like as we go into the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street housing project? We're looking at a mixed use. We're going to have seniors there. What do we have to consider from a policy perspective? How do we mitigate problems or things that may happen?

I just want to say, for the record — and the Leader of the Third Party gave me a bit more background and thoughts about what this individual, who was a director of the Yukon Council on Aging, was thinking. I think we have to take this sort of advice. It was a really straightforward, no-nonsense approach to doing things. We're going to have to take that and make sure that folks — that this type of thinking is in our policy, as well as being supportive and aware of the fact that a lot of our clients have not had the easiest of times and have lots of things going on — but first of all, the safety of our clients and the health of clients is paramount. I think you could say that the discussion around a formalized structure for seniors, and just safety in building in general, is continuously evolving. We're understanding what new challenges we have.

Again, I can say to the member opposite that part of what I committed to was going down and meeting with those folks directly, in different buildings, to understand as well and for them to know that we're listening and that we're ready to act. I think some of those simple things — like the cameras, making sure that we're aware of what's happening in those buildings, the simple things like lighting, keeping an eye on what's happening, and making sure that our clients are also following the tenancy contracts — are all going to be important aspects of making sure that things are safe in our buildings.

**Ms. Tredger:** On the topic of seniors — this is way back, a conversation I had with someone talking about, many years ago, the Yukon housing advisory committee organized a plan to have a seniors trust fund so that any surplus from YHC would go into building housing for seniors. This idea was supported, but then it was cancelled because of, I believe, the 2000 election, but I'm not actually sure on the year.

I'm wondering if that's something that the minister is thinking about bringing back or considering at all.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** This is new information to me, but what I will do is work with our team to find out the history of that fund, what the scope was, how it was allocated, and the terms around why it is not in place. If it seems like it is something that we should further investigate, then we will work with the president to look into it and also to see if we have any new programs — or even in this budget that we are seeing coming out now at the federal level. Are there similar types of allocations now? I will try to figure out the construct that we are working within now and see if it is still relevant. I will get back to the member opposite with that information.

**Ms. Tredger:** I appreciate that.

I am trying to think about how to ask this question. In terms of accessible units, I have been in some of the seniors buildings downtown and I see lots of accessibility features. I haven't gone in their bathrooms, but I assume that there are good features throughout the units. Other housing that is not senior-specific does not have the same accessibility features. I am wondering if, as people move off the wait-list, are there cases where seniors are having to go into inaccessible units, or are there people aging in non-accessible units who are waiting for spaces to move over? Is there a good balance of those? How is that working?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** As an example, our team was just sharing with me that, out of the nine units that we're building in those three triplexes, only one, because it is two storeys, is not accessible. The rest are barrier-free — all the units that we have just built in that infrastructure.

If you are in a situation where you are aging in place in a unit but there seems to be a change in your needs, we would be looking to relocate you into an accessible unit. What you can gather is that, when people move out and we have that opportunity — we have to stay within code, and we are going to try to make things barrier-free. You saw the partnership that we did with Cornerstone — and I think everybody in the Assembly went there and saw how incredible that is. I would say that, from a barrier-free perspective, it is pretty cutting edge, right from access to amenities in the unit to access to the

windows — you name it. The other buildings that we are building are the same. We are trying to upgrade our units. There is still a fairly significant amount of existing stock. In those cases, we are trying, as we can, to upgrade those units.

I will note as well for the Assembly that this morning I had a discussion on the topic of accessibility with the president and had asked if the president will have a discussion with the board at their next meeting, because my other concern — and I think that people have seen it highlighted lately — is accessibility into buildings. Whitehorse, as an example, is not a very friendly place for folks who need real accessibility options — besides the climate. I have been lucky enough to have some people educate me on that work, and I have worked with some advocates who have tried to make sure that I can see the world through a little bit of a different lens. They have been kind enough to spend time and share that with me. Yes, it's difficult.

The other thing that I had asked the president is: If it's appropriate, can we reach out to the City of Whitehorse? It's probably something that we will be looking at for other areas — not so much to focus on what the city can do, but how do we work with the city in partnership? Because, of course, we have a number of buildings. I know that individuals in the Assembly have reached out to me about snow removal and access. We have our own responsibility, but a shared commitment to that through different entities as well as with the municipality is something that we have to think about.

I just want the House to be aware that accessibility and reducing barriers, for us, is not just about the interior of these buildings but also the exterior and how people who are vulnerable, as well as others, move through our communities.

**Ms. Tredger:** What is the asset limit for seniors to access Yukon Housing Corporation, and when was that policy put in place?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We currently do not have a cap for seniors. We do for other folks on our wait-list, but we don't for seniors, but we are looking at identifying and modernizing some of those policies to take that into consideration. That has to be a very significant conversation because normally, I believe, if individuals have a current home, there is a period of time they have to sell that. But I have also been educated by members of the Assembly who have been here longer than I have about what that really means. There are some pieces there that don't always support the client quite as well. It is a broader conversation. We will make sure that we are working through this, looking at a very holistic approach to building out these policies and evolving it over time.

At this point, for seniors, we don't — but, of course, we still have a methodology that we use to prioritize for folks as they look to move into our units.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that. That is very helpful.

I have one more question on the topic of seniors and that is about Normandy. My understanding is that Yukon Housing Corporation has signed the lease agreement for 10 units over 20 years that is about \$3.5 million. Will that include the access to all services in the building, such as food services, meals, and all the things that are provided to all the members? I am also wondering who is going to be operating that facility.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It doesn't. That gets access to the units. What we are trying to do right now is work with Health and Social Services — Yukon Housing Corporation — and we are working through identifying what a future modernized policy would look like. What we are trying to do is balance out the fact that some of these — of course, Normandy is being driven by the private sector. The service model is being led by a Yukoner in that role through a Yukon company. There have been some questions about that, so we think that this is something that we really appreciate supporting.

Normandy is one model where you have the private sector setting a rate for these services, and then we have 10 units. We are also looking at Vimy, which we talked about a little while ago — about it coming online and what it costs those folks to be able to deliver a service, such as food, and the model that they are looking at. What I can say is that we are delving into that. We also are aware of the cost that it takes for an individual to be in long-term care. We know that. The Minister of Health and Social Services and I have had lots of discussions about this, and I appreciate her perspective on it. We are looking at what the monthly costs would be for somebody if they didn't have this option to be in another government unit. There is a cost that we are aware of when thinking about Copper Ridge Place. There is a cost that used to be associated with Macaulay, and Whistle Bend has another cost. Those are all significant, even on a daily basis. It's not what folks have to contribute but what it costs the Government of Yukon and Yukoners as a whole as taxpayers.

Those are the things that we are balancing right now: What makes the most sense, what makes good long-term, sustainable government policy, how do we stretch dollars as much as we can, and how do we ensure folks get it?

Without saying much more than that — because it has to go through an internal process and then we have to make some decisions on that — but what we're trying to do is make good financial decisions while ensuring that we have the right supports for folks, whether it's in one of the existing structures or something else.

I guess if the line of question is getting at: "Hey, you have these 10 units. What happens for these other services like food in the building?" — we're contemplating what we would potentially need to do or what would enable folks to have the services that they need, depending on who the clients are, who would be using those units once the building is open in late fall 2022.

**Ms. Tredger:** I do have a lot of questions about what that's going to look like. I was just doing some sort of napkin math, and it looks to me like, per unit, we're looking at \$17,000 to \$18,000 a year per unit. I don't know if those are single units or double units, but from what I've seen, that's probably comparable to market, but it's not cheap for units. I'm a little worried about whether the tenants will be expected to then pay the company — I didn't catch the name of the company — for the services, like meal services, or whether they will have the option of not accessing those services. In that case, do they have kitchenettes or kitchens or things in their building so that they

can cook instead, or is YG committed to providing access to those services for all the tenants?

I'm curious about having pre-committed to that before a contract could have been developed and about what the costs for that would be.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think there was a lot there. I will try to just sort of work through that.

What we're contemplating is — I'm just going to talk about Normandy — that, as we identify costs associated with service delivery there, we are investigating how we could potentially provide extra supports to folks either in those 10 units or individuals who may want to stay in that structure and provide services, but it could be a challenge to attain.

Then there are other individuals who have been there. I know that, in the last couple weeks, there have been tours where they have been well-received and well-attended. In those cases, we have seen folks go in who have interest in staying there. I think they're in a financial position to make that decision.

Of course, what we look at in the future, we are discussing. We want to make sure that the folks who are most vulnerable have the option. This is just one element in an entire housing continuum. It's important to state that we are still building units through the Yukon Housing Corporation that are affordable. This is a private sector partnership with the government. We have Vimy, which is similar. Inevitably, it is a private sector NGO partnership with government.

What was important — going back to the root of that as well — was, to make that contract — what we knew was that the Government of Yukon needs units as well in an affordable space as well, and I think the previous minister, working with the board and the corporation, looked at the units and knew that being able to de-risk the project was going to provide a whole other solution in the housing continuum. We are dealing with years and years, if not decades, of different approaches. We know that we have a vulnerable population — which we have talked about — who have been in hotel rooms, and we don't want to have that anymore. We want to come up with long-term, suitable solutions, and I think that there is a good business case for that. I believe that, in this case — early on with those 10 units — it made sense to de-risk the project, be able to provide another solution for seniors who wanted that and, at the same time, be able to get those units.

Now the conversation revolves around who should be in those units. There are lots of folks. We just went through the wait-list. There are different folks. Who are suitable occupants? What would be congruent — from a societal piece or from the culture in that building? What makes sense? What are the costs there, and what are the services provided? Those are all the things that we are just trying to finalize before our tenants move into the building.

**Ms. Tredger:** The one part I didn't hear an answer to is: Who is going to be operating Normandy?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** My understanding is that it is a syndicate of a number of different local companies. It is KBC Holdings that has moved this forward. That is Northern Vision Development, Ketz Construction, and Borud Industries — all organizations that have a long, successful private sector history.

There was a bit of dialogue here, I think, early on around — and I apologize to Hansard. It's called Corix, I think — an Alberta organization early on that they were in discussion with as a service-provider solution. I think that what they have decided is to build out a delivery model that will be delivered on behalf of the company itself. I know that I have seen one individual who has a long history of doing management and delivery in the hospitality industry and the service industry. I think that they have identified to lead that. I could come back to the House and let folks know about where they are at from a standpoint of recruitment and the composition of staffing. I know that, early on, we knew that there were different levels of expertise that they wanted to have on-site, whether it was for food preparation or medical support staff — those types of things. I guess that we can probably even — either during Health and Social Services debate or from Yukon Housing Corporation — bring that forward. But again, we are looking at a Yukon group of companies providing a service to Yukoners with a Yukon-built model — looking at best practices in this space.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that answer, and I am looking forward to hearing, as we go forward, the arrangements that are made for those 10 units, and I hope that they will be really successful. I am excited that those services will be available.

I would like to jump around a little bit and follow up on some questions that my colleague asked. She asked about — there used to be a program that provided low-interest loans to people for a down payment for their first home. I believe that the minister said they are considering bringing this program back. That is very exciting news. I think there are many, many people for whom this would be really helpful. I am wondering if there is a timeline for that, because I think that is the sort of program that would be a game changer for people.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** That would have been some significant progress in an hour and a half — that we are bringing it back.

What I had said was that we are going to look at the current situation and landscape to see if it's something that we should look at trying to have in our list of programs. I want to be very clear on that. I have asked for us to investigate the current situation based on the fact that it is ever-evolving and based on the fact that interest rates are rising. I think that the means test will be more challenging in the future, I assume. That is what we have seen — that tightening up for folks.

I am going to be open. I think that the member opposite flagged this and was advocating on behalf of a constituent. I am listening. I am listening to all members of the Assembly. I went back, and the discussion that I have had with the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation is that we have to be very open to being able to adapt. With this particular program, we thought that there was a duplication because folks who could meet the test for this could also qualify for a traditional lender. We felt that we could move out of that space and let a traditional lender take that space, and we could go into places like the communities where it was harder to get debt financing.

I also believe that we were also looking at the federal government's programs. There are two things that we are really

waiting to see. One is the rent-to-own that was committed to at the federal level. What does that look like, when is that program going to roll out, and how is it going to be accessible? Maybe that is going to fit the need for folks, so we want to know that. I will be up front that I have a challenge sometimes. We go through the information, but I'm also taking a common-sense approach to it. Some of the programs that the federal government has said — you can take some of your savings, such as your TFSA or RRSP, and you can pull that and use it as a down payment. I think that everyone in the House can say that there are folks out there who are trying to make sure that the bills are paid, the lights are on, their children have what they need, their children have care, and they are just trying to get through.

Even in a place like the Yukon where there are 13,000 empty jobs right now — open jobs — and there are a lot of different opportunities, even with that, even if our inflation is lower at this point than everywhere else in the country, even in that scenario, I still think there are people who would say, "Yeah, I don't have that ability to liquidate or to pull this money out of the savings program for my down payment."

I just think it's important to share that with you. We're taking into consideration all of the things that are at play here. The discussion I have had is, let's make sure, as the federal government clarifies their programs: Is that going to meet what used to be in place here for the homeowner? If not, what should we be looking at?

I don't have a time. What I'm saying is that it's a discussion, and an investigation is on the table concerning that previous program. I have listened to folks like the member opposite who is asking me questions. I have listened to others here. I think that's the respectful thing to do and the right thing to do. That's the commitment that this government has made, that there are good ideas from all corners.

Since I'm throwing the praise out, I'll say the same thing. We have also talked about — during the election, the Yukon Party talked about some beneficial programming — whether it's lots or programming — so that Yukoners can get access to homes. I would say that I agree with that, and I would even take it a step forward.

If we're going to be in a position — and, I mean, it's not in this year's budget — it's something that we'll work on and look to see if we can come up with an appropriate way to, within our existing program allocations — can we look at a program where we do give that incentivized ability for Yukoners who are finishing their trade or post-secondary as well? Because, in those cases — and it's not to alienate anybody else; it's just the fact that we're investing — folks go to school, and then we invest in those individuals. Now we're investing right from early childcare, because we have this groundbreaking program where we're investing before they go to kindergarten, then through the education system, then we have the Yukon grant. Well, we want those people home, and they want to be home, and they should be home with the support of their family. So, we're also trying to figure out how to take that into consideration — whether it's access to land to build or it's through our programs — and how do we do that?



Of course, we have to worry about trade agreements and certain items like that, but we're also — things like — we had to get an exception in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* just to be able to do the agricultural end, so we have to look through multiple lenses when we are thinking about the development of these programs.

I have listened to both sides of the floor — the Official Opposition and the Third Party. We are almost done with this spring session, but certainly, as we go into the fall session, there will be time to get me on my feet in Question Period to talk about where we are in that investigation or through conversations in the hallway or e-mail or letters between the end of this session and the start of the fall session.

**Ms. Tredger:** I appreciate the clarification. I guess I would just add that I don't think a program like this has ever been more needed than it is now. We have a sort of weird market, at least in Whitehorse, where renting is relatively expensive compared to housing prices, although they are both astronomically expensive. I can think of lots of people I know who are paying more in rent than they would for a mortgage for a comparable place, but the kicker is that they don't have a down payment to buy the place which would give them a cheaper mortgage, and they can't save for it because their rent is very high. I think this program really would make a big difference for a lot of people. I guess I just hoped to see something like that be brought forward as soon as possible.

I would also follow up on some questions about 4<sup>th</sup> and Jeckell. In the briefing, I asked whether there would be new staff allocations to support 4<sup>th</sup> and Jeckell, which I think is projected to have as many as 75 people in the 44 units. Maybe it's not 44 units; I can't remember the number off the top of my head. There is a significant number of new clients, and I was told that the department is planning to redistribute staff to cover supporting those clients as well. That worries me a little bit, because unless there is excess staff capacity right now — maybe there is, but it seems unlikely — I am wondering where people are going to find the time to support those extra clients. Can the minister explain a bit more about how that is going to work?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Within our bilateral agreement with the federal government, we do have funding for some term positions. There are three full-time positions. The funding, at this point, goes until 2028. We have used some of it. There is some flexibility. It can be used for supporting tenants as they move in or maintenance. There were two term positions that were coming to an end at this fiscal we just completed. I think that, right now, what the team is looking at is re-evaluating how those funds should be used, whether it is through the support system for some of our newer structures or existing other needs.

Again, it's taking a look first to make sure that we have an appropriate support system as people move in, but noting the fact that, yes, it is a significant amount of density. Depending on who the clients are, it's not just our department. We have other relationships with Health and Social Services and with our seniors coordinator and such, so we will have to take a look at how to best support folks who are in that building.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that answer.

Last Sitting, we talked about a number of units — I think it was about 20 units — that needed some repairs but were livable. I believe that the plan was to move people in as a short-term solution to get through the winter. I am wondering if that happened and if there is a long-term plan for getting those repairs done in those units and housing the people who are in them.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It was 16 units, I believe. We talked a bit about them. They weren't exactly where we would have wanted them to be, but we had to make sure that they were safe for folks to move in. This came from the housing summit that we did in October. It was identified at that time that a number of Whitehorse families were living in unsafe or precarious housing as winter progressed. At that time, the Yukon Housing Corporation stepped in and led an interdepartmental team, with support from the Safe at Home Society and the NGO community, through the coordinated access team. They worked quickly to identify housing to be made available to meet this emergent need. Again, this is consistent with the intent of Yukon Housing Corporation's community housing program, which aims to address the housing needs of vulnerable Yukoners.

Sixteen Yukon Housing Corporation units in Whitehorse were identified for immediate allocation, expediting health and safety repairs to ensure that housing was available to families in need. I am just going to check, but I don't think we are moving anyone out. We are not looking to move those individuals out of those units, but what we are doing is that they will stay in those units, if that is their decision, and we will be working with them and around our maintenance budget to identify or fix things that haven't been met to the appropriate threshold as we go forward.

**Ms. Tredger:** Now, that sounds like a great solution.

Speaking of maintenance, I understand that during COVID, there weren't — only emergency repairs were being done. I understand that's — the regular maintenance schedule has started again for home repairs. I imagine that, after that time, there is a bit of a backlog. I'm wondering how much of a backlog there is and when it is expected to be back to a regular time for getting repairs done in the units.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Of course, the Housing Corporation strives to ensure our housing units are safe, secure, and in good working condition for clients. The corporation prioritizes and addresses requests for maintenance and repairs on a case-by-case basis, balancing resources and staff availability with urgency of requests — again, going through and prioritizing.

Emergency repairs are addressed as soon as possible to ensure the health and safety of clients. Yukon Housing Corporation engages third-party contractors to complete many repairs, as well as specialized repairs and service work. Minor repairs are typically completed by our staff.

It was a challenge during the last two years trying to make sure that we were working with the Public Service Commission, making sure that the staff were safe and, at the same time, that our clients were safe and the back-and-forth.

We can go back and meet with our team to see where we are, if we're moving through this pretty smoothly or if there is

a big backlog, and then try to get that information back to the member opposite just to let her know.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you. That would be appreciated. I imagine many of those people are very excited to get their repairs back to being done in their homes, and I appreciate the work of everyone in the department working on it.

I continue to hear from residents about bed bugs and what a — and I understand that this is an incredibly challenging issue. I'm wondering: Is there any new money, any new strategies, any new things happening to try to address this problem? Because I cannot imagine living, on a daily basis, with bed bugs and not having any way to deal with it.

I'll leave it at that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It's part of our maintenance budget as well. I think, as the member touched on it, it's a challenge. It continues to be a challenge for us. We continue to look at and use best practices. There are a couple of different ways that this can happen, or we go into a unit and then the challenge comes back to us. Again, it is part of our maintenance scope, and I think that it has become a reality — definitely for the Yukon Housing Corporation — that this isn't going to be completely remedied anytime soon, and we try again to understand what this means to our clients, the same way any landlord would. I think that our team reaches out to use the best expertise we can to get this done, and we are going to continue to do that — but we are going to be sympathetic to the fact that it is an extremely uncomfortable scenario for folks when they are dealing with that.

**Ms. Tredger:** I am going to switch gears a little bit. On the housing initiatives fund, when the ministerial statement was made about that a little while ago, most of the partnerships were with First Nations or non-profits. The one private company I did see — I think that it was called HTTVB Real Property, and there was a million dollars for 15 new homes. I was wondering if we could have some more details on what those new homes were and where they are.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are looking to accept applications from all communities and entities, whether they are private sector or not. Officials have just made me aware — so, that HTTVB Real Property for those 15 new homes — that is the same group that we have worked with in Whistle Bend. We have done three buildings with 87 units with some of those same developers in Whistle Bend — so, a strong track record. I think that members in the House have gotten to know folks — medical professionals — part of that team — have been doing some work. I think that project is slated to be undertaken — if I'm wrong, we will come back, but as I am aware, it would be right in front of what used to be called Peacock Sales. It is just right across on an empty lot, just across from the Yukon tourism building. If it is not that lot, I will come back, but I think that is where it is. Those are the folks who are doing this project.

**Ms. Tredger:** I thank the minister for that information.

Regarding the flood relief program, in the briefing, officials told me that they were working on developing eligibility criteria, and I am wondering if there has been any progress with that. I am also wondering if it's anticipated that

there will need to be any flood relief for the coming year and whether any money has been allocated for that.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The eligible amounts of our flood program have three components: grant funding for restoration, replacement, or repairs to principal residences damaged by flooding to a maximum of \$35,000 per residence; flood relief initiative loans for restoration, replacement, or repairs to existing principal or secondary residences, as well as outbuildings, damaged by flooding; in addition, some flood mitigation measures related to building structures and systems may be approved. The interest rate for these loans is set at zero percent. Clients accessing loans are not eligible for subsidy on the repayment of the loan, and the maximum loan amount is \$50,000 per principal residence on that second one. And third, grant funding for property owners and tenants who had chattel possessions damaged in the flood — chattel grants have a maximum amount of \$6,000 for both owners of principal residences and rental households.

We have \$2 million in the budget for this upcoming year. We are working with what we have dealt with from last year, and I will be working closely with the Community Services department and the minister there. We will see what happens this year. Depending on what's in front of us, that might be another discussion for a further need, but at this point, we have \$2 million allocated, and we have this scope for the program.

**Ms. Tredger:** Is that program currently accessible to people?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** No, it's going live for application in May. I don't have the exact date in May.

**Ms. Tredger:** Speaking of application processes, I have noticed that recently, for most of the Yukon Housing Corporation programs, it has switched from continuous applications to quarterly application deadlines. I am wondering why that change was made.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** It was to streamline application processes and allocation. It just gives us more ability to work quickly on some of the requests that are coming through with the applications.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that answer.

With regard to the emergency home repair program, we are hearing from folks who have mobile homes that require some pretty large-scale repairs and are currently unable to get home insurance because of the level of repairs that are required, but they would be able to get home insurance once the repairs are complete. I am wondering if people are able to access the emergency home repair program for that or if there are other supports that are available for them.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will have to get back to the member opposite on this one. There are probably specifics through individuals that the member opposite might be advocating on behalf of — or bringing those questions forward on behalf of. I know that there are a couple of things at play. Let me look at what our scope of programming is. If it's not an emergency but actually an upgrade, maybe over time — I am not sure exactly what the situation is, but we can take a look at our program.

The other thing is that one thing I know that has been challenging for folks is that sometimes — I don't know if it is

in this case, but maybe there can be an offline discussion — you get a CSA approval on the mobile home when it is manufactured. I can remember that, during my time with the City of Whitehorse, one of the challenges was if there was some level of change made to the structure that can also change how it's looked at. I don't know if that affects insurance. I can tell you that when I think back to my place, I left it basically as it was. I got my insurance through the local Co-operators at the time, but I remember having discussions to say, if you make some changes — some folks were changing the roof structure, and how folks delivering those policies looked at it tended to be augmented sometimes. In some cases, it was frustrating. People wanted to wrap the structure for better R-value.

I know that is something we really grappled with, because we were going through the building codes and — this is essentially with the City of Whitehorse, not all Yukon — going through that process and trying to figure out how to support people who were in that situation and still make sure that they can still be insured, but also taking into consideration that we — at that time, at the municipal level, there was no ability to provide that certification again once the structure was augmented, even if it was for better purposes.

So, let us get back to you on that question and see if we can clarify a few points for the member opposite.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that. I appreciate it.

I would like to ask a big-picture question about how we're moving toward affordable housing as a territory. I have been very excited to hear about the Northern Community Land Trust. That has been really exciting work. I'm really glad that they have been able to get support. I think what they're doing really makes home ownership accessible in a way that it is not otherwise. There are also people for whom home ownership isn't a goal.

One of the solutions I keep coming across that just seems to have so much potential and so much promise is housing co-ops. There is evidence from across Europe and other places in Canada that they just do a really, really good job of housing people in rentals and stabilizing the housing market and stabilizing the rental market.

I'm wondering if the government is doing any proactive work, whether it's supporting NGOs that want to bring these sorts of projects forward, whether they're working with developers who might be interested in these projects, or whether they're interested in sponsoring some of these projects — because my understanding is that, federally, there was a lot of support for housing co-ops that kind of dried up in the 1980s. Since then, we haven't seen a lot nationally. I'm wondering if the Yukon government is looking at proactive solutions to fill this gap.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Big picture, our process is that we are going to be open to a dialogue with partners who come with innovative ideas. I think the member opposite touches on the cooperative model. I think there is great opportunity and value in something like that, but it's a fine balance for us in the sense that — look, there are so many NGOs — which I think we all know — in the Yukon — not just in this space, but in every space.

As a government, we have done analysis of this, and there are hundreds and hundreds of NGOs. I think, for us, we also believe that Yukoners are extremely entrepreneurial and very innovative. This territory has had a long history of that and we are always willing to sit down with folks.

We are not going out with a concept to find an NGO that will do it right now, but if the housing trust — that team — came to us — and I agree with the member opposite; I think that it is a great model.

What we will do is that we will build platforms and we will pull platforms together like we did with the housing summit. What happened was that there was good output. We talked today about that summit. We identified some people in need really quickly and we addressed that through those units.

We saw one NGO that had a really significant vision of what they want to build out and also the capital to do it, and so we have started to work with them since then with some seed and planning money and support. That is kind of where we are at. What I would say is that I think there are some great organizations out there: Habitat for Humanity, the trust, Grey Mountain, and Vimy — you name it — and they are all doing different things. We are open. We are keeping an eye on what is out there. I also don't have visibility to all of the conversations that happen between our senior teams. I get phone calls a lot from organizations that are commending the accessibility of our senior team and their willingness to have discussions about future projects and all of those things.

I am sure that ideas are swapped around, but we're not, within strategy, proactively going out with some of those ideas, but we are always open to discuss them if somebody brings them to us.

**Ms. Tredger:** I guess that this is just my plug for a taking a more proactive approach and maybe coming up with ideas and going out and promoting them and finding partners so that the initiative doesn't have to always come from NGOs and private sectors. I would love to see a really active role for the government in promoting housing solutions.

With that, I will finish my questions for today. Thank you so much to the officials for all of their work year-round, as well as their work today, and thank you for the dialogue that we have had here today.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any more debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation?

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

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

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

**Acting Chair:** The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$20,219,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$46,773,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$66,992,000 agreed to**

**Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to**

**Ms. Tredger:** Acting Chair, seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount-Lorne Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

**Ms. White:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:23 p.m.*



# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 69

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, April 20, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, April 20, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I would like to extend a welcome here, along with my colleagues, to some individuals who are joining us today for a tribute to the Business Excellence Awards. With us today are Andrei Samson, Lars Hartling, and Trevor Mead-Robins, who are all here representing the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. They are producing an event tonight and tomorrow. I would like to welcome them to the Chamber and thank them for their work on this.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I am delighted to introduce some students from the Porter Creek GSA. With us today, we have: Gabriel Hopkins, Harley Kloer, Kiersten O'Brien-Jackson, Emily Graham, Molly Hobbis, Nari Barker, Rune Spicer, Arianna Charles, Yeonseon Lee, Evey Moore, Val Thompson, Annie Li, Michael Broeren, Maddy Mills, and Azarioa Hogan.

Thank you so much for being here.

*Applause*

**Ms. White:** Today I have the pleasure of introducing two folks in the gallery. The reason why they are here, of course, is for the Education bill later this afternoon. But without leadership from within schools, we wouldn't see some of the changes that we do. So, today we have Jason Cook, who is the leader of the Porter Creek GSA, a teacher who, I believe, has fundamentally shifted the way that school acts as a whole.

Then, of course, we have Peter Giangrande, who is the principal of that school. Without that leadership from the very top down, we wouldn't see the changes that we can see — those shifts — so today I welcome them both to the gallery.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Earth Day

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise today to pay tribute to Earth Day, which is this Friday, April 22. This is an important annual event celebrated around the world. The theme of this year's Earth Day is: "Invest In Our Planet".

Now is the time for us for to invest in action on climate change. It will not be easy. It will take courage and character,

and it will take effort from all of us to preserve and protect our health, our families, and our livelihoods. This is our time to act. Investing in our planet can happen in many ways.

Climate change can damage economies, increase scarcity, and drain profits and resources. Innovation in sustainable business practices and environmental social governance standards is often the route to prosperity — economically and environmentally. Incentives for healthy cities and communities empower citizens to build a resilient future. Action from our youth, from our elders, from the big city, and from our smaller communities has an impact on the pace of corporate and government change.

As northerners, we are very familiar with the threats caused by climate change, and we are uniquely vulnerable to its impacts. As we know, the average temperature in the Yukon continues to rise at a pace that significantly exceeds that of the provinces in Canada. We see how warmer temperatures impact our infrastructure, traditional ways of living, and ecological systems. Thawing permafrost shifts the ground beneath us, challenging the integrity of our buildings and roads. Areas with distinct plant and animal species are changing.

Migration patterns are shifting, impacting the availability and access to traditional food sources and also increasing the risk of invasive species.

Last year's flooding was like no other, and yet we could see it again. The effects of climate change can suddenly and significantly alter our world.

Celebrating Earth Day and reflecting on the reality of climate change is important. Investing in our planet is investing in our clean future. To honour the Earth is to take action to heal the damage we have done and to prevent future catastrophes.

Thank you to the Earth for all that it has given us, and now is our opportunity to give back.

Let us celebrate Earth Day with action.

*Applause*

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April 22 as Earth Day, the largest environmental awareness event in the world.

Earth Day has been observed for over 50 years. Throughout the decades, we have seen many changes around the globe. With an ever-increasing global population and environmental changes stemming from climate change, we have seen lasting impacts on many environments.

Earth Day is about understanding the impact that our lives have on our surroundings. It's about recognizing that there are things we can do as individuals, households, and societies to help curb the negative impacts that we have on our environment.

It's not lost on many Yukoners that the majority of our food and goods are trucked very long distances to make it to our grocery store shelves. There are a number of local growers, farmers, and producers across the territory who have made it their life's work to ensure that locally grown and raised food is available to us year-round, and I encourage all Yukoners to support these farmers, producers, and gardens to ensure that

they grow their businesses and increase their food production to help slow our reliance on Outside foods.

The same goes for our natural resources. The more we are able to utilize our own sustainable resources, the less impact we have on the environment.

We have the means to produce energy. We have the means to support our own fuel-wood and biomass industries. We have the ability to tap into our own resources and to produce more locally based jobs and partnerships between Yukon organizations and all levels of government.

It is important to think about how we can become more self-reliant while lessening our impact on the environment. For now, think about how you and your families can participate in Earth Day. Kids get excited with they are actively engaged in events such as Earth Day. Talk to them about eating local and conserving energy. Take them out, pick up garbage, go for a family walk or a bike ride, and talk about the importance of active transportation.

Mr. Speaker, [www.earthday.ca](http://www.earthday.ca) provides some wonderful ideas on how families can celebrate Earth Day at home, whether it is through food, energy conservation, waste reduction, active transportation, or doing something to directly benefit the natural environment. It is these small actions that help plant the ideas and the knowledge about respecting our Earth in our youngest generation.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Earth Day. In the middle of a climate crisis, we have to remind ourselves, as leaders, to act like this is truly an emergency. Serious changes need to be made in our relationship with the land in how we use it and how we live on it. From wetlands to forests, the decisions that we make in this House will have impacts on land across the territory and will affect so many future generations.

Responding to the climate crisis doesn't stop with protecting our land. This year's theme for Earth Day is to "Invest In Our Planet". To me, that includes: investing in public services for people; investing in active transportation; investing in clean energy instead of continuing to rely on oil and gas; and investing in laws and regulations that protect communities and respect self-governance and calls for land back. Make no mistake: These missed kinds of changes can be made quickly if governments want to.

Another emergency — the pandemic — changed the way we think about political will. When we spent big dollars and moved fast, the sky didn't fall. We can do the same for climate change.

These investments help people to live healthier, happier lives with richer and wiser relationships with the environment. Right now, there are people on the ground fighting to make these changes. There are activists around the territory holding the government accountable to act now. They are building a positive future in the face of climate change. I especially want to thank them today for the work they are doing.

*Applause*

## **In recognition of Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce 2022 Business Excellence Awards**

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce 2022 Business Excellence Awards. The awards will be celebrated at both a Premier dinner later today and an awards webinar tomorrow.

This is the first Business Excellence Awards event in several years as the event has not been held since 2019 — prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The return of the Business Excellence Awards is a very positive development, bringing back what was a prestigious setting for great local entrepreneurs to be recognized for their efforts.

The awards exist to celebrate the many businesses that help to enrich the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon as a whole. The event also serves as a time for local entrepreneurs to celebrate each other's accomplishments and to share new ideas with one another.

This year, there are nine award categories. Finalists will be featured in an awards video tonight, along with the announcement of winners. Winners will be announced publicly tomorrow during a live webinar.

The Business of the Year Award has been split into two awards this year in order to recognize both larger companies with 11 or more employees and those businesses with under 11 employees. New awards have also been added to this year's festivities, including the Outstanding Workplace of the Year Award and the Sustainable Business Practice Award.

While all of the awards were measured differently, one constant is that all of the nominated businesses have demonstrated leadership and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yukon businesses have put in the work to keep Yukoners safe during the public health emergency, and these awards recognize their hard work and determination.

Because of the challenges faced in the last two years, it is especially important that we acknowledge those leaders in the business community who put in the work to adapt to the pandemic while representing the durability and determination that our local entrepreneurs are known for. Our local businesses were at the forefront of the pandemic response, and I thank them all for their commitment to public safety.

In closing, thank you to the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce for putting on this event and congratulations to all of the award nominees.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Whitehorse businesses ahead of the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce 2022 Business Excellence Awards and offer our congratulations to the winners who will be announced at this evening's awards dinner.

Our business community consists of dedicated, hard-working businesses and entrepreneurs, each of whom is driven by a will to succeed and a commitment to our community. This community was among the hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. We saw business owners and staff having to make changes to their business models in order to adapt to ever-



changing restrictions and health recommendations. These businesses faced an unexpected hit to their bottom lines, their customer bases, and their ability to provide goods and services.

While the pandemic affected all businesses differently, most are doing a great job at getting back on track, due in large part to their creativity and forward thinking.

I would like to offer our thanks to all of these local businesses that worked and sacrificed to continue to offer goods and services through a very trying time. You helped Yukoners navigate the pandemic, supported our community, and supported one another.

Tonight, businesses will be recognized for their hard work and dedication in a number of areas. We will see awards presented to a business for its sustainable business practices, to an outstanding workplace for giving back to the community, for outstanding customer service, and for innovation and, of course, awards for business person of the year, new business entrepreneur, and business of the year, which will recognize a business with one to 10 employees and also a business with over 11 employees.

It is an honour to take part in this evening's events and awards. I look forward to seeing which of our incredible local businesses will receive well-deserved recognition tonight.

Once again, thank you to our business community, and congratulations ahead of tonight's awards.

*Applause*

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

### TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a number of documents. The first is a *Yukon News* article from August 21, 2013 entitled "Government hid Peel numbers from public". The second is a *Yukon News* article from August 23, 2013 entitled "Another inconvenient truth". Third, I have a *Whitehorse Star* article from April 23, 2013 entitled "Peel plan called 'lightning rod for division'".

**Ms. Clarke:** I have for tabling the Yukon government request for expressions of interest document for housing development of the Macaulay Lodge site that includes a portion of greenbelt lot 309.

**Ms. White:** Today I have for tabling a media release from the Yukon Employees' Union dated today, April 20, entitled "Yukon Government must deliver a healthy Midwifery Strategy".

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

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with local health care professionals and stakeholders to develop a new health human resources strategy that includes:

(1) support for Yukoners seeking education in health care fields;

(2) improved measures to support recruitment and retention of health care professionals; and

(3) a focus on ensuring that Yukon patients have access to the health care they need in a timely manner from health care professionals who are able to provide them high-quality care appropriate to their needs.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon government for listening to the request of the Official Opposition to provide the Yukon Hospital Corporation with multi-year funding for extending their ophthalmology program and reducing wait times for cataract surgery.

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

#### Green infrastructure program

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In 2019, our government declared a climate emergency, and we are taking steps to reduce our emissions, fight climate change, and better protect our territory for future generations. Through *Our Clean Future*, we have set an ambitious target of reducing the Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions by 45 percent by 2030. It is an ambitious goal, and we must prioritize sustainable practices in all areas of our work to accomplish this.

One key way that we are prioritizing sustainability is through the Department of Highways and Public Works' green infrastructure program. This program is a multi-year capital investment dedicated to implementing building retrofits, renewable energy systems, and sustainability projects on government-owned buildings. Building retrofits are one way we can upgrade our buildings to decrease greenhouse gas emissions and make our government more energy efficient.

I am pleased to report that we currently have 38 energy retrofit projects underway in Government of Yukon buildings across 11 communities. While all of these retrofit projects are important, one project that I would like to highlight today is the replacement of the Yukon Justice Centre atrium roof, which just began construction. If you have ever been in the Yukon Justice Centre — and I have been — or perhaps just driven by, you'll note that it is an extensive glass roof over the atrium. While it lets in a lot of light, important in our long winters, it also lets out a significant amount of heat.

With this project, we are upgrading to triple-pane skylights to improve heat retention and to reduce air leakage. This project will also reduce the building's greenhouse gas emissions by more than 16 tonnes annually. Similarly, we will also be starting work to replace the roof at Yukon University this year.

The new roof will be built with more insulation, it will be more thermally efficient, and it will help to reduce the building's emissions by over 136 tonnes per year. This project will also improve the life of the building and reduce maintenance costs.

The climate crisis demands action, and we are moving quickly to do our part. Retrofits play a significant role in emissions reductions, but considering that more than a significant percentage of our territory's heating comes from burning fossil fuels, we will need to explore alternative heat sources as well, which brings me to biomass.

Biomass is an alternative way to heat buildings through the use of wood. Using wood will reduce our need for traditional non-renewable heating fuels, like oil and propane, which contribute to our emissions and have to be trucked up the highway.

The Government of Yukon currently heats three buildings using biomass facilities: the Whitehorse correctional facility, the Dawson City water treatment plant, and the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant.

We are also working on expanding the Whitehorse Correctional Centre's biomass heating system to also heat the youth justice centre and Takhini Haven. This expansion is expected to reduce the building's total greenhouse gas emissions by 320 tonnes per year or over 1,400 round trips to Dawson from Whitehorse.

From retrofitting our existing infrastructure to investing in renewable energy projects, I am proud of the steps that we have taken toward fulfilling our commitments in *Our Clean Future*, and I look forward to sharing future progress on meeting our goals.

**Mr. Hassard:** Thank you for the opportunity today to talk about a subject that the Liberals have broken many promises and commitments on — building retrofits. Let us go back to the 2016 election. The Liberals at that time promised to invest \$30 million per year in building retrofits to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions — not over five years, not maybe someday, but \$30 million per year.

So, despite continually boasting about the size of their capital budgets, there was no such investment in 2017, nor any year after. Just this year, after six years of breaking another promise, the Liberals have finally put money in the budget for building retrofits. We are happy to see the projects that the minister highlighted. We support building energy-efficient government buildings. In fact, the Yukon Party started that trend with the energy retrofit on this very building that we are in today.

However, it is laughable that, after six years of breaking their key election promise, the minister is trying to pretend that the Liberals take climate change seriously. The minister mentioned expanding the current biomass system at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. What he left out of these points is the massive shortage of firewood in the territory. Residents can't get firewood to heat their own homes due to a lack of fuel wood, sawmills are closing down, wood suppliers can't cut wood here in the territory, and Yukoners are crying out for any sign that this government understands how badly

they have destroyed the wood harvest here in the territory. But the minister says that they are investing in biomass for buildings.

Now, the Yukon Party supports biomass, but with the mess that the Liberals have created, can the minister tell us where he plans to get this product — BC maybe? Shipping wood up the highway to a territory that has a lot of trees doesn't seem very climate friendly. Again, this fuel-wood shortage is a result of Liberal inaction.

The Liberal record on biomass heating is poor as well. For example, the Teslin Tlingit Council has installed biomass throughout the community of Teslin and has even gone so far as to hook up the Teslin School, but the government continues to burn diesel fuel because they refuse to sign a heat purchase agreement with TTC.

Since the minister mentioned the law building, maybe we can remind him that there was a perfectly good biomass system in place in that building, but the Liberal government decided to replace it with propane. Given their track record, which new buildings do the Liberals claim are identified for biomass heating?

Now, let's go back to 2019. In the Fall Sitting, the Liberals touted that amendments were on the way to the *Assessment and Taxation Act* to allow for a municipal energy retrofit program; however, it wasn't until two years later that the Liberals scrambled to bring such changes forward. Unfortunately, they forgot to consult municipalities. It took letters from the Association of Yukon Communities, individual mayors, and even the former Mayor of Whitehorse, who ran as a Liberal candidate in the last election, to tell the Liberals that more work needed to be done on this program. Once again, it took until the program was on the verge of being defeated in this Legislature for the Liberals to finally listen and take action. Most rural Yukon communities indicate that their residents can't even take advantage of the program as created.

We certainly agree that more needs to be done to address climate change. Unfortunately, the Liberals' poor track record on climate change speaks for itself. It is yet another broken, hollow promise that they have only now decided to address.

**Ms. Tredger:** As we collectively work toward lowering our greenhouse gas emissions, building retrofits make sense. The more energy efficient a building, the fewer resources it takes to heat. This makes sense both financially and environmentally.

In Canada, and especially in the north, we have seen building codes change, not only to take into account the climate that we live in, but to take into account the effect these buildings have on the climate. Retrofitting older, inefficient government buildings is an obvious and basic step, and it is high time that it happened.

But as we look beyond the Yukon government's own buildings, it is obvious that there are still many barriers to energy retrofits. For example, the better building program, which is meant to help homeowners do energy retrofits, doesn't lend people enough money to complete a full retrofit on a home.

For example, my colleague has pointed out that, if she were to apply, with the current proposal, she could borrow \$25,000. The problem is that, when she did her own energy retrofits, it cost over \$50,000 to do the work needed, and that was back in 2013. If she was counting on the loans today, she would not be able to get that job done.

Will the minister be working with his colleagues to advocate that this program be expanded to fully meet the needs of Yukoners wishing to retrofit their homes?

There is also rental housing. All the current programs for retrofits target homeowners, but for landlords whose tenants pay the heating bill, there is not a lot of incentive to put money into making their homes more efficient. What is this government doing to encourage landlords to retrofit their rental properties?

What support is there for buildings that go above and beyond the building code? We have heard stories of people who have invested huge amounts of their own money into innovative solutions for making their homes more energy efficient and have faced hurdles and barriers at every step, from lack of financial support to being charged commercial prices for their personal electricity use.

For example, there is a condo in my riding that has installed an innovative electrical system using solar panels on their own building. Unfortunately, because it is a collective investment of the residence, they are being charged commercial rates rather than individual rates for electricity and are being hit with massive overage charges. They're being penalized for coming together as a group of passionate and concerned citizens who are thinking outside of the box rather than being supported for their innovation and personal investment.

So, although I think energy retrofits are a great place to start, it is extremely important for our future that the government begin to look at the big picture instead of just ticking off the boxes on a checklist. If we are to have a hope of making it out of this climate crisis, we need to start looking at how we live and making sweeping changes that encourage participation from folks in all walks of life.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the comments from the members opposite. Although there certainly are differences of opinion as to how to get there, I think there is common ground that Yukoners need to reduce greenhouse gases, whether it's through transportation or through the heating of both commercial and non-commercial buildings.

Our government is working hard to meet our commitments in *Our Clean Future* by helping Yukon buildings switch to more renewable energy sources. We are, in turn, reducing our emissions and building a greener, cleaner territory. Mr. Speaker, in addition to our work at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, our government is also installing a new biomass heating system at Elijah Smith Elementary School which will significantly reduce the school's carbon footprint.

We are also taking steps to help Yukoners make energy retrofits to their homes and businesses through the new better building program. The better building program will provide up

to \$50,000 to Yukoners to make energy retrofits to their homes and up to \$100,000 to make retrofits to their businesses at the lowest lending rate in the country. This innovative program will help Yukoners reduce their emissions, save money, and add value to their homes.

It is not just one project or program that will help us reach our goals in *Our Clean Future*; it is truly through a combination of initiatives that we will effectively protect our territory's environment through a meaningful reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Just last week, Minister Jonathan Wilkinson was in Whitehorse to announce the investment of \$32 million to support the Atlin hydro expansion project. Over the next three years, our government will invest an additional \$50 million toward the project that will add 8.5 megawatts of dependable renewable electricity to the Yukon's main grid. This project is expected to generate 31 gigawatt hours of renewable electricity each winter when the demand is greatest and will eliminate the need for four rental diesel generators, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 27,000 tonnes per year.

Another exciting project underway in the Yukon that will help us meet our energy goals is the grid-scale energy storage project, which is scheduled to be operational in the spring of 2023. Once complete, Mr. Speaker, this will be the largest grid-connected battery in the north and one of the largest in Canada. Yukoners will know that this work is beginning at the top of the south access and the Alaska Highway. Over the 20-year lifespan of the project, the new battery is expected to reduce carbon emissions in the territory by more than 20,000 tonnes.

Mr. Speaker, we are tackling climate change in the territory from all angles. From helping Yukon residents reduce their personal emissions to modernizing the energy systems in the territory, our government is making smart investments that make sense for both the pocketbooks of Yukoners and the sustainability of our territory's environment for future generations.

I want to end by thanking all of the hard-working staff in all the government departments involved in helping us reach our goals in *Our Clean Future*, and I look forward to continuing work in fighting climate change and building a healthy territory for all Yukoners.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Universal paid sick leave

**Mr. Hassard:** So, earlier this year, the Making Work Safe Panel, which was a creation of the Liberal-NDP coalition agreement, recommended making paid sick leave mandatory for Yukon-based private employers. It was not lost on the business community that the panel was co-chaired by the very minister who it will now fall on to make a decision about whether or not to proceed.

Last week, the minister told the Legislature — and I'll quote: "... now the government has taken those recommendations, and we are breathing life into those recommendations..."

The minister also said that they are engaging with local businesses. So, can the minister confirm that they are actually consulting with the business community before making any decisions?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** On the paid sick leave program, we agree, because we know that the Yukon Party also endorsed the CASA agreement, so we know that they're also in favour of paid sick leave in the territory, and that's good. It's good for Yukon workers and everything else.

The question is: How do we actually make good on the recommendations that came out of that panel's work? That's exactly what the civil service is doing right now. They're looking at options so we can then take them to the business community and consult with them. So, yes, we are consulting further with the business community on this issue.

**Mr. Hassard:** The fact is that it was the Minister of Community Services who co-chaired the panel that made these recommendations, so obviously he has supported them enough to sign off on the report. Now it's this very same minister who is leading the work on responding to his own recommendation; however, the minister has confirmed that he has been speaking to several Yukon businesses about these recommendations and what the government's response will be.

We have been told that the government has given strong indications that they will actually reject the recommendations to establish mandatory paid sick leave, so will the government stop dragging its feet and finally announce that they are not going ahead with the proposal that will add a new burden to small businesses here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Making Work Safe Panel has delivered its recommendations on the development of paid sick leave in the territory, and our government is now going to engage with local businesses and stakeholders who have raised concerns about the panel's recommendations.

Following the recommendations being released, we have heard from businesses and some of the concerns. We are in direct conversations with businesses right now, and we're going to work with them to alleviate their concerns.

If the member opposite actually read the panel's recommendations — and I don't think he has, because one of the pillars of those recommendations is implementing a paid sick leave program without harm to small business, to business, to Yukon businesses. That's actually one of the principles under which this whole thing has been drafted.

So, if we decide to implement paid sick leave — and we are looking at that, because we know that research has shown that paid sick leave can have an enormous benefit for workers and businesses when it's implemented properly. So, we're going to do the work to say what we can deliver to Yukoners. We're going to do that and then present what we find to Yukon businesses. One of the principles under which we're working is to do no harm to business in the implementation of this panel, and that was the panel's recommendation. I encourage the member opposite to familiarize himself with the report before asking questions.

**Mr. Hassard:** Earlier this year, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce made it clear what this proposal would mean for

small businesses, and they said — and I'll quote again: "... the imposition of a statutory obligation to offer 10 days of sick leave would create an additional immediate burden of a 3.8 per cent increase in payroll expense, reduced efficiency and increased administrative costs."

They went on to say again clearly that the Yukon Chamber of Commerce is opposed to any proposal that generates a significant increase in the cost of doing business for SMEs.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister do the right thing and reject the recommendation that he signed off on earlier this year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We know that there is value in supporting Yukoners so that they can stay healthy and safe in the workplace. We know that employers have concerns about how a program would be introduced and managed in the Yukon. The engagement showed us that there is support for a paid sick leave program in the Yukon, but it left unanswered how the program would be funded.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have spent \$1.7 million on the COVID-19 paid sick leave rebate program. That program will persist until September — the fall — of this year. There are substantial costs to consider. This government is doing the responsible thing by assessing those costs and assessing how we can actually implement a paid sick leave program that would benefit Yukoners and Yukon businesses as well. One of the principles is: Do no harm. That is in the report. That is what this government is going to do. We are going to look at the options and come forward with a program, if we decide to go that route, that actually makes sense for Yukoners and Yukon businesses.

We have heard from the business community. They don't have a monopoly on that. We are talking to businesses all the time. We understand their concerns. We have actually grown the economy exponentially in the territory. We are going to continue to do that because we work and we communicate with Yukoners of all stripes, including businesses.

#### **Question re: Public sector growth**

**Mr. Dixon:** While there is certainly no doubt that the economy has grown over the past several years — a quick look at the GDP confirms this. But as much as the Liberals try to paper it over, the real driver of the Liberal economy has been the unsustainable growth of the public sector. Since 2017, the public service and public spending has ballooned. Rather than help to drive the economy, this unsustainable public sector growth is choking out the private sector. The growth of government has driven housing prices up, has fuelled inflation, and is deterring the growth of small businesses.

When will the Liberal government get this rampant government growth in check and the stop the unsustainable growth of the public service?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** In our 2022-23 main estimates, we have 5,421 full-time equivalents reporting to the Government of Yukon to support programs and services for Yukoners. This is an increase of 95.7 FTEs, or 1.8-percent growth, from 2021-22.

We have heard from the business community as far as growing government, and we have made tremendous efforts in every one of our budgets to ensure that we limit the amount of growth to our FTEs. We want to make sure that we have, in every single department, the potential to make sure that our programs and services are being supported for Yukoners.

Making lives more affordable for Yukoners is extremely important. I would ask the members opposite: Which of these public servants would they have us cut?

**Mr. Dixon:** I thank the Premier for confirming the fact that the public sector has grown and the private sector has not. Earlier this year, the Yukon chamber sounded the alarm bell about this. They said that government-led policies, actions, and proposals were increasing the cost of doing business and that they felt the Liberal government was kicking them while they were down.

One of the key points that they raised was the Liberal government's hiring spree. They said — and I quote: "This growth in the public sector is seeing employees leaving the private and self-employed sectors to join the public sector in increasing numbers, which has resulted in increased costs for SMEs to recruit and retain employees in a market that is struggling to attract and retain employees."

The Liberals like to tout their record of growing the economy, but the reality is that all that they have grown is the government.

When will the government put the brakes on the unsustainable growth of government?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** When the member opposite was a minister, we were in a recession. Mining companies were leaving. We are having an active resurgence of the economy because of our principles and because of the economy and the environment being taken seriously together, which the opposition absolutely did not do.

The member opposite talks about growth of government. Here is how we grew the government — 31.1 FTEs for mental wellness and substance use. Is that what he is talking about? He wants us to not hire those folks? How about the almost 11 of the 95.7 FTEs that I am talking about for response to COVID that are not full time? They are time-limited. Are those the FTEs that he is asking us about — of the 95 new FTEs — that he wants us to cut from this government? The remaining FTEs are a response to *Putting People First*, emergency medical services, and midwifery.

So, again, the member opposite can't have it both ways. We are either going to move forward on these important initiatives or we are going to cut government. Which way would the Yukon Party go?

**Mr. Dixon:** It is clear that the Liberals have been very proud of how much they have grown government and the government spending that they have enacted.

But the fact is that this record spending and the record growth of government is throwing fuel on the flames of inflation that Yukoners are experiencing. The growth of government has driven up housing prices. It has driven up construction costs. It is fuelling the very inflation that the Liberals continue to ignore.

Now we're hearing that it is choking out the private sector and hurting small- and medium-sized businesses. We are now in a period when we should be thinking about economic recovery, and that recovery needs to be driven by the private sector.

When will the Liberals stop growing government, start getting out of the way of the private sector, and stop the unsustainable hiring spree?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Let's just set the record straight on a couple of points. First of all, we have seen our economy grow. We have seen the same number of businesses as pre-COVID. The number has actually grown with more businesses.

Yes, there were some times over the past couple of years where we had to hire people because the previous government spent tens and tens of millions of dollars on the Whistle Bend facility, as an example, but had no HR strategy. So, yes, you know what? You need nurses. You need support people in some of these infrastructure projects and in some cases as well with education.

But I can tell you this: We have seen blistering growth. If the member wants to get up again and give us some examples of how he can prove to us that our GDP has not been driven by that 50 percent from the mining sector, not from the tourism sector, and not from innovation, I would like to hear it, because again, they have proven to be unreliable, and we have heard it again today.

#### **Question re: Essential services staffing**

**Ms. Tredger:** From education to health care, Yukoners are missing the services that we desperately need. There simply aren't enough critical workers. Thousands of Yukoners have no primary care provider. Schools are closing every other week, because there aren't enough teachers to keep up. Essential workers are burning out, and there is no backup. Staff shortages seem to be the legacy of this government because, so far, their solutions just aren't working.

The minister is stuck on repeat saying that shortages are happening everywhere in Canada, but it is this government's job to do something about it. Can this government tell us what the plans are to fill these vacancies, or are they planning to let Yukoners keep waiting for the services they need?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I would like to begin by thanking the incredibly dedicated work of the public service this year and over the past couple of years. It is fascinating for me to hear, first, the Yukon Party stand and say that government is too big and then hear the NDP stand and say that government is not hiring enough folk.

We are working during a time when there is a labour shortage across Canada and across the world, and we are working very hard through the Public Service Commission to recruit, to retain, and to make the Yukon an attractive workplace. We know that the Yukon has been seeing growth, but we also know that there is pressure across all labour markets. I would be happy to talk more about the ways in which we are supporting our public service, but I would just like to say thank you to them for the incredible work that they have been doing.

**Ms. Tredger:** It seems like the minister is saying that nothing else can be done. We disagree. Here's just one idea: There may be a shortage of workers, but there is no shortage of Yukoners who want to study for these professions.

Let's look at medical schools. Across the country, there are Yukoners in medical schools who are working day in and day out to become doctors, but unless they got one of the coveted spots reserved for Yukon students, these students are left on their own and so they have no obligation to come back.

For Yukoners studying to become nurse practitioners, there are no funded spots in schools. They can try accessing the small scholarships in place, but these hardly cover rent. Again, none of that funding is an obligation to come back home.

Will the minister work to provide incentives for more Yukon medical and nursing students to come back home once they have graduated?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm wondering if the member opposite is aware of the work being done by our government with the federal government to encourage health care professionals. A federal program was announced during the federal budget last week. Doctors and nurses are both eligible for funds should they choose to become professionals who choose to work in rural areas of Canada. There is \$60,000 available to each medical student and \$30,000 available to each nurse.

Our government is reaching out to the federal government and working closely to ensure that the medical professionals who come to work in the Yukon Territory after graduation can avail themselves of that funding. I look forward to working with them further and to further exploring these options.

**Ms. Tredger:** It's not just doctors and nurse practitioners; these shortages are being felt across every level of our most important services.

In universities across Canada, there are hundreds of Yukoners studying to become social workers, teachers, midwives, clinical counsellors, and more. Again, graduating Yukon students could address the working shortage if coming back was easier.

While the Yukon grant covers some costs, there is no support after that money runs out. If any of these students want to go on to post-grad, they're out of luck. With the rise in the cost of living in the territory not to mention the housing crisis, coming home can sometimes feel impossible.

The minister has talked about how funding is not an issue when it comes to dealing with staffing shortages. Let's use that money to support Yukon students.

Will the minister incentivize Yukon students to come home by fully covering their tuition with the requirement of practising in the territory after graduation?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm happy to rise to speak about this really important issue. It folds into the Yukon's economy. It folds into the budget that we are currently debating.

I can indicate that, this year, \$255,000 from this budget will support health and social services training in Yukon communities. An additional \$250,000 is included to support careers in health and social services, including adding an additional cohort to the licensed practical nursing program at

our very own Yukon University. This program provides opportunities for up to 18 new students each year to pursue health care careers, and we have jobs waiting for each and every one of them upon graduation. \$397,000 in this budget will allow us to hire additional nurse practitioners and a chief nursing officer to enhance community nursing in the territory. By investing in the territory's health care system, our government is increasing access to medical services while reducing the wait times and the need for out-of-territory medical travel. A total of \$88 million will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to continue to provide Yukoners the important services that they need.

We are not blind to the concept of shortages of health care professionals and other professionals across government. We are working extremely hard to provide these services for Yukoners and benefits for Yukon workers.

#### **Question re: Whistle Bend pond maintenance**

**Ms. Clarke:** The Whistle Bend pond was designed by the Government of Yukon as a key part of the storm water infrastructure for the new neighbourhood. Its operation and maintenance were later transferred to the City of Whitehorse. However, in 2019, media reported how algae growth overwhelmed the pond. The Yukon government produced an operational plan with the city to use as a long-term solution to address excessive algae growth and pond performance. However, last summer showed that this plan is not working. The pond was again overwhelmed by algae, and the city had to commit additional resources to remove it.

Given that the pond was created by the Yukon government, what additional support, if any, can the minister provide to the city to maintain the Whistle Bend pond?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We work with the city all the time on this issue and on many others, and I will continue to work with the city council, the mayor, and city administration through Community Services. I meet with the mayor every couple of weeks to discuss areas of mutual concern. I have not yet had this issue brought to my table by the Mayor of Whitehorse, but if it is brought to my table, I will certainly work with the city administration and come up with another stab at trying to fix the algae problem in Whistle Bend.

I know that this is in the member opposite's constituency, I know that it's a big issue for her, and I look forward to further questions on the algae in Whistle Bend.

#### **Question re: Flood preparedness**

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, with the high snow levels, many Yukoners who own property affected by flooding last year are thinking about what needs to be done this year. Many want to get to work on their properties to prepare for the possibility of another flood this summer. For some, that means reconstructing slopes with stone or rip-rap, building up breakwaters, or constructing concrete or rock walls. But what many are being told is that they need to get permits from government before doing any of this work. In many cases, this means they need to go through YESAB, which some have been told could take months.

What is the government doing to ensure bureaucratic red tape is not getting in the way of Yukoners trying to protect their property from the potential of flood damage this summer?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, the lead on the flood response is the Emergency Measures Organization, which is part of Community Services. It's also working closely with the Water Resources branch from the Department of Environment, and the lands branch from Energy, Mines and Resources is working with residents. So, there are a few ways in which we're working to try to expedite permitting. The first one is that we put a call out to contractors to get them pre-approved, and there was a YESAB application that we were able to use from — I believe it was — 2016, which had already done the environmental assessment along many of the waterfronts. So, those are in place.

We then talked at a couple of community flood meetings to discuss with residents what they could do with the department — with the lands branch. We got a licence of occupation, which is normally required — we got that waived — the branch did. I thank them for that work, and they did that in consultation with First Nations. They're working with all other applicants. If they can work off of their property, they're able to do the work, but if they have to work — I have to give more response afterward, Mr. Speaker, but there are several ways in which the branch is working to try to facilitate and support residents.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, Yukoners who have been reaching out to government about this have been told that the government identified two specific contractors who are able to do this kind of work and do not need to go through YESAB — but that is only in certain areas, not everywhere. This also means property owners who have the ability to do the work themselves are not allowed to and instead will face a several-month wait time to go through assessment and permitting. This doesn't make sense to Yukoners who are looking to take action to protect their property at their own cost and through their own initiative.

Will the government consider undertaking a blanket YESAB assessment to allow Yukon property owners to undertake reasonable flood mitigation measures on and around their properties this summer?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, the question that was just posed to me was virtually the answer I just gave. The work that is being done was to try to facilitate for residents to be able to do the work as quickly as possible, while also being environmentally responsible.

There is longer term work that is going on. I know Yukon Housing Corporation is doing work around repairs to homes. I know that the Emergency Measures office is doing work to look at various flood mitigation options through engineering plans that have been underway over the fall and up to now. That work — once there has been conversation with communities about which options they prefer, we will then go back and look to see how we can help facilitate the YESAB work.

But we are working now to help homeowners work as quickly as they can. There are still requirements.

I just encourage everybody, if they have not been at those several flood meetings that have happened, to reach out to the lands branch. We have folks there who are navigating residents through that process to advise them of the best approach right now.

#### **Question re: Teacher remuneration**

**Mr. Kent:** So, I have a question for the Minister of Education about an issue of back pay owed to educators throughout the territory. This issue dates back almost three years and occurred when permanent school-based employees were moved to the same bi-weekly, year-round pay system as other Yukon government employees. We have heard that, in most cases, individual educators are still owed thousands of dollars due to errors in calculations when this move was made.

Can the minister tell us when the government will pay our educators what they are owed?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. I will start by saying that — thanking all of our educators. Some of them are in the House today. I certainly hold up all the work that they have done, especially through really trying times over the last couple of years dealing with COVID-19.

In terms of the specific question that the member is asking, I will bring that back in a legislative return.

**Mr. Kent:** So, as the minister mentioned, Yukon educators have been on the front line of the pandemic for two years now. They have had to adapt to changing circumstances and have done so admirably, yet the government continues to deny them money that is clearly owed to them since the pay system was changed over three years ago.

So, when can our educators expect to get the money that is owed to them by the government?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, I agree with some of the preamble of the question in terms of the importance of our educators. I have said that we certainly hold up the work that they have done. We have just completed a new collective agreement and there are increased benefits and pay for our teachers.

I will bring back information to the Legislature on the specifics that the member is asking about, but I really want to emphasize that we absolutely hold our educators up and the work that they have done. They have been on the front line during probably one of the most difficult times. We have maintained in-person learning. We have worked hard to keep children at the centre of our focus and continue to do so each and every day. For that, I think that every single Yukoner is grateful for the work that our educators have done, and I, as a minister, every single chance I get, I say that to our educators.

**Mr. Kent:** So, during the election campaign last year, this came up at several doors in all of our ridings, and I am sure that the Liberals heard about it, too — evidently not, perhaps not the Minister of Education. There was optimism after the election that this would be dealt with swiftly by whichever party formed government, but here we are, over a year after the election and three years since this first became an issue, with no end in sight.

We have heard from educators across the territory that they are owed thousands of dollars. We have also heard that the government has money budgeted to pay them out, but they are insisting on dragging educators through an extended process that has taken years, instead of just paying them what they're owed.

So, since the Minister of Education is unfamiliar with this, perhaps I will try the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. When will the government stop dragging their feet and simply pay Yukon educators what they are owed?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I know that there was a grievance from December 2019 that was heard by the Public Service Commissioner, and in January of last year, 2020, there was a decision that was given in favour of the government stating that the change in transition to recurring bi-weekly pays did not result in permanent employees being shorted and that the government did not fail to comply with consultation.

I know that the Yukon Association of Education Professionals has referred the grievance to the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board for adjudication. I understand that this matter was heard a few weeks ago. I will come back to this Legislature with that response. The Minister of Education also offered to do the same thing.

I think that the information coming from the members opposite is not accurate. I am happy to get the response once I have heard it from the adjudicator.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### OPPOSITION PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

#### BILLS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT BILLS

##### Bill No. 304: *Act to Amend the Education Act* — Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 304, standing in the name of Ms. Tredger.

**Ms. Tredger:** I move that Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre that Bill No. 304, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Ms. Tredger:** I think that it speaks to how excited I am to get to this bill that I forgot to read my script and jumped right into what I want to say about this bill.

I want to start by acknowledging the students we have with us today in the gallery, because this is happening because of them. We are debating this today because of them. The first time we debated this bill, I asked everyone in this Legislature to keep the students at the centre of this conversation and at the centre of the debate we had. I don't need to remind people of that today, because there is no way they are going to let us forget. They have so much power in their voices. They are here, they are vocal, and they make me so excited for the future, so I want to start by thanking them so much for being here.

This bill started with conversation. It started with a conversation with students. When I talked to students from the LGBTQ2S+ community, they talked about how much they needed support. That support meant a lot of things to them. For some of them, it was a desire for community and connection. For some of them, it was desperation about their mental health and how they were going to cope.

It's tough. It's tough being a teenager. It's tough being a child, and it's especially tough being part of the LGBTQ2S+ community at the same time. There's the challenge of accessing mental health care and medical care that's safe. That's a reality. You can't count on going to a medical health professional and knowing that you are going to be safe there when you are part of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

I could tell you stories about myself sitting through appointments and trying to decide: Do I challenge what has just been said, because it was not okay? Or do I keep my mouth shut and try to get this appointment so I can get the health care I need?

Some of the students have support in their homes; some of them don't. Some of them struggle at school. Some of them face bullying from their peers. Some of them may not even have support from their teachers. I know we all want to think that schools are safe places, but students are telling us that's not a guarantee for them. There is also the global context to consider. We are seeing the rights of the LGBTQ2S+ community around the world being eroded, systematically and steadily.

In Texas, a law was passed that makes providing gender-affirming medical treatments to trans-gender youth child abuse. It is stipulated that doctors, nurses, and teachers are legally required to report parents who help their children access that kind of care. Florida passed laws saying that no classroom instruction can involve sexual orientation or gender orientation in kindergarten through grade 3 or in a manner that is not age appropriate or developmentally appropriate for students in accordance with state standards. That means that not only can teachers not teach about these subjects, they can't support with these subjects.

We are seeing trans athletes across the world being banned from participating in sports, even at the student level — even at the school level. We saw a referendum in Hungary about education and the LGBTQ2S+ community with frankly offensive questions designed to stoke fear and hatred.

The rights of our students are under attack across the world. It is up to us to stand up and protect them.

When I was having these conversations with students, I asked: What would help? What would make things a bit easier? They said they needed support at school. They talked to me about the Rainbow Room at Porter Creek. They told me that their school has gotten safer. It's more friendly; it's more welcoming. It's warmer, because the Rainbow Room exists.

What they are saying is backed up by mountains of evidence. There are studies showing that students who participate in GSAs report a greater sense of belonging in their schools, higher self-esteem, and lower rates of depression.

So, how would a GSA actually help these students? What would it do? It can be a lot of things. It might be a safe place



for them to go — a place where they know that they aren't going to get bullied and they can just be themselves and not worry about the school for a little while. It is a place where they can receive validation and support, as they figure out who they are and how they want to be in the world. It can be a place to connect with peers. It can be a place to connect with teachers and access the support they need. They might be able to tell stories there that they can't tell anywhere else, and teachers might see that and give them the help they need. GSAs can be advocates for their peers, and in fact, the research shows that when GSAs do that, that helps the whole school to become safer.

I want to tell one story about a GSA. I have told it before, but I think that it bears repeating, and that is my story, going to school without one. So, I wasn't out when I was in high school, but I knew that there were classrooms that were safe places, and I knew that there were classrooms that were not. I was very lucky that I had teachers who created safe spaces in their classrooms, and I loved that. I couldn't have told you why I loved being in their classes, why I came over at lunch time, stayed late, and came early, but I knew that I felt safe to be myself, safe to express my thoughts, and safe to learn.

But, of course, that wasn't all of my teachers. I remember a particular class in particular where a student was told that he better change what he wore when he came to class, because he was making the teacher uncomfortable. I remember all the students knowing that if they wanted that teacher's approval, all they had to do was bring in the latest gay joke they had heard and then share it and the teacher would pass it on to the class.

I wish I could say that, at the time, I had done something about it, that I had done something to stop that being such a homophobic and transphobic environment, but it is pretty hard when you're a student. It is pretty hard when you are just one person. When you don't have explicit support from the school and from your peers, how do you push back? So, for me, I just stopped going to class. I wasn't someone who missed a lot of class. It was unusual for me, but when I went, I sat very quietly at the back. I made sure that no one ever paid attention to me, and mostly, I just didn't go.

Now, would that have been different if I had a GSA? Maybe. Maybe I would have told my friends what was happening, and maybe we would have found strength in numbers to challenge what was going on. Maybe a teacher would have heard me tell that story and could have taken action to make sure that the class wasn't like that.

I was lucky that I did have classes where I felt safe, but a GSA would have guaranteed that I had a safe space, even if there weren't supportive teachers around. I say "lucky" to have that safe space, but it shouldn't be dependent on luck — whether students feel safe in their schools. I felt lucky, but it really should just be a given that students feel safe in their schools. It should be a basic expectation that no matter what school a student goes to, they feel safe in their classes.

We risk a lot when students don't have safe spaces. We risk losing them from their classes; we risk losing them from our schools; we risk losing them altogether.

Unfortunately, there are many Yukon schools that don't have spaces like that. That's where this bill comes in — making sure that no matter which teachers are in a school, no matter which administration is in power, no matter which students are in a school, there is a safe space for them.

In developing this bill, we talked to a lot of people. We talked to students who told us how important it was. We talked to parents who wanted to make sure their kids could access spaces like this, even before they came out or before they officially made that request. We talked to teachers who were trying to make these things happen but without resources or support.

I want to really thank everyone who took the time to talk to me. In particular, I would like to thank the organizations that took time to write letters supporting this bill — in particular, Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon Society, and the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. It's not an easy thing to take a stand publicly, and I really appreciate that they have done that.

This is going to change things, if it passes. Right now, students are supposed to be allowed to have access to GSAs but only if they ask for them. That's a huge barrier. I would never — never in high school — have been the one to stand up and say, "I would like a GSA for me, please."

In fact, even later on when I was in university, when there was a club and I started making excuses to end up in that area of the university and I just kind of casually walked by when they were meeting — I wasn't going in; I just wanted to check it out and sort of see. Gradually, over time, I was able to work up the courage to walk through those doors and find an incredible group of people.

The same thing is true in school. There are many students who would like to find these supports, but these supports need to exist for students to access them.

This bill was also designed — we discussed this in Committee of the Whole and second reading, but this bill was also designed to have a lot of flexibility in it, because we know that there are a lot of kinds of schools in the Yukon — there are big schools, there are small schools, there are rural schools, and there are urban schools. A GSA is the right solution for some of those schools, but probably not all of them. So, this bill allows for activities.

I am so excited to see what schools come up with, because I think there will be as many ideas as there are students and teachers, and I think they're going to be wonderful.

I also want to talk about the implementation of this bill, because Queer Yukon, in particular, raised questions about this in their support letter. How do we make sure that the intent of this bill, which is to have safe spaces, becomes a reality? How do we make sure that it's not just a box that gets checked with no real action on the ground? How do we make sure that educators responsible for these spaces have the skills, whether that's lived experience or training, to make these school spaces actually safe and welcoming for everyone?

This is, I guess, where I throw the gauntlet over to the government, if this passes. To breathe life into this bill is going to take work, and I am so excited for that to happen. I would be

happy to help at any stage of the process. I really hope that the work is done to make sure that teachers do have the support to make these spaces a reality and that students do have the support to ask for the spaces they need.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the reactions I have heard to this bill being introduced, because I have heard a lot of them. I have never gotten as much feedback about anything, I don't think, as I have about this bill. I've heard from parents who are so excited that their kids will have these safe spaces in schools. I've heard from teachers who are fighting to try to make this happen but struggling with a lack of resources, struggling with moving from school to school without ever being able to create something permanent for students.

I've heard from adults who had GSAs, and they told me their GSAs changed their lives. I heard from adults who didn't have GSAs and how much different their experiences could have been had they had that support. My favourite story was from a friend who was leading an activity with a group of 11-year-olds and telling them about this bill. One of the 11-year-olds said, "This could happen at my school?" — and burst into tears.

So, as I wind up today, I have a number of thank-yous, because nothing gets to this stage without the work of an incredible number of people. I would like to start by thanking my colleagues in the other parties for their support getting here. In particular, I want to thank the Official Opposition, which allowed us to put this right after Question Period today so it could be debated — and both sides for their thoughtful questions and their help getting us to this stage.

I want to thank the organizations that wrote letters of support. Again, it's not an easy thing to take a public stand for your organization, and I appreciated that they've done that — to everyone who has taken the time to tell stories, to risk to be vulnerable, and talk about the changes that are needed, to everyone in the community who has just given this outpouring of support. I want to thank the Education staff all over the Yukon who have already been doing this work, for the administrators and teachers who are making this happen, for the teachers who are making this happen despite their administrators — you have made the world safer for a lot of kids, and I appreciate that.

Most of all, I want to thank the students. I want them to know they are so powerful. They're creating the world they deserve, and it starts with school, but it's going to be so much more than that. Because of them, the world is becoming a safer, warmer, more welcoming place, and it's not going to stop with the schools. It's not going to end there.

Thank you. Thank you so much to the students.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I too would like to welcome the students here today from the GSAs. I recognize all of you and the teachers who have come today to be here for this third reading. I am pleased to rise today to this private member's bill, Bill No. 304, brought forward by the NDP Member for Whitehorse Centre.

As Minister of Education, my focus is on ensuring the safety and well-being of all children in our care. Our

government has done a tremendous amount of work to make Yukon laws more inclusive and to make the territory a safe and supportive home of LGBTQ2S+ communities.

Students in the LGBTQ2S+ community are a marginalized group in schools. I recognize that and see the need to continue making changes that will continue to improve the lives of students. All youth and staff deserve a safe and supportive school. I take this very seriously. I am absolutely committed to putting policies and programs in place so that students and staff feel safe, welcome, and included. This is valuable work and means a lot to the students in our schools.

I was very happy to meet with the GSAs and students from other schools on April 13 where we discussed, at length, the bill before us today and the challenges that these students have and continue to face. I spoke to the youth and adults in attendance about the normal steps taken to create an amendment in contrast to the bill that we have before us today.

During this conversation, we spoke about the importance of consulting with all partners and stakeholders when considering changes to our Yukon laws. We talked about, as legislators, the responsibility of hearing all opinions, regardless of what they are, and taking the time to consider them.

From the information gathered in Committee of the Whole, we know that there has not been a very broad engagement on this bill. The member opposite has said that youth need this support now, and I don't disagree. I do have concerns though.

I have concerns that, in their haste to make a statement, it is possible that the bill could be on a course to further divide our community. Now, had we worked through this concept — a concept that we do not disagree with, and I really want to add that and emphasize that. Had we actually had the opportunity to work through this concept thoroughly, I believe that this division could be avoided and should be avoided.

I was somewhat taken aback by the Member for Whitehorse Centre's comments when this was last debated. I really have to say this because I think that it is important. I am referring to her refusal to discuss this with the Yukon Catholic Education Association. I appreciate that a conversation about GSAs, or supported activities in schools, could be a difficult conversation, but let's be honest here. Difficult conversations are part of our job. You can't simply change laws to avoid difficult conversations. If we start refusing to speak to people who don't agree with us, where does that end, and what does that say about our democratic system? I have had many conversations with people who don't agree with me at all. I do it because I was elected to represent the people of Yukon, not only the Yukoners who like me, act like me, or pray like me. No — I stand here as a voice for all Yukoners. I take my role and my responsibility to represent all Yukoners very seriously.

Building long-standing, trusting, and respectful relationships with all partners and organizations is paramount in all that I do. This is why consultation and engagement are so important. If not for the good work that our government did during the engagement process with Yukoners for the LGBTQ2S+ action plan over the last several years, I would not be confident moving forward with this bill. To help ensure that government is meeting the needs and priorities of Yukoners, I

think that it is essential to speak about this in third reading due to the areas of debate that have occurred regarding the perceived lack of consultation. It is important that we put this on record. We initiated a territory-wide public engagement process in the fall of 2018 to identify ways to strengthen our legislation, policies, programs, services, and practices to ensure that our Yukon Territory is working toward inclusivity.

We hired Qmunity, a Vancouver non-profit focused on improving the lives of LGBTQ2S+ individuals, to facilitate the engagement. Qmunity initiated a pre-engagement process. They met with LGBTQ2S+ community members and equality-seeking organizations to determine the appropriate method, scope, duration, and design of the public engagement.

In January 2019, Qmunity hosted 12 focus groups, which I named in second reading of this bill. We also hosted three large community dialogues. The themes of these dialogues were: health, mental health, and wellness; safety, justice, and employment; and LGBTQ2S+ culture and community building. We published a “what we heard” document in 2019. Some of the feedback we heard was for: education and training in LGBTQ2S+ culture and competency across departments and sectors; a culture shift toward more acceptance that would require systemic and institutional leadership from Government of Yukon and associated professionals; person-centred services in rural and remote communities outside of Whitehorse, including mobile and active outreach to communities; gender-neutral washrooms; and low-barrier access to facilities like schools, hospitals, and other government buildings. Additionally, specific feedback was received regarding health care, education, employment, business, and LGBTQ2S+ culture and community.

We found through the engagement that stakeholders were generally supportive of taking steps to positively impact diversity and inclusion. Stakeholders also expressed a strong desire for clear, timely, and coordinated action on the priorities of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and organizations. We initiated a second phase of this engagement with the purpose of prioritizing what we heard during and after the engagement.

From the LGBTQ2S+ prioritization survey, we heard that — and this is directly related to this bill today, Bill No. 304 — 74 percent of respondents said that it was extremely or very important to ensure that sexual orientation and gender identity policies are implemented and that gender sexuality alliances, GSAs, or similar clubs are supported by school leadership and educators; 77 percent said that it is extremely or very important to provide education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency; 81 percent of respondents said that improving anti-bullying initiatives in Yukon schools, especially for LGBTQ2S+ youth, is extremely or very important; and 70 percent said that providing extracurricular programming that is more inclusive of queer relationships and diverse gender identities is extremely or very important.

There are three documents on yukon.ca that go into detail on what we heard, with one of them being the report from community itself. In addition, you can find the final action plan there.

This was the first time that extensive consultation has been done in the Yukon on the needs and, in my opinion, it supports the amendments contemplated today in Bill No. 304. All of our work resulted in the first inclusion action plan in Yukon history. I was so proud to release this on behalf of Government of Yukon and with our partners in July 2021. It includes over 100 actions under eight themes, including: health care; education and youth; community and culture; and inclusive governance.

Regarding education and youth specifically, the plan identifies four areas of focus. I'll speak about them just briefly: implementing the sexual orientation and gender identity policies and encouraging schools to support gender and sexual alliances or similar clubs.

I want to just emphasize the fact that we do have a SOGI policy in place. I have made that commitment to review that and to work with our LGBTQ2S+ community, including our GSAs. A hard part for me with the bill is — “Nothing about us without us” is a principle that we adopted and what we were told and understood when we started this work. So, not having that direct conversation with folks has been difficult for me — to have this amendment before us. I will talk a little bit more about that as we go forward here today.

Providing education and training for teachers and school administrators in LGBTQ2S+ cultural competency, improving anti-bullying initiatives in schools, encouraging extracurricular programming that is more inclusive of queer relationships and diverse gender identities — I am very proud of — and I spoke extensively, I think, in the second reading about this — the accomplishments that we have made, as a government, from legislation to health policy and to new funding, including funding for the first Pride Centre in Yukon history.

So now — because overall we are supportive of moving forward — let me tell you what work will be required to make sure that we can take the next steps in this journey together — not to have a divided territory. It will involve reassigning people working within the Department of Education to focus on the implementation of this legislative change. Those people are currently working on implementing an inclusive and special education policy. That is intended to reach many of the same goals as this change. These staff will now need to refocus so their work can integrate implementation of this new amendment. There will be meetings with members of the community — those who support this and those who do not. We will speak with educators, school staff, community leaders, school councils, and many others. We will, as a government and in partnership with the school communities, determine how this will be implemented. This is work that I will do with the Department of Education because it is what is appropriate. Our Liberal team will take this concept and make it work for students while also working to bring community along with us on this journey.

Our territory does not need division. We know that we are strongest when we work together. Given the deficiencies in the approach to the engagement and the consultation when this bill was introduced by the NDP Member for Whitehorse Centre, I feel confident that our government can make up the difference through implementation. The strong relationships that we have

built over the last few years will enable us to work collaboratively with Yukoners to ensure that this policy is implemented fairly, respectfully, and inclusively. I support this bill and look forward to continuing the work of our government that we are doing to ensure that our schools are safe, caring, and inclusive.

Again, thank you to the members of the school community who are here today. For all of those who have participated in the debate of this bill, I appreciate the discussions that we've had.

**Mr. Dixon:** I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 304 at third reading. Over the course of second reading in Committee of the Whole, I have raised a number of questions and concerns about this bill. At second reading, I noted a few important things. First of all, I went through and explored the content of the bill. From my perspective, the intent of the bill, as expressed by the sponsor, is to ensure that all students feel safe at school and, in particular, that students who are LGBTQ2S+ feel safe and welcomed in their school. That is certainly something that I can support.

The bill itself changes the explicit role of principals under the *Education Act* to ensure that spaces and activities that make LGBTQ2S+ students feel safe are made available. It does not explicitly outline what those activities must be, but leaves this open to the discretion of the government through implementation. In absence of direction from government, it leaves it open to the discretion of the principals themselves.

I should also note that the bill has changed over the past several weeks. First, we saw the Member for Whitehorse Centre table Bill No. 303 and then Bill No. 304. We then saw an amendment to Bill No. 304, and then finally a clause was negated in Committee of the Whole, which essentially removed it. While it's still not perfect, I do think that the legislative process improved this bill from what we saw first tabled a few weeks ago.

The amendment from the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission was somewhat reassuring to me, because my initial concern related the potential implications that this bill could have from a collective agreement perspective. The minister, at that time, indicated that the amendment would address this, so I think that allays one of my concerns.

Finally, in second reading, I also pointed out that, at the briefing with the NDP, the coming-into-force clause was a bit unusual because it contemplated an order-in-council which, at the time, I was led to believe was not forthcoming. So, negating that clause also improved the bill, in my view.

The next point that I wanted to touch on was the importance of the ability of private members to introduce bills that propose to change existing legislation. This is something that is important to me. It's also, I think, a very important aspect of our role as legislators. I think that it is something we will see more of, especially in the context of a minority legislature as we find ourselves in currently.

Finally, an extremely important point is the real need for public consultation on laws and regulations. There are times

when changes can be made to legislation that are of a certain nature where broad and public consultation is not needed.

I do not believe that this amendment to the *Education Act* is one of those times. The Member for Whitehorse Centre has been clear that there was no formal consultation on this bill, and in fact the member implied that some groups were not consulted because the member would not like what they had to say. I don't think that this is good practice. I believe that, as legislators, it is incumbent on us to hear from Yukoners regardless of whether or not we agree with them.

In the case of this bill, we have also heard directly from groups like the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees that not only were not consulted, but they specifically asked to be consulted and were not. I think that it is unfortunate that those groups were not consulted and that it was a misstep. I think that this bill could have benefited from input from the school community. Yes, I acknowledge that some of the feedback may have not been exactly what the member wanted to hear, but that doesn't mean that it should be ignored. Nonetheless, it is clear that consultation should have occurred and did not. So, recognizing this, I proposed what I thought was a reasonable course of action at second reading, which was to send the bill to committee so that MLAs could seek the views of Yukoners about this. I thought then, and still think, that it was a good idea and not something that should have been so quickly dismissed by the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus.

All-party committees offer an excellent tool to bridge the gap between the important role of MLAs to propose legislative changes and the need for consultation on those changes. It is not something that we have proposed just for this bill. In fact, earlier this Sitting, it is even something that we proposed for a private member's bill from our own caucus. Unfortunately, the Liberals and NDP did not agree with this proposal and voted against sending Bill No. 304 to a standing committee to allow for that consultation to be done.

So, to conclude, we are faced with a bill that will change the legislative role of principals. There was inadequate consultation done with the principals themselves, with the union that represents them, and with school councils or boards which are established in the very legislation that this bill seeks to amend. Not only was there no consultation done, but the sponsor of the bill explicitly stated that they were not interested in consulting Yukoners with whom they may not agree.

I don't believe that this is the way that legislation should be amended. However, ultimately, my view is that this bill is ensuring that there are safe spaces in our schools for LGBTQ2S+ students. Whatever flaws there were in the process, that seems to be the driving intent of this bill and I support that intention. So, I will support this bill and will vote in favour of it at third reading. I do hope that the government takes the requirement for consultation seriously and seeks input from the school community about how to implement this change.

I know that the minister, in her third reading speech, outlined a number of steps that the government will take, and I

hope that consultation with the school community on the implementation is something that they consider as well.

I do want to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing this forward and offer my commendation for addressing an issue of importance to all Yukoners and to our community. While it's unusual that private members' bills successfully pass through the Legislature, I do hope that this is a trend that changes as well.

So, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the flaws with the process for developing this bill and the inadequate consultation, I will be supporting the bill and voting in favour at third reading.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill at third reading. I want to thank the students and the principal and teacher who are here today — who have joined us for witnessing this important debate and the important opportunity that it affords us all.

I will take the opportunity to review briefly our government's commitment and dedication to equity and inclusion. I think it's evident from the moment we arrived in government — and I think it's important, particularly with the young audience here today and with Yukoners who are listening — to review just a few of the steps that our government has taken.

My colleague noted, of course, the importance of creating the LGBTQ2S+ action plan in July 2021. Of course, it was based on engagement with Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ community and focuses on improving inclusivity as an employer, as a government, and as a service provider. Here in the Yukon, we are challenging the erosion of the rights that are mentioned by the member opposite in her third reading address — the erosion of those rights around the world — and we are doing that every day and that work will continue.

We have taken a number of steps in improving the health experiences of LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners and we have improved timely access to supportive mental health and wellness services for LGBTQ2S+ Yukon citizens.

We have worked to develop policies that promote equity and create more inclusion. We have worked to develop programming and services, and it is important to our government to have done that and to continue to do that.

Recently, we introduced a number of changes to the Yukon health care insurance plan, which not everyone may be aware of, to expand gender-affirming care coverage for Yukoners. With these changes, Yukon has become a national leader in providing supports to transgender and gender-diverse individuals. While gender-affirming surgeries were already covered under the Yukon health care insurance plan, these changes broaden the scope of coverage, based on the feedback of transgender health care experts and gender-diverse Yukoners. These changes have expanded the coverage to include a more comprehensive list of surgeries and procedures that support gender-affirming care and enhance access to hormone therapy.

Yukoners have medical care coverage for surgeries and procedures that include: laser or electrolysis; facial

feminization surgery; voice therapy; voice surgery; and enhanced access to hormone therapy. We have committed to conducting a review of any policy change within 60 days of any updates to the World Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care to ensure that Yukon stays aligned with these standards. Within 60 days, we will review any of those changes.

Back in 2017, changes were made by our government to the *Vital Statistics Act* removing the requirement for sex-reassignment surgery prior to an individual changing their sex on their Yukon birth registry. Birth certificates now have an option to include a gender-neutral marker. Those were two incredibly important changes for the community.

In 2019, Yukon was the second Canadian jurisdiction to offer World Professional Association for Transgender Health training to health care providers and the first to offer it at no cost to attendees. This training has provided health and social care providers with resources to deliver compassionate and culturally sensitive care.

These new policies are aligned with the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's standards and were reviewed by health care professionals specializing in the health and wellness of gender-diverse populations. They were reviewed by the president of the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health and the former president of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.

In addition to our regular funding, Health and Social Services has provided funding to All Genders Yukon to increase mental health supports for the LGBTQ2S+ community during the pandemic and beyond. Our government will continue to innovate and to adapt to ensure that the needs of Yukoners who identify as LGBTQ2S+ are being met.

I think that members of this Legislative Assembly have heard before that one of the first meetings taken by the then-Minister of Health and Social Services, me, and the then-Minister of Tourism and Culture was with an amazing group of individuals who came to us about their concerns and their wishes to improve the policies, the laws, and the community here in Whitehorse — here in the territory. It had a lasting impression on us all, and we have worked diligently since that time and before, I might add — but certainly since that time — to make sure that our government is a leader in directing the community of the Yukon to inclusivity and equity.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff, who are World Professional Association for Transgender Health-trained, deliver presentations and provide access to counselling. We increased safety for LGBTQ2S+ Yukoners by passing the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*, which bans conversion therapy in the Yukon Territory. We also amended the *Family Property and Support Act*. We are also protecting Yukoners' health by covering preventative medications, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis for the prevention of HIV, and expanding coverage for the HPV vaccine for anyone to the age of 26.

While *Putting People First* may not have highlighted specific issues of people who identify as LGBTQ2S+, the transformation and cultural change that we have committed to

through this report to the Yukon's health care system will be attentive to the needs of all Yukoners.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Department of Justice and particularly the legislative counsel office, which worked extremely quickly and very hard to provide drafting advice and some redrafting assistance to the Third Party, as noted. The bill that is now before the Legislative Assembly, Bill No. 304, is an incredibly important step forward in a long list of dedicated actions taken by this government to serve the LGBTQ2S+ community.

**Mr. Cathers:** To begin with, it's important to note that the actions Bill No. 304 envisions can already be done through policy or through direction from government. With or without Bill No. 304, those activities and actions can take place in schools.

As you know, we proposed referring Bill No. 304 to the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments. At second reading, I noted that we felt it was important for consultation to take place. I urged all members to support referring Bill No. 304 to this all-party committee and tasking them to hear from Yukoners and report back. Having an all-party committee conduct public consultation would have allowed questions to be answered and allowed all reasonable input to be considered. Hearing from people with different perspectives on an issue helps create better legislation. It could have happened before today's debate; however, the government and the Third Party voted against public consultation.

Through the life of this bill, we have already seen how the lack of consultation leads to legislation that could be improved. This bill was tabled in one form, then re-tabled by the MLA for Whitehorse Centre to fix earlier issues. The government proposed an amendment, which passed, and that amendment did improve the bill.

Then the MLA who tabled it urged MLAs to vote against one of the clauses in the bill they tabled, and that clause was removed. Considering comments made by both the Liberals and the NDP during debate on a private member's bill I tabled, it's clear there's a double standard when it comes to private members' bills, depending on who proposes them.

Mr. Speaker, I support the concept of promoting equality and non-discrimination in schools. All students should feel safe and welcome going to school, and it's important for parents and teachers to encourage students to treat each other with respect. The details of how that is done, however, is a topic more Yukoners than were involved in the development of this bill have thoughts about. When it comes to public consultation, it is important not to presuppose what people might say during that consultation but instead to listen to them and consider reasonable suggestions.

To summarize, here are four problems with the approach taken by the Liberals and the NDP.

Number one, they voted against public consultation on this proposed legislation, choosing to assume that no reasonable questions, concerns, or suggestions would come forward.

Secondly, even after receiving requests from Yukoners for public consultation, they chose not to listen.

Thirdly, following events including the Hidden Valley school scandal and the investigations at Jack Hulland, a lot of people have had their trust in the education system shaken. On any matter relating to their children, parents who have lost trust in government want to know what government plans to do and how, because they just don't trust the system to take care of their kids.

Fourth, when I proposed amendments to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* that would have provided increased democratic oversight and specifically provided for public consultation on regulations and ministerial orders, the NDP voted against even talking about it further. For purely partisan reasons, they chose not to see past me to the thousands of Yukoners who have been upset by lack of public consultation on rules that were impacting their lives during the pandemic. Instead of proposing changes — which we made clear we were open to — they chose to vote against this bill, because they argued there had been no consultation.

Much like OH&S regulations or highways legislation, that rules may be needed to deal with a public health situation does not mean rules should be developed by government acting unilaterally. In a democracy, public consultation matters. While the NDP are certainly entitled to vote against anything I propose, they should expect that after they cited a lack of public consultation as a reason to vote against changes I proposed to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act*, I might remind them of their own words just last month about the importance of public consultation on private members' bills.

I support the concept of promoting equality and non-discrimination in schools and creating an environment where all students feel safe and welcome. I don't support the Liberal and NDP decision to dismiss requests for public consultation on this legislation.

At second reading, I voted in favour of continuing debate. Due to the decision by the Liberals and NDP not to allow for public consultation, I will not support the bill at third reading. I will be abstaining from the vote.

**Ms. White:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just trying to process, to be honest — just trying to process.

I think that it is quite a day when we compare amendments to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* to a clause being added in the *Education Act*. I think that is a day.

I appreciate that the Member for Lake Laberge is going to abstain from voting today, but that hasn't stopped him in the past. That hasn't stopped him in the past — voting against changes being in the human rights legislation for gender identity to be included, among other things. But it is there. It is there.

And so today I know where are at least one member will be, and that's okay. That's okay, because I will remind myself why I am standing here and why we are speaking about this — why we are here today.

I appreciate the comments; I do. I have heard the comments about consultation. In the NDP office, we are mighty near eight now, which is the most people who have worked in that office in a long time. There are 1,185 people who work for the

Department of Education. There are 110 people who work for the Executive Council Office. There is a budget within the Government of Yukon for consultation. We don't have access to that, unfortunately, as the smallest party in the Legislative Assembly, so we took to speaking to students. My colleague is more than able to defend herself, but when we talk about consultation and hearing from opposing views, I don't disagree. I don't. But when we say that those opinions need to be weighted in the same way, I do disagree. I do.

The Catholic school board — they have opinions, and that is okay. Churches had opinions when the Yukon government brought forward legislation to ban conversion therapy, and it was hugely important. That was hugely important. It was also driven by students, and that was important, but we also didn't weigh one person's right to be themselves against a religious organization's feeling that they should be able to change that. So, when we talk about consultation, I don't disagree.

I am glad that the Minister of Education is talking about the resources that will be put forward because I think that it is really important. I think that is really important.

I do, however, call into question pitting LGBTQ2S+ students against inclusive education, saying that it is one or the other, because I don't think that it is, and that's how it sounded. If that wasn't how it was meant, I guess it's no different from the comments from my colleague being misunderstood as well.

So, when we stand here today, I think about Shara Layne and the article that I read from 2013 about her locker being vandalized at Vanier and how, for longer than a week, it said "faggot". That's not acceptable. We know that it is unacceptable. It was unacceptable then and it's unacceptable now. I would say with relief that things are changing. Hearing about prep coverage — that was super important. That was an e-mail that I got from a member of the queer community saying that this is covered in British Columbia and we should cover it here and this will save lives.

Talking about identification on drivers' licences — Shaun LaDue led that charge. Chase Blodgett was leading things for All Genders Yukon. I think about Steve and Rob Dunbar-Edge, the first couple to be married in Canada. All of these things start by people, unfortunately, in at times disadvantaged places saying: "We deserve human rights, and we deserve the same access."

So, I think about the discussions that I've had with not just my colleague but my friend from Whitehorse Centre and how important it is that we look at that. I think about the conversations that I've had with my friend in the gallery today. I think about the conversations and the lessons that I've learned from the students. That's what brought us here. It's what brought us here.

I think about how seeing a pride flag hanging from a principal's office in elementary school — what that means to kids, even if they don't know what it means. I know that when I was in F.H. Collins last week and saw the YEU pride moose sticker in windows or the flags in windows — what that would mean to kids. I know that I have had lots of opportunity over the years to go to Porter Creek Secondary School. I can say with confidence that, when that GSA started, things changed at that

school. It was always a great school — don't get me wrong. Every school is a great school. But this is a school now where — whatever hallway you're in, no matter what floor you're in, no matter what wing you're in — it just radiates straight-up love.

When we talk about activities and we talk about how it doesn't have to be a place and it doesn't have to be a student-led organization — it could just be activities — hanging that one flag in one classroom in a visible spot can change everything for kids.

I think about my high school experience. I'm actually wearing a pin right now; it's an ally pin. It was gifted to me by one of the students. I think about it. When we have this conversation, it's important to say that these rooms — these spaces and this inclusivity — isn't based on one kind of kid and one kind of identity and one kind of sexual orientation. This is literally all kids. This is literally anyone in that student body.

I think about my own experience in school where I was the one who asked all the questions because the friends who needed the help couldn't ask the questions. That's that role. The Premier told us about his role and his support of friends. So, being an ally, each of us in here has the opportunity to be an ally. We have the opportunity to be an ally with teachers and with school administration. I wanted to make sure that I recognized the principal of the Porter Creek Secondary School because it really is that role and that person who sets the tone of the school, and his tone has been fierce and has been protective. It has empowered that GSA.

So, each of us has an opportunity here. We can be an ally. We can choose to abstain. We can speak against and choose to abstain a vote, but we do have an option here; we do have an opportunity.

I'm glad to know that the Minister of Education is going to redirect some resources. I think that's really important. Maybe Yukon government can gift each principal with a pride flag, and that's an easy first entry into having an activity — just having that hang somewhere. It's a first start; I think that it's an incredible first start.

You might not be able to see them right now, but I actually had no idea that there were as many flags in the gender identity world as there are. I have learned so many things because of the students at Porter Creek Secondary School, and they can walk you through each of those flags and what they mean. But it's about representation.

So, today, we have this opportunity to be allies. Despite the differences — and it's true. Despite the differences in how we got here, we have the opportunity to be allies. So today, I, with pride, say that I am going to vote in favour of this legislation, that I'm going to stand shoulder to shoulder with kids from now and into the future, and that I will continue to support educators and administrators and community as they need it, because I think that's a real opportunity that we have. So, I encourage people today, when we get to that point of that vote, to vote in allyship, in support.

I do thank the Yukon Party for letting this become the first vote after the Question Period, and I do thank the Liberal government for the work that has been done up to this date. I

think that the more barriers we can remove and the fewer battles we can put on individuals' shoulders to get the rights they need, the stronger we will be. Let's take those lessons that we have learned from the people who have borne this responsibility, and let's stop making individuals have to stand up for themselves. Let's stand up for them together. Let's take away that individual burden of responsibility from one or from a minority population, and let's spread that out, because, as allies, that's the opportunity and the ability that we have.

I thank the students. It has been great. There have been so many good lessons. I thank the administration, because today is a big day. Again, this has been lightning fast, but it has been lightening fast because we were told by students that this is what they needed — and not just for themselves. This is the important part. The students in the gallery today, they are okay because they have incredible leadership in their school that is taking care of them, but we need to make sure that this is replicated and that we here, the Department of Education and governments, make sure that it is existing in schools. That's our opportunity as allies today. I look forward to that vote.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am just going to say a few words. I am not gay, but I wish to be an ally to people who have a different orientation than I have. I think it makes a stronger world, one that is more inclusive. I am a lot greyer in my hair than some of the young folks in the gallery today. I have had almost every form of privilege come my way, and I think that it's important that we use our responsibility as elected officials to make sure that our world is more welcoming, more safe, more inclusive broadly, so I am happy to get up and vote today.

I want to say just a few words. I wasn't going to get up, and then I listened to the speech from the Member for Lake Laberge and I thought that there are a couple of things I'm going to say. First of all, the Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, as I pointed out two weeks ago, last met in 1987. That's 35 years ago, and the member suggested that there were two weeks — we could have got that committee up and running and got this sorted out in two weeks. I disagree.

I don't think that committee has been active at all, so I don't think that it is a strong argument. I agree with the Leader of the Third Party that, when we talk about the difference between the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and this bill that is in front of us today, they are very different.

We have done engagement — not on the specifics of this bill but broadly on an inclusion strategy for LGBTQ2S+ folk. That was done by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. Well, that department did that work and did it by talking to Yukoners. I just looked it up and I was sure it was there. Sure enough, there is a page devoted to education and what we can do. That engagement work has happened. I think that when we spoke of this during Committee of the Whole, I made similar comments that engagement is incredibly important. We also have to, as legislators and as government, not just talk to the people who agree with us. It's tough leading a territory. There are always different opinions, and I think that we should embrace — isn't that the principle that we are trying to stand up for in this act that is brought to us

from the Member for Whitehorse Centre? It is that we shouldn't try to force everyone to be the same. We should support people to be able to be different so that they can be safe, so that they can have an opportunity like I had or maybe others of us here have had.

I just wanted to say that I believe in engagement. I don't believe that everybody needs to agree. I believe in this amendment because it will move from being a policy to being a law. I had a whole conversation recently with my colleague, the Minister of Justice, about how important that is — what kind of stature that gives to something like this, how it says to the Yukon that this is important and that we insist that this happen because we want a more just and inclusive society.

Just my last comment will be that I had the privilege to also be a councillor here for the City of Whitehorse, and in the *Municipal Act* it says: no abstaining. It says that, no, you have a job. You are elected; you have got to vote.

I appreciate that those are not the rules that we have here, but I think that it is important that, as elected folks, we stand up and express our vote. We were elected to do so.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I want to thank all of my colleagues in the House for their comments today and in Committee of the Whole as well, during second reading. I want to thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for bringing forward this bill. I am trying to rack my brain to try to think if there has ever been an opposition bill that has ever passed the floor of the Legislative Assembly before. I can't think of one.

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Yes, the *Act to Amend the Ombudsman Act*. There we go. Thank you very much, Leader of the Third Party. It is very rare — unicorn rare.

Again, it is an extremely important topic. We, as the Liberal government, have had an awful lot of conversations about supporting the bill — not the concept, but the bill — because it is a different way of going about what we can accomplish. That wasn't a long conversation because the support is more important than the process, in our minds. I think that the importance of consultation has been well-documented throughout the passing of this through the processes of the Legislative Assembly.

I will take a little bit of a different slant on it, I guess.

We have all been accused of not consulting very well — every single political party. In Question Period today, there was a great example. In Question Period today, the Yukon Party stood up and said: "Your recommendations on paid sick leave — we don't care; we want you to just go ahead and say no to that because the business community wants to not have that" — at least the people they spoke to. That is one opinion and one group and, again, maybe a lack of consultation. We were accused of a lack of consultation as well when we were in the majority government. I think that anyone in majority government — it's good fodder for opposition — I have been there in opposition — to say "consultation".

It is an important topic, though. I think that is what is really important in the debate today. I have said this before: My biggest fear in democracy and the western culture is that our



society becomes limited in opposing views. It is ironic that today we are talking about an extremely marginalized group and talking about how we have to make sure that — what the group wants and what the LGBTQ2S+ want — you need to consult with people who may have been consulted internationally since the days of the Crusades — sure. It's an ironic juxtaposition to say the least, but it doesn't limit the importance in the end.

My experience, 52 years on the planet, as an ally with my friends in the LGBTQ2S+ community — they understand what it means to be non-binary. They understand gender fluidity. They also understand that this applies to politics as well. It applies to faith as well.

There are members of this community — surprisingly? no — who are everything from libertarian to socialist and all pieces in between. There are members of this community who are religious or agnostic, from Catholic to Jewish faith and everything in between as well. This is why it's so important that we consult, even if we're not consulting with people who necessarily, in our opinion, have like-minded views on a particular topic because we might surprise ourselves sometimes.

Even if we don't surprise ourselves, that is the tough job of leadership. Once you analyze, once you listen to, once you debate, you have to make a decision.

I don't think the Minister of Education was talking about one or the other as far as the inclusivity compared to this bill. I think what she was trying to say — and I would never put words in her mouth, but she's hopefully nodding behind me — is that it's about: We were prioritizing something. This is important; we will prioritize this. It's going to be at a cost; everything has a cost. It's worth it. It absolutely is.

My point today is please — the young folks who are in the gallery today and people who are hopefully listening — it's really important that, in these days of social media and cancel culture — and I said this before — we need to engage with people who we may not think agree with us 100 percent, and we will be better as a society if we extend ourselves into those uncomfortable conversations.

One thing I have learned in this job is that, when I was 16, I did think that I knew everything. Now that I'm 52, I know that I don't know a lot, and I learn more every single day. But I'm just one person from one perspective. I have lived a life of privilege, as well, as a cisgender white male growing up in a town where the religion was what I was. It was easy for me, in those limited backgrounds, to think that I knew everything.

But what a wonderful experience of my life to surround myself with people who made sure that I was always a lifelong learner and that I was open to experiences from other folks from all different backgrounds. It has made me a better person along the way. It has humbled me and made me question some of the old motives that I would have had as a young person, which I definitely question today.

It's extremely important that we do consult. I know that the NDP knows that. I know that the Member for Whitehorse Centre knows that as well, and I recognize the extremely limited resources of being in a third party. I want to thank the

Leader of the Third Party for the conversations that we have had about sharing resources and what we can do to make the confidence and supply agreement better as we go down uncharted territory together. We don't agree all the time, but our relationship is strong because of the respect that we give each other. It's hard being in two different political parties when, at the end of the day, when it comes election time, it's no holds barred, but in those days in between, the Yukon is better off when people with opposing views have those tough conversations and come to resolve differences and move together for the greater good. That's what we are doing here today. It's not a surprise that everybody in the Yukon Liberal Party will be supporting this, and that is not a whipped vote; that is under principle.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Ms. Tredger:** It is really an honour to close this debate and close the debate on a piece of legislation that I am so proud of and so excited to bring forward.

Before I speak about that, I do want to just add a little bit to some of the conversation that has been had during this reading. There were a couple of things that I was surprised to hear, and I do want to respond. The first was that the Minister of Education suggested that, in order to implement this, they are going to pull staff from inclusive education so that less work will be done on inclusive education. That is pitting communities against each other, and it is shameful. Saying that our education system can only support the LGBTQ2S+ community by taking away from inclusive education — that is a tactic intended to divide and distract, and we will not fall for it. I will not let my community be used as an excuse to renege on commitments about inclusive education.

I absolutely expect that this government will support both safe spaces for LGBTQ2S+ students and inclusive education, and that is what I will hold them to account on.

We have also heard a lot of concerns about consultation — a lot of concerns about what I said about the Catholic school board, and I said: "No, I did not consult with the people who do not think that I should be allowed to get married or have children. I did not consult with the people who do not think the identities of the people in my community are valid."

You know, there is a big difference between talking with someone who disagrees with you — between having hard conversations — and going to people who have said that they don't think you deserve rights, between going to those people and asking: "How should we support our students?" I am happy to sit down with the Catholic school board. I will take that one for the team. I will have that conversation, but I am not going to delay this bill to do it. I am not going to delay making sure that our students have safe spaces in their schools in order to have those conversations.

In doing so, I have been accused of dividing our society. Apparently, bringing forward this bill, taking a stand to make sure that students have safe spaces in their schools is dividing

our society. If standing up for queer and trans rights is dividing society, that is what I will do and I will continue to do every single day that I am in this Legislature. And of all the days to be in this Legislature, this is a good day. I am so proud to be here. I am so proud to have — we still have some of the students with us. We still have some of our educators with us, and they are going to see change in this territory, because they brought forward — because of the work that they have done, because of the voices of people in the Yukon, we are going to have change in this territory. We are going to have safe spaces for our students, for our queer and trans, for our LGBTQ2S+ students in schools — no matter what school they go to, no matter who teaches there, we know that those students will have a place they can go for support.

I am so proud of the work that everyone has done to get us here, and I am so proud of this change, and I truly think that it is going to make for a warmer, safer, more welcoming Yukon.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

#### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

#### Bells

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Agree.

**Mr. Kent:** Agree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Agree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Agree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Agree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Agree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 15 yeas, nil nays.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 304 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 304 has passed this House.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

#### COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

#### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate in Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

#### Department of Justice

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to begin this afternoon by thanking Deputy Minister John Phelps, who is joining me here today, as well as Luda Ayzenberg, who is our director of Finance, Systems, Administration and Records for the Department of Justice. I appreciate the two of them being here today to support this debate.

I am happy to speak about the Department of Justice main operation and maintenance and capital budget for 2022-23. There are a number of budget items that support various Justice initiatives. They also support department commitments under *Our Clean Future*. Worth mentioning, of course, at the beginning of this debate is the community safety program. I can also indicate the improvement in the creation of Justice programs and services that provide supports for those in contact with the justice system. I am very proud as well of the work that we have done with respect to quality and responsive policing services and the infrastructure and IT investments.

I can note that the estimates outlined in the 2022-23 budget consist of capital investments of just under \$4.1 million and operation and maintenance expenditures of \$86.4 million. It is a significant budget for the department's priorities. I am very pleased — and I hope I have the opportunity — to speak about our new community safety planning program; about strengthening safety, access, and justice for Yukon victims of crime; about support for the Selkirk First Nation community safety officer program; about a new program offering supervised community housing justice services for justice-involved women; and about continued support for the family mediation service and Family Law Information Centre.

There are also, in the budget, updates to the *Public Utilities Act* and, for the *Our Clean Future* project, increased resources for the Department of Justice and support for the gun and gang violence action fund. There are updates to the RCMP First Nation policing agreement, to the RCMP unionizing and wage increases, and compensation increases for the judiciary. There are a number of upgrades to surveillance equipment at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the construction of a new morgue and coroner's office and maintenance and renovation replacement of RCMP detachments, just to name a few.

I will stop there, and I look forward to being able to respond to questions from the members opposite about these important aspects of the Department of Justice main estimates for 2022-23.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to begin by asking the minister how many employees the Department of Justice has now and particularly how many positions are being added this fiscal year.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Department of Justice currently, at the end of this budget, will have 295.1 FTEs, and the new FTEs contained in 2022-23 total 12.

**Mr. Cathers:** Would the minister please indicate the total cost to date related to the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and regulations and ministerial orders under it? I'm looking for both the legal drafting costs as well as the costs of implementation.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The COVID response costs for — this is, again, not 2022-23, which is the budget before the Legislative Assembly, but I think the question relates to the 2021-22 budget. The forecast from the estimate for the 2021-22 expenditures for COVID-19 response was \$766,000. The actuals for 2020-21 were \$628,000 for COVID response from the Department of Justice.

**Mr. Cathers:** I think the minister misunderstood the question. I was not looking for the cost from last year; I was asking for total costs to date since the start of the pandemic.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't have the figure that the member opposite is asking for, which I understand to be the cost the Department of Justice has allocated for their work on the COVID-19 response since the beginning of the pandemic and up to and including current dates, I think. I don't have that number. I have given the numbers for 2020-21. We are still in the process, of course, of closing out that fiscal year, so there could be some adjustments to that, but as I have said, it is \$628,000 at the moment, with the dates that I have.

Back in — it looks like February of 2022 — I don't have the total cost. If the member is seeking total COVID response costs all together from government, I think that I can certainly answer those questions — by department — but it is also probably an answer better given by the Department of Finance globally, but that is the fact-checked figure that I have with respect to COVID response for the Department of Justice.

**Mr. Cathers:** Would the minister please indicate what the costs of enforcement related to CEMA orders has been to date, as well as any litigations and court cases relating to it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I can indicate that the budget from 2021-22 is still being completed — the final assessments of actual expenditures.

So, the best estimate I can give today with respect to what will have been spent last year on the enforcement of CEMA orders by the compliance and investigations unit — which is created in Justice and reports to Justice through the various supervisors there and to the deputy minister — is approximately \$400,000. So, that's the compliance and investigation unit in 2021-22. I can see if we have a figure with respect to an estimate for 2022-23, which is the budget that we are debating.

I can also indicate, with respect to litigation, that litigation is generally supported by the Department of Justice's internal lawyers and staff who are employed by the Department of Justice through their salaries, so we do not track individual cases, but I can say that the Government of Yukon has entered into two contracts with outside counsel for the provision of litigation services for the Mercer et al. versus the Government of Yukon lawsuit — what is maybe commonly known as the Mercer case. The first contract is with the law firm known as Arvay Finlay and is for \$250,000. The second contract is with McCarthy Tétrault LLP for \$850,000. It is important to note that the total of the \$250,000 contract with Arvay Finlay LLP — a little more than \$139,000 was spent in 2021 with respect to that contract, and a little over \$49,000 has been invoiced in 2021-22. The total available for that contract has not been expended at this point. The total amount spent to date on the McCarthy Tétrault LLP contract is a little over \$785,000 — \$785,363.28. That contract commenced in 2021-22. The commitment sum of both of these contracts is \$1.1 million.

**Mr. Cathers:** Could the minister please clarify the total cost? I believe it was the Premier or one of her colleagues who made reference earlier in this Sitting to a total cost related to the Mercer et al. case — also known as the "group of seven" — I believe the figure cited was a total cost of \$3 million.

Could the minister please confirm: Is that correct? What are the other elements of that total based on?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm not sure what the reference is by the member opposite, but the figures that I have given are the most up-to-date figures we have with respect to the government's expenditures on the outside litigation service firms — so Arvay Finlay and McCarthy Tétrault — for the purposes of dealing with the Mercer case.

**Mr. Cathers:** It just does not seem that those numbers are aligned with what the minister's colleagues indicated earlier. I would note, as well, that the minister herself, on March 30 during debate on the supplementary budget, said that, related to that court case, there was almost \$1 million in costs related to document production alone.

So, I'm just asking what the total cost is of that spent by government related to that litigation.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I'm happy to repeat these figures if necessary.

The contract with Arvay Finlay is for legal services for \$250,000, some spent in 2020-21 and some spent in 2021-22. The amount for the services for McCarthy Tétrault is for

document production. The contract with them was \$850,000. A little over \$785,000 of that has been expended in 2021-22.

Total contracts currently in place — now, we're nowhere near the completion of this litigation, and the complete sum that has been directed in the Department of Justice budget for the purposes of dealing with this case to date is \$1.1 million.

**Mr. Cathers:** As the minister knows, part of the court application by the group of Yukon citizens was based not on what government did, but how they did it and the lack of consultation that they felt was undemocratic. Has the government made any attempt to settle the case out of court instead of spending millions of dollars fighting with Yukoners in court?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question.

The matter is clearly ongoing. The Yukon government is the respondent in relation to a court case brought, by my recollection, in the early summer of 2020, but I stand corrected. I don't have it in front of me, so I am not going to make reference to the date other than to say that, early in the pandemic, this matter was filed with the Supreme Court of the Yukon Territory. The Yukon government is a respondent, and it is not appropriate to speak about what is happening with relation to the government's position, or legal counsel's position, in relation to this matter. I don't think that I will provide any other information other than to say that the matter is ongoing. I am very hopeful that the parties can resolve it in a way that is to the benefit of Yukon taxpayers.

**Mr. Cathers:** I hadn't intended to ask another question on this, but the minister's last comment illustrates my point. The minister said "to the benefit of Yukon taxpayers". At this point, it certainly has not been to the benefit of Yukon taxpayers when millions of dollars are being spent by government on this legal case where government is fighting Yukon business owners in court. I wasn't attempting to delve into the specifics of the case. I was simply asking the question of the Minister of Justice, who happens also to be Attorney General: Has the government made any attempt to settle this case out of court instead of spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money on litigation, fighting these Yukoners in court?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that it is important to note, and for Yukoners to know, that the Yukon government is defending this case. We are not fighting anyone in court.

We are providing an appropriate defence to allegations that have been made through a Supreme Court of the Yukon Territory application. As a result, unfortunately, Yukon taxpayers' funds must be spent to defend a case that has been brought against the government. I will leave any other comments about how that case is being managed to the experts that we have hired at Arvay Finlay as legal counsel and have great confidence in their abilities to manage this case.

**Mr. Cathers:** It is unfortunate that the minister is refusing to answer that question, but I do have a number of questions, so I will move on to the next ones on my list.

I would like to ask the minister about funding for the RCMP, particularly related to drug enforcement. We have seen, in looking at the handout provided by the Department of Justice at the briefing, that it looks like there is funding for an

additional two RCMP officers, but the vast majority of the increases in funding for the RCMP to which the minister has referred actually relate to collective agreement increases for the RCMP amounting, according to page 2 of the handout provided by the department, to a total of \$3,738,000 for RCMP collective agreement increases while, in comparison, what appears to be new funding for officers appears to be \$297,000 to fund two additional RCMP officers for the crime reduction unit. Can the minister please elaborate on that? Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am happy to speak about work that the Department of Justice does with the RCMP and the excellent work performed by the RCMP here in the territory. The Department of Justice works to ensure the provision of a professional, accountable, and appropriately funded territorial policing service that is responsive to the priorities of Yukon citizens and worthy of the public's trust. Our government funds significant ongoing investments in police resources through a *Territorial Police Service Agreement* with the RCMP, and the Yukon has one of the highest police per capita ratios in Canada, averaging approximately one RCMP officer per 337 residents.

The RCMP forecasts its anticipated human resource operational funding and capital investment needs to the Government of Yukon through an annual financial planning process, which has been very agreeable and the opportunity for us to have up-to-date and in-depth conversations with the RCMP about their funding and capital investment needs, as well as their human resource and operational funding. Over the past five years, the Government of Yukon has increased the operational budget of the M Division — which is, of course, the division here in the Yukon Territory — by \$3,800,000, approximately 15 percent, which included funding for eight new RCMP positions over that period, but I can also break down the funding for the RCMP, which is the basis of this question. In the 2022-23 budget, the Department of Justice has proposed a number of items to support policing and to improve community safety and well-being.

This year — and this is for the first time — the wages for RCMP regular members will be adjusted, according to the provisions of a new collective bargaining agreement. Yukon's portion of these wage increases includes \$3.4 million for officers deployed under the *Territorial Police Service Agreement*. I think that it is incredibly important to understand that this negotiation has been going on for a number of years. The RCMP collective agreement has been put in place Canada-wide, and our portion to properly pay police officers is in this year's budget at \$3.4 million. With these increases in place, the RCMP will return to being a top-10 employer of police officers with respect to wages. They have fallen short of that goal.

The support from the federal and territorial governments for these pay raises and market adjustments will assist the RCMP to recruit and retain future members within the police service.

In addition to these strategic wage increases, this year's budget will provide the RCMP with an additional \$297,000 to support four years of additional staffing within the crime reduction unit, and the increase augments targeted policing

efforts in response to the ongoing substance use health emergency. This funding has been arranged.

In addition to that item, there is \$420,000, which is now a permanent increase to fund members who are working with the historical case unit and the crime reduction unit, which equals five permanent positions. This year's funding requests in this budget also include an increased budget to assist the RCMP to address a number of costs that are linked to increasing commodity costs and escalating service costs, such as the cost of maintenance contracts, shared services, fuel, and utilities. We have allocated an additional \$1.1 million to offset increasing operation and maintenance costs.

Further, our government continues to strengthen relationships in the world of — and goal of — reconciliation with Yukon First Nations and First Nation governments through a continuation and expansion of the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. The First Nations and Inuit Policing Program enhances community policing services that support culturally responsive policing in Yukon First Nation communities. As such, the 2022-23 budget provides an increase of \$425,000 to cover the Government of Yukon's contributions for police services under the current framework agreement. The amount supports the existing framework of 17 RCMP members already deployed under the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program.

In addition to this funding, and as Minister of Justice and receiving recommendations from the Yukon Police Council, I have provided the 2022-23 policing priorities to the commanding officer of the RCMP, and I am happy to speak about those in more depth if the member opposite is interested.

Those are the allocations and the line items in the 2022-23 budget that will support the Yukon RCMP.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister made reference to the letter of policing priorities. Has that letter been released publicly? At this point, I don't believe I have seen the one for this current year. Has the minister actually released that and made it public? If not, will she agree to table it here today?

The second issue that I would ask about is with regard to the guns and gangs funding. Could the minister please confirm that the limitation is still in place that it can't be used for the RCMP but has to be used for other purposes?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question about the policing priorities of this year.

I signed the letter to Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard with respect to this year's policing priorities. I believe that it was signed near the end of March. I will table a copy of that letter here in the Legislative Assembly — or if I can send it directly to the member opposite, I have no issue with that. I understand that if it hasn't yet been made public, it will be in the very near future.

I certainly wanted the opportunity, prior to that, for the chief superintendent to receive the letter and to be able to read it and digest the policing priorities for this year.

I can indicate, with respect to the guns and gangs funding, which is, since March 2019 — I believe it was \$2.25 million at that time to Yukon government over a period of time. Government has invested this — the member opposite is

correct: There are certain parameters with respect to how those funds can be used. I can indicate that we have continued to discuss this with the federal government, and I recently had some conversations with federal ministers regarding this as well.

But in the parameters given to us by the Government of Canada, the Government of Yukon has invested this federal funding in enhancing the knowledge base in the Yukon related to the prevalence of organized crime and about specific issues, including drug trafficking and illegal firearms trafficking.

We have invested in community-level programming that will help to deter or divert youth from criminal activity and gang involvement — this has included funding — and a funding agreement with the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon.

We have worked on developing strategic partnerships with the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and other government agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and First Nation governments to ensure that inmates, offenders, and individuals being supervised in the community on judicial interim release, also sometimes known as “bail”, can access a continuum of services to support rehabilitation, community reintegration, and maintaining a violence-free lifestyle post-community supervision.

Some of the funding has worked to develop intelligence-sharing partnerships to enhance intelligence gathering, data capture, and analytical capacity. Some of the funds have been used to support investigative capacity of the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit with two additional investigator positions and operational resources.

**Mr. Cathers:** Now, the minister made mention of illegal firearms. That brings me naturally to the topic of the — as the minister is aware, in May 2020, the Trudeau government passed an order-in-council that reclassified thousands of firearms that had been lawfully purchased, most of them as unrestricted weapons, and chose to ban those weapons and classify them as prohibited, along with going away from what had long been the standard in Canadian firearms legislation where, if a firearm was classified as prohibited previously, the owner was allowed to keep that firearm but not allowed to sell it. The new step under the order-in-council imposed the so-called “buyback program” that is, in our view, simply confiscation by a friendlier-sounding name.

My question regarding that is — the minister is aware that this regulation is very unpopular with many Yukoners. Has the minister raised concerns about that with the federal counterpart? Has she suggested that they repeal it or change it in any way?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** To be clear about what I'm referencing, the member opposite is correct. In June 2019, *An Act to amend certain Acts and Regulations in relation to firearms*, which is known as Bill C-21, received royal assent, and this resulted in changes to the background checks and the documentation relating to firearm sales, forfeiture of firearms, and transferring and transporting certain firearms. This began in June 2019.

In a letter to the federal Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness at the time, the minister at the time —

I wrote noting — the letter that I sent was in March 2020. I noted for the minister in that correspondence that firearms are a very important part of a subsistence lifestyle here in the territory, that Yukon citizens, Yukon First Nation governments, and Yukon municipalities would like an opportunity to comment on changes to federal legislation. I noted for the minister in that correspondence that considerations of law-abiding firearms owners must be taken into account when decisions about personal and public safety are made.

I think that answers the member opposite. We have spoken about this issue, as well, on federal-provincial-territorial agendas with ministers of Justice across the country and I am assuming, as well, although I will not assume I can clarify whether or not it has also been a topic on deputy ministers' agendas throughout the last two and a bit years or since this initially — Bill C-21 — came into being in June of 2019. I can also indicate that those conversations continue with respect to how it will ultimately be implemented.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the minister talking about the federal bill that was passed, but I was actually asking her about the order-in-council that was passed by the federal Cabinet on May 1, 2020, which, of course, is a related matter but a separate matter than the minister was asked about. So, I had asked her — first of all — if she would agree to table the letter that she just referenced and, secondly, if she could indicate, with regard to the regulation that — as the minister is aware — many Yukoners have joined people across the country in disagreeing with the change that was made in that May 2020 order-in-council. I have spoken previously in opposition to that regulation. I have been clear about my views on the topic. We haven't really heard clarity from the government on their views and what I am asking regarding that: Has the minister raised this issue regarding that regulation with her federal counterpart, and if so, what position did she take or what representation did she make about it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I can indicate that respect to May 1, 2020, the Government of Canada announced prohibitions and the regulation being spoken of by the member opposite on more than 1,500 models of assault-style firearms and certain components of those. A *Criminal Code* amnesty period was in effect from that date until April 30, 2022. I can indicate that the Government of Canada committed, at that time, to a buyback program that would allow owners of newly prohibited firearms to return firearms for fair compensation. Businesses would also be able to either turn in the firearms to the Government of Canada or return it to the manufacturer, also for compensation.

We understand that the federal government has invited up to 15 private consulting firms to design and run the buyback program, but the program has yet to begin. Exceptions have been made under the amnesty for indigenous peoples who are exercising aboriginal or treaty rights to hunt and for those who hunt or trap to sustain themselves or their families. That was done under section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, and these exceptions allow for the continued use of previously non-restricted firearms in limited circumstances — and that's

important for Yukoners to know — until a suitable replacement can be found.

However, by the end of the amnesty period, the intention is that firearms owners must comply with the ban, but I can indicate that recently Public Safety Canada announced that the amnesty period would be deferred until December 2023. The deferred regulations are designed to enable law enforcement to trace guns used for criminal purposes and to function alongside the ban on assault-style firearms as part of Canada's firearms strategy.

The amnesty is not ending this month, although initially it was to do so. I know it has been extended. The date I have is December 2023, but I will confirm that. We will check that date, because it is for some reason not jiving with my memory of the extension of the amnesty, so I just want to confirm that date, and then I will indicate it later in debate or by way of an appropriate document filed here in the Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister didn't indicate that she had raised it with the federal minister, which leaves the impression that she has not raised it with her federal counterpart or she would have said so. She certainly left the impression with her comments that she supports the federal actions. I would just remind the minister regarding this topic that, on this issue, it is not only profoundly upsetting to many firearms owners, but in fact, the National Police Federation union that represents RCMP members, in its very first position statement that they issued regarding firearms, noted their disagreement with the approach by the federal government and that it was diverting resources from where they were more needed.

I would just quote briefly, before moving on to other matters, that position that the National Police Federation said, in part — and I quote: “Costly and current legislation, such as the Order in Council prohibiting various firearms and the proposed ‘buy-back’ program by the federal government targeted at legal firearm owners, does not address these current and emerging themes or urgent threats to public safety. It also does not address: criminal activity, illegal firearms proliferation, gang crime, illegal guns crossing the border or the criminal use of firearms.”

“In fact, it diverts extremely important personnel, resources, and funding away from addressing the more immediate and growing threat of criminal use of illegal firearms.”

Just for the reference of Hansard, I think that I have tabled this in the past. It is the position statement issued by the National Police Federation in November 2020.

I want to move on to another related matter as it comes down to public safety and that is the area of the community safety officers. We are pleased, of course, that the program that was implemented by Kwanlin Dün — we were pleased to partner with them in funding — has been successful and that the government is considering the potential of doing this in other communities and is doing it with the Selkirk First Nation.

But my question relates to the total cost of this and what the funding is for. There is a line item that is identified in the handout provided by Department of Justice for a community safety officer position for the Selkirk First Nation that is a total

amount of \$400,000 for that position. It is 52-percent recoverable from the federal government.

There is also another \$300,000 that is described in the handout as a time-limited increase of \$300,000 to implement a community safety planning funding program available to First Nation governments.

Could the minister explain what that means? What other First Nations is the government currently in discussions with about potentially implementing a community safety officer program? What is transpiring in that area?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I just want to go back for a second. I have to correct myself with respect to the extension of the amnesty period by the federal government regarding the firearms changes to legislation and the program that will involve a buyback run by the federal government. The date that I made reference to was December 2023, and it is actually October 2023. The amnesty period has been extended to that.

The other thing I should be clear about is that I would appreciate it if there weren't assumptions about what I may or may not mean. I am happy to answer questions. What I verbally relayed with respect to these circumstances of our government's position regarding the firearms changes by the federal government were facts only. I am happy to repeat — in my letter to the federal government and it has been our position all along — that firearms are an important part of the subsistence lifestyle here in the territory; Yukon citizens, Yukon First Nation governments, and Yukon municipalities would like the opportunity to comment on the changes to the federal legislation and to be involved; and the considerations of law-abiding firearms owners should be taken into account when decisions about personal and public safety are made. It has always been the position that I have discussed with the federal ministers in relation to this particular important issue.

I am happy to move on to the additional questions about community safety planning. The reference to \$400,000 is in relation to community safety officer programs, and I will come back to that if the member opposite wishes, but the reference to \$300,000 in the 2022-23 budget is, in fact, in relation to the community safety planning program that is an initiative of Community Justice and Public Safety of the Department of Justice of the Yukon government. These increases are the first planned allotments to the Department of Justice operation and maintenance budget. So, in the 2022-23 fiscal year, it will be \$300,000.

The forecast is that, in 2023-24, it will be \$700,000, and in 2024-25, the plan is for it to be \$800,000 in the budget and, thereafter, \$200,000 until the fiscal year of 2029-30 allotments.

The planned inclusion of those budgets is for funds to implement a community safety planning funding program available to First Nation governments here in the territory. All 14 Yukon First Nation governments will be eligible to apply for up to \$200,000 maximum, within a total funding package of \$2,800,000, which will be available between 2022 and 2030. Eligibility criteria for the funding is being established, and future applicants will be asked to provide a business case detailing the scope of the request, expected outcomes, and an

associated timeline for their project. Individual First Nation governments will be able to apply on more than one occasion but up to a maximum of \$200,000. The anticipated benefits of the program will be to support implementing community-designed and community-led safety initiatives that are delivered by First Nation governments to meet the needs of local communities.

The intention is that the focus of the program will be to remove artificial barriers to eligibility that have been created by the federal program, which, in the past, has allowed First Nation governments to apply for funding to do community safety planning, but there have been difficulties with respect to the barriers that are set up by that program, and they limit the innovation and the federal program does not meet the needs of the community. With our program, we expect to provide stable, consistent, inclusive, and transparent funding for First Nation-led community safety plan initiatives. Progress on the commitment is also in progress on the commitment to the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

I can say that we are excited about this program. I had an opportunity to briefly discuss it at the last Yukon Forum to indicate that the commitment by our government is \$2.8 million over the next eight years for the purposes of providing money to First Nation governments and communities for the purpose of addressing planning for their safety and overall community safety planning. It's an exciting opportunity.

It is not anticipated that community safety officer programs, should they be part of the ultimate planning for these communities, would or could be funded out of this funding opportunity.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do just want to go back to where the minister started at the beginning of this. Also, just for Hansard and for anyone wishing to reference it if they are listening to or reading debate later, the position statement to which I made reference from the National Police Federation, which is the union representing RCMP members, was entitled *Gun Violence and Public Safety in Canada*. The press release that they issued with it was dated November 23, 2020.

I would also note that the minister again made reference to a letter that she sent to the federal minister regarding a previous piece of legislation. That, of course, was prior to the issuance of the order-in-council to which I am referring. The minister suggested that I had not asked her for her position on it. In fact, I did ask her what the government's position was on that order-in-council and whether she made any representations to the federal government about it.

I want to touch on a few other areas here. The administration of justice negotiations are also referenced in the budget. That, of course, is the administration of justice with First Nations. Could the minister indicate what the costs to date of those administration of justice negotiations have been, as well as the amount in this year's budget? Could she please outline what the scope of those negotiations are and what their status is?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the questions about the administration of justice agreements. Of course, these are available to Yukon First Nations pursuant to the original

negotiations of self-government agreements. An increase of \$532,000 in the 2020-21 actuals includes an increase of \$665,000 for negotiations and an additional cost for negotiating some collaborations in the partnerships unit, which was created at an increase of \$1,000 for the collective agreement increase. These increases were partially offset by an overexpenditure in the fiscal year 2020-21 for personnel adjustments, but again, this has yet to be reconciled.

The best estimate that I have for the 2020-21 budget includes the figure of \$676,000, which we expect to be close. I don't have a figure for cost to date. Administration of justice negotiations have been available to Yukon First Nations for many years. I can indicate that our government has implemented a new approach to the justice-related negotiations with Yukon First Nation governments, and it is based on recognizing and respecting Yukon First Nations' jurisdiction, governance, and their legal principles, providing new opportunities for collaborations and partnerships, and promoting incremental and capacity-building initiatives.

The Government of Yukon is committed to working with Yukon First Nation governments and the Government of Canada to negotiate and implement administration of justice agreements. These negotiations are a priority for some Yukon First Nation governments — in particular, Teslin Tlingit Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Our government is committed to strengthening government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nation governments, fostering reconciliation, and implementing the final and self-government agreements.

The Government of Yukon is committed to enabling Yukon First Nation governments to exercise their authority and their jurisdiction over the administration of justice. This is in response to the questions about the scope of the work that is anticipated, or being done, by the Negotiations, Collaborations and Partnerships unit in the Department of Justice.

Our government's new approach to administration of justice agreements negotiations with Yukon First Nation governments offers opportunities to consider new tools and partnerships regarding justice-related matters with First Nation governments and the Government of Canada. We hope that this approach encourages the First Nation governments who are not already ready to do so to consider entering administration of justice agreement negotiations. Of course, they are tripartite between Canada, Government of Yukon, and First Nation governments.

The Government of Yukon is prepared to enter into administration of justice agreement negotiations with the Government of Canada and those First Nation governments who have an interest in doing so.

I am happy to note that, at this time, we are having active discussions with the Teslin Tlingit Council. Kwanlin Dün First Nation has taken a brief break, based on some staffing issues they have, but conversations with them have been ongoing for several years, I am happy to say.

I should note that, in August of 2020, the department established a new Negotiations, Collaborations and Partnerships unit within Legal Services, and this branch has a

corporate responsibility to negotiate administration of justice matters with First Nations, including AJAs, and to develop corporate strategies for justice-related matters with Yukon First Nations, which is a great move going forward and an opportunity to be available and ready to do the work with Yukon First Nations in the area of administration of justice agreements.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to ask the minister questions related to the vaccine mandate and impact on Justice employees. We know that certain areas, such as WCC and Justice, had a significant number of people on leave without pay. Can the minister indicate how many employees in the Department of Justice were placed on leave without pay due to the vaccination mandate, and how many of those have returned, and which areas still have employees on leave without pay?

Secondly, I would ask the minister to indicate how many active human rights cases there are right now related to the pandemic and government regulations, mandates, et cetera, related to the pandemic.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have some of the information that might be of assistance to the member opposite. Department-wide, we had — and that's the Department of Justice — less than 20 employees who were on leave without pay during the vaccine mandate. I can indicate that all have returned to work, with the exception of 10 of them. I will go there in just a moment. I think there was also one person who was accommodated for religious reasons in that group, ultimately, and the other 10 still remain on leave without pay, because they are employees at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is designated as a location where individuals must be vaccinated because there is a congregate living situation and for health and safety reasons in relation to the congregate living situation that is there at the Correctional Centre.

I'm not aware of any active human rights cases that are before the tribunal or that have been brought to the Yukon Human Rights Commission here in Whitehorse involving Justice employees, if that's the question. Then if it's a broader question of how many cases have been brought to the Yukon Human Rights Commission in relation to COVID restrictions or public health measures, I don't have a number with respect to that, but we can look into it to determine if, in fact, there are any cases and if they remain before the commission.

Of course, I am saying that because we would have to contact the commission and determine if they would provide that kind of generic information about any cases. The commission is independent of the Department of Justice, of course, and their work is governed by the *Human Rights Act*.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would appreciate the minister getting back to me with that information. I know that previously, as Minister of Justice, I have seen information — not the granular detail of human rights cases, of course, but information related to them. My understanding is that this could also be made public, so I would appreciate if the minister would provide it.

I just want to ask a question about the implementation we have seen across a number of departments — funding related to the implementation of the government's climate change and



energy policy or strategy, also known as “OCF”. Could the minister please indicate how much funding in O&M is in the Department of Justice budget this year related to the implementation of that strategy and how much capital is associated with it?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Government of Yukon has directed a time-limited increase. This again is related to the Corporate Services branch of the Department of Justice. It directed a time-limited increase of \$125,000 for *Our Clean Future* projects in order to update the *Public Utilities Act* by 2025.

*Our Clean Future* prioritizes work in a number of areas, including a review of the *Public Utilities Act*. A review of the act will focus on how to ensure an effective and efficient process for regulating electricity in the Yukon. That act comes under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, and the Government of Yukon has developed *Our Clean Future*, of course, in partnership with Yukon First Nations, transboundary indigenous groups, and Yukon municipalities. The increase in funding for the Justice budget this year will provide policy support and resourcing for the completion of this work with a target date of 2025.

**Mr. Cathers:** I will wrap up my questions here and hand the floor over to the Third Party in the interest of expediting budget debate as well as providing them with the opportunity to ask questions today. I would just like to thank the officials here, as well as those in the background, for their assistance in providing information to the minister which was provided to me in response.

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague for sharing the floor today. I am excited to see the officials here this time — again in the Justice debate but this time on the mains.

I wanted to start by asking some questions about some of the problems that existed in Corrections back when I worked there in 2009, so it was a couple of days ago.

One of the challenges was — often, for example, folks would be brought in by the RCMP from rural communities. Back in the day at the time, the Greyhound bus was still running so people could get south. For example, if they were released from Corrections, they could get to Teslin and Watson Lake. Of course, we know that the Greyhound bus closed down, and then there was the Husky Bus, and the Husky Bus could take you north. So, it could take you, for example, through the points toward Dawson City. Now, knowing that Greyhound bus is not in existence any longer and the Husky Bus is not doing scheduled services, what happens when someone from a rural community is released from the correctional facility?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I certainly agree that there were days when that was not done — release from custody or from having served a sentence — in a way that we think is supportive of inmates and transitioning from that kind of sentence back to their communities.

I thought initially that the question might be more about bail hearings or about judicial interim release, and I can indicate that we’re trying — one of the lessons from COVID — to do more and more of those virtually so that individuals are not

brought into Whitehorse and then ultimately released on some terms or conditions.

So, work is ongoing with respect to not only providing the infrastructure that is required and available but having the practice changed.

With respect to the question regarding releases from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, every inmate at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre has a case manager. Case managers are required to do reintegration planning for inmates into their communities when leaving custody. They often work in partnership, primarily with friends and family, to make sure that somebody is able to be transported if transportation is the issue.

But I think for me — and I know for the team at Justice — the real focus here is determining how we can better transition inmates from being at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre back into their communities with skills and opportunities to meet the challenges that they will face, even if they have only been there for a relatively short period of time. I can also indicate that we’re working with our Yukon First Nation partners to see how we can do that better in partnership and ultimately, hopefully, provide a transition phase if that’s a possibility — almost like aftercare or the ability to transition from the environment that is available to an inmate to a return to their community or to another living situation if that is their choice.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I do appreciate knowing that we’ve learned lessons due to COVID and are making things easier — for example, not making people come into town for bail hearings. I do appreciate that. I think that it is probably very helpful for folks.

The minister did just mention friends and family when talking about getting folks back to rural communities. One of the things that we hear on a regular basis is that having a vehicle, having a licence, having the ability to put gas in — all of those are barriers. So, for example, what happens if someone lives in a remote community — let’s say Beaver Creek, as it’s the farthest one I can think about right now on the road — and they are released from Corrections? Ideally, they would go home. They don’t have a way to get home. So, what is the Government of Yukon’s responsibility to that person? You have a person from a rural community. There isn’t someone who can come in or maybe there was a plan that someone can come in — things happen. But what happens? What is the government’s responsibility to that person upon release?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I certainly appreciate that there can be cases where an individual is really facing some barriers. The reintegration planning is not short. It takes place over a period of time so that those arrangements could be made. It is incredibly important that we increase and maintain our trust and partnerships with communities, community organizations, NGOs, and First Nation governments that might be able to help in that kind of a situation. I can say that we have some ability to pay, obviously, for taxis or for some assistance with transportation nearby — or more nearby — so you’re not necessarily taking a taxi to Dawson. I take the member opposite’s point, but it truly is a collaborative approach to recognize that it is not like a movie

scene where the gates open and somebody wanders out and doesn't have any support. We recognize that this is an important element.

There is no program or policy, if I can say it that way, in relation to those specific responsibilities at this point, other than — and I want to emphasize this — the responsibility of case managers, the concept of reintegration planning, and the concept of our partnerships. In a world where those are working properly, we are not sending somebody out with no support at all. It is possible that there are situations where that might have happened. It is not something that we want to see happen going forward.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

Am I right in understanding that the arrest processing unit will have daily visits, for example, as a sobering centre?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am just going to ask the member to repeat the question as we may have heard it incorrectly. You are asking about the arrest processing unit, the APU, which is a unit physically at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for the purposes of dealing with those individuals who have been arrested, usually related to alcohol. I think that there is a question about — I don't want to guess, so if she could repeat it.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. What I was asking or trying to ask: Are individuals — for example, picked up by the RCMP who may be acutely intoxicated — taken to the arrest processing unit and then not, for example, processed into the correctional facility — are they just there for, let's say, eight, 10, or 12 hours?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question.

The arrest processing unit is physically located at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It is used as a place of last resort by the RCMP — it is RCMP policy to do so. They work in collaboration, should they come upon a person who is intoxicated. For instance, they work in collaboration with Emergency Medical Services, with NGOs like the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, or the Sarah Steele Building, or perhaps in collaboration in the near future with a government like the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, where they will have services for individuals who are struggling with addictions. That is what I am talking about in this case but, as a last resort, if there is no appropriate location or if the individual cannot be returned home or to a safe place where they can sober up, then they may be taken to the arrest processing unit.

That's primarily for the purposes of being safe and not consuming any further alcohol and sobering up. They would be available to stay at that location until that was a possibility and would be released from there.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. What happens upon the release of those folks? So, the minister said that it's not like a movie where the gates open and a person walks out. If someone has been taken in for the purpose of sobering, what happens when those folks are released?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I just want to be clear. I think I said, "I hope it's not like the movies", and this is the case, because we want to make sure we are

helping people who are leaving custody at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

I am going to address the situation where somebody was taken to the arrest processing unit as a last resort. They remain in the custody of the RCMP and under the jurisdiction of the RCMP while they are there. They sober up and will be released by the RCMP if it's safe to do so. Always, one of the criteria is that the person is not a danger to themselves or to anyone else in that situation and they have regained their faculties around that.

If a taxi is called — which it could be — it would be the responsibility of the RCMP. We are always wanting to make sure that individuals are supported in that way. Friends and family are often called to drive them or pick them up. I can indicate that the individuals who work at the arrest processing unit, or with the RCMP, in the situation of releasing individuals are keenly aware of the humanity that's required to do this work and of the support that may be needed for an individual to get safely to where they need to be going.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for the clarification. I think it's just a visual image in mind now and I just imagine it's like the movie and the gates open — although, I worked there, and it's not quite like that. There is a glass door. It's quite nice.

How many folks have stayed at the arrest processing unit since April of last year? Obviously, I don't need to know anything about them. What I'm looking for is the number of unique stays at the arrest processing unit since April of last year.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the opportunity to quickly look. I do have some statistics from the Department of Justice here, but it's not included there. I was not sure. I just had a chance to check that.

We would receive those statistics from the RCMP, so, as I have said, the arrest processing unit is physically at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre but is the jurisdiction of the RCMP, although we, of course, work with them to provide staff there as well.

We can ask the RCMP for that figure. I want to be clear that the question is: How many individuals will have been processed at the arrest processing unit since April 2021? Is that correct?

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that. I am hoping that it will be in a legislative return, an e-mail, or a tabled document. The reason I ask is that we did actually file an ATIPP because I was curious about it. If we go back to the Beaton and Allen report, which I know that the minister would be familiar with from a previous life — the Beaton and Allen report was really adamant that there needed to be a safe sobering place downtown. It shouldn't have been the arrest processing unit. Full disclosure: This government inherited a facility that was built by a previous government. It depends on what you think justice-involved folk should — you know, there is a whole slew of things there. But it was inherited; I recognize that. Also inherited was an arrest processing unit instead of a sobering space downtown, but the minister, in a multitude of portfolios since declaring the substance use emergency — one of the things to look at is how we deal with this. Do we believe that

acute intoxication is a justice issue or is it a health issue? Do we take people up to the arrest processing unit at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre or elsewhere?

Anyway, it was recommended in the Beaton and Allen report that there be a sobering space in downtown Whitehorse, so we did ask for an ATIPP. From January 2020 to January 2022 — so two years — there were 1,952 stays at the arrest processing unit. If we look into that — and it was hard to get a breakdown because it is ATIPP and you have to ask very specific questions. When I'm looking for those numbers — the reason why I'm asking is that, if it was a matter of individuals needing that sobering space, then with having declared a substance use emergency, my hope is that we can do it in a different way.

I do appreciate that the minister will get back with that number. I am hopeful that we will be up again because this is, I think, an important conversation. I do actually have more of an interest in having a conversation about programs, policies, or things like that — what is happening on an ongoing basis — because I really do appreciate that the amount of money toward Justice in the budget is important, but I just want to know how things are done. I am hopeful that we will be back.

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.*

### The following written question was tabled April 20, 2022:

Written Question No. 19

Re: auxiliary-on-call and casual staff (White)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 70

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, April 21, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, April 21, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Bills ordered dropped from Order Paper**

**Speaker:** Before we begin with the Daily Routine, the Chair would like to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper.

Bill No. 303, entitled *Act to Amend the Education Act (2022)*, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre, has been removed from the Order Paper as it is similar to Bill No. 304, which passed the House yesterday.

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming a number of guests here for the tribute to MLA Mickey Fisher. They are: Mickey's daughter, Lila Nickel; her husband, Rod; and their children, Jamie and Jacob; as well, Gord Steele; former MLA Patrick Rouble; Leo Chasse; and Dale Kozmen.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

**TRIBUTES**

**In remembrance of Mickey Fisher**

**Mr. Cathers:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party and the Third Party to pay tribute to former Yukon Party MLA Mickey Fisher. He passed away in late December at the age of 81, and we are appreciative of his service in the Legislature from 1992 to 1996, representing the riding of Lake Laberge. The riding of Lake Laberge had just been formed under that name and Mickey was the first person to serve as MLA for Lake Laberge.

On behalf of the Yukon Party caucus, I offer our deepest sympathy to his family and friends.

Born on December 22, 1940 in Bearberry, Alberta to Eunice and George Fisher, he moved to Watson Lake as a teenager to join his sister Shirley Charchuk. There he married Marjorie Cole and had two daughters, Adrian and Lila. In 1982, Mr. Fisher and his family moved to Whitehorse.

His election in 1992 was part of the first official electoral victory under the Yukon Party banner. From 1992 to 1996, he served as MLA and a minister in the Yukon Party government under Government Leader John Ostashek.

Mickey Fisher is the first person I ever voted for in an election. I wasn't old enough to vote in 1992, but in the 1996

election, I marked my first X on a ballot for Mickey Fisher. I didn't actually meet Mickey until after I was elected and unfortunately I didn't know him well. He was from a generation a little before me within the Yukon Party and part of the first government to be elected under the Yukon Party banner.

As I stand here to honour his contributions to the Yukon, I know that there is much more to tell about Mickey's life and his service to our territory than I am personally able to say. A friend who worked with him during his time as minister described him to me like this: steadfast, did his job, didn't seek the limelight, and did his homework.

Long-time editor of the *Whitehorse Star* Jim Butler honoured Mickey's work in an article this February and said this about him — and I quote: "He methodically carried out his tasks with integrity and commitment." Mickey's daughter shared this about her dad: "I know he really enjoyed his travels as an MLA. They went to Russia, Sri Lanka, and Singapore, and those trips really stood out for him. He and mom moved to Stewart and worked as the emergency measures officer before relocating back to Faro, where he was on the town council and worked to help get the gas station operating again. I think he was also proud of his contribution in getting the Northern Lights Centre operating in Watson Lake."

Mr. Speaker, after their time in Stewart, BC, in 2007, he and his wife moved back to the Yukon to Faro. He moved back to Whitehorse after Marjorie's passing on April 15, 2010.

I would like to thank Jim Butler for paying tribute to Mickey's contributions to the Yukon in the February 11, 2022 edition of the *Whitehorse Star*. As he notes, Mickey Fisher was well-liked by his colleagues and respected by ordinary Yukoners. Butler wrote: "... Fisher was unfailingly courteous and cordial, with a genuine desire to help others." He recalled how Mr. Fisher was always ready to speak to him as media and willing to chat about any topic, political or otherwise.

Mickey's passion for Yukoners, his riding, and the Yukon Party government that he was part of can be heard during his speeches in this House. Butler described him: a chatty, quintessential Yukoner derived from Alberta roots, a woodcutter, a fly-in cabin builder, hobby farmer, camper, fishing enthusiast, all-round nice guy.

During his time in the Yukon, Mickey also worked in Watson Lake as town manager, as a taxi-cab operator, and for Yukon Electrical.

Thank you for your service to the Yukon and its people, Mickey. On behalf of the Yukon Party, I offer our sincere condolences to his family, his daughter Lila, and his grandchildren Jamie and Jacob Nickel, and our sincere condolences to all his friends as well.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Lyle Mickey Fisher. Mickey was born in Bearberry, Alberta on December 22, 1940 to Eunice and George Fisher. He passed away this past year on his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Watson Lake would be Mickey's first stop in the Yukon, having moved there as a teenager to be with his sister, Shirley

Charchuk. This is where he started his family, marrying Marjorie Cole on June 27, 1964 and welcoming two daughters, Adrian in 1973 and Lila in 1974.

During his time in Watson Lake, Mickey worked for Yukon Electrical, ran a taxi company, and was the town manager.

The family also spent a great deal of time enjoying fishing and camping at the log home and fly-in cabin on Meister Lake. He and his family later moved to Whitehorse where he and Marjie owned and operated several small businesses, including a small market garden and woodcutting business.

He was elected as the Member for Lake Laberge in 1992 to 1996 in John Ostashek's Yukon Party government, where he served as the minister for the departments of Renewable Resources, Community and Transportation Services, Yukon Housing Corporation, Economic Development, and Health and Social Services. He and Marjie later moved to Stewart, BC and then to Faro, before coming back to Whitehorse after Marjie's passing on April 15, 2010. Mickey was a proud grandfather to Jamie and Jacob Nickel.

I first met Mickey while he was a councillor for the Town of Faro, but really had the opportunity to build a friendship when he moved in across the street from me in Granger. I was intimidated by Mickey at first and hesitated to engage with him. I wasn't sure how he felt about the big red sign on my lawn when election time came around, but over time, we became friends. He was so kind to my family, and we always made to sure connect over the holidays. I truly appreciated the conversations on current events that I shared with Mickey. Mickey always had the news on and kept up on current events that were happening in the world.

Even as his health deteriorated, I would often come home from a long day in the Legislature to find Mickey plowing my driveway with his best pal, Nemo, sitting by his side.

I will remember Mickey as a tough, intelligent, and caring man.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tabling returns and documents.

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under returns and documents for tabling, the Chair has for tabling the *Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2021-2022*, dated April 2022. This report is compiled pursuant to an order of the Members' Services Board.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling three documents today. The first is a CBC article from April 21, 2016, titled "Yukon gov't mum on Whistle Bend facility operation costs". The second is a *Whitehorse Star* article from April 21, 2016, titled "Unknown cost a 'new low in fiscal management'". And finally, an article from the *Yukon News* on April 22, 2016, titled "Government's cost estimate for Whistle Bend facility 'hogwash,' says NDP".

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling four legislative returns.

**Ms. White:** I have for tabling an editorial written by the Minister of Community Services, dated April 1, 2006, titled "taxpayers build white elephant".

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

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to take action to ensure that property owners are able to do flood preparation and mitigation work in a timely manner instead of being tied up in bureaucratic red tape related to YESAB and permitting.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Polarettes Gymnastics Club facility

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise before the House today to highlight the new Whitehorse gymnastics and climbing facility. I know that today I will hear support for this new facility coming to Whitehorse, as all parties in this Assembly supported the construction of a new facility in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, the Polarettes Gymnastics Club has over 1,000 active members and a wait-list of kids. The club has outgrown its facility at Vanier Catholic Secondary School, and this new facility will allow for more participation and increased programming.

Yukoners are some of the most active people in the country, and rock-climbing has exploded in popularity in our territory and across Canada. Climbing is now an Olympic sport and a sport option in the Canada Winter Games. Climb Yukon Association has coached a youth climbing team in the Yukon for more than 26 years, and since 2008, they have worked as a not-for-profit and now a sport governing body promoting climbing in the Yukon.

The Climb Yukon Association has outgrown the bouldering walls at Porter Creek Secondary School. The new facility will provide increased programming and regular public access to a modern indoor climbing facility.

In 2019, in support of Yukon's sport and recreation groups, we commissioned a feasibility report that explored several options. We settled on a new facility for a gymnastics and climbing gym, as these sports have similar height requirements. We're excited to support the long-term growth of gymnastics and climbing in the Yukon by partnering with the Government of Canada, Polarettes Gymnastics Club, Yukon Gymnastics Association, and Climb Yukon Association.

Mr. Speaker, the Whitehorse gymnastics and climbing facility will be located on Goddard Way. The gymnastics and



climbing facilities will be separate spaces within a common, energy-efficient building. The Government of Yukon is working with Polarettes and Climb Yukon on the design. The tender will open this summer, and we expect that the facility will be ready by the end of March 2024.

This facility will also strengthen our bid to host the 2027 Canada Winter Games. This project joins other recreation projects in progress around the territory, including the Second Haven skate park in Whitehorse and upgrades to Mount Sima. This year, we will finish constructing the new swimming pool in Pelly Crossing; construction will start on the White River First Nation community centre in Beaver Creek.

Our government is building modern, safe, and exciting recreation facilities that are helping Yukoners to live active lives and remain competitive in sports on national and international stages. I want to thank the Government of Canada, the Polarettes Gymnastics Club, Yukon Gymnastics Association, and Climb Yukon Association for moving this important project forward.

**Ms. McLeod:** I think everyone understands how important recreation is in our territory — not only for adults, but especially for youth. We know that we need to keep our youth busy with positive influences so they don't take a turn down the wrong road. For many Yukoners, whether it is sports, arts, or any other activity, something you try as a child usually carries over into your adult years.

That's why the Polarettes Gymnastics Club is so important. It's definitely a club that has no partisan lines, as witnessed in last year's territorial election. As noted by the minister, all three parties committed to building a new gymnastics centre for the club. I should also mention that Polarettes are very popular in the community. Many Yukon parents have paid close attention as to when online registration for fall, winter, or spring classes are available, and many parents have experienced missing out on registration with their child put on a wait-list.

While it's unfortunate for many parents, it's a good problem to have for the Polarettes. As they have identified, if they had a new facility, they would be able to accommodate more people, so hopefully the frustration of parents who can't get their child into Polarettes will be a thing of the past.

I thank the minister for the update, but there are some items that he left out. What is the budget for the project? How much is the government chipping in? When will the tender close, and when will the construction actually begin? I am also wondering if the minister has taken into consideration supply chain issues and has budgeted for delays and increased costs. As the minister mentioned, this facility will include a climbing wall. Can he tell us how this is worked into the budget and how much he has consulted with the main user of the climbing wall, the Climb Yukon Association, on the wall's planning? Finally, the minister has said that the new facility will form part of their bid for the Canada Winter Games, so can the minister assure us that it will be built to those certain specifications?

This is a project that we are very happy to see being worked on and we will be following its progress very closely.

**Ms. White:** The Yukon NDP support recreation, and we, like the other parties in this Assembly, met with representatives of the Polarettes Gymnastics Club and Climb Yukon during the last territorial election. We sent a letter of support contingent on funding from the federal government, so I'm glad to know that this project is closer to a reality and that this government has the support of the federal government to move ahead. Can the minister tell us the funding arrangement between Yukon and Canada to get this facility built?

We also are wondering about the plans about the current club facility. Will it still be available as a public space for families who currently use it for drop-in and, if not, what are the government's plans for the existing space? We don't disagree with the other projects that have been highlighted by the minister, especially the construction of a new pool in Pelly Crossing and the community centre in Beaver Creek, but what about recreation opportunities in other rural communities?

Watson Lake has an incredible recreation centre, with a weight room, three-lane bowling alley, seasonal swimming pool, curling rink, and ice rink. Without forgetting the youth centre, community hall, and commercial kitchen, this centre offers a wide range of activities and services for folks in this community. This facility is in desperate need of a roof. Is this a project that the minister is committed to funding?

This type of facility in other communities is what all Yukon communities deserve. We know that recreation is good for physical health and mental health, kids and adults alike. The government's *Putting People First* report states — and I quote: "Yukoners support improving access to health promotion opportunities in their communities, such as nutrition, exercise, and recreational programs. These types of opportunities were noted as key for maintaining and improving health and wellbeing, and for deterring substance use and addiction." So, when will the government ensure that all Yukoners have access to year-round recreational opportunities?

The minister also highlighted that this project would be great for Whitehorse's bid for the Canada Winter Games, but he only has to go back as far as his own editorial that I tabled to be reminded of the further requirements of planning an event like this.

So, can the minister tell me what the housing plan is for the 2027 Canada Winter Games? Despite the minister's criticism in 2006, the housing built for the 2007 Canada Winter Games is a legacy, housing both seniors and students at the university, so we look forward to similar legacy housing investments as part of this bid for the Canada Winter Games.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the members opposite for their remarks this afternoon and their general support for this wonderful facility that we are building in Whitehorse. Our government has worked with First Nation partners, municipalities, local contractors, community organizations, and the Government of Canada to get projects done in communities across the territory.

Last year, I was proud to be at the opening of Whitehorse's newest skate park. That was a \$3.5-million investment in providing youth an avenue to recreate and foster their creativity

in a fun and active environment. In Dawson City, we worked closely with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation to build a 3,000-square foot youth centre that will give local youth and young adults in Dawson an opportunity to pursue traditional activities and education and to make lifelong friendships. We provided nearly half a million dollars for the centre.

In addition, we have begun to build the Dawson City recreation centre that is on track to be completed soon — as early as 2026. We have also allocated more than \$10 million for the new health and wellness centre in Old Crow. The new centre will be the first of its kind in the Yukon, providing both health and social services in a collaborative care model to Yukoners living in and around the area.

In budget 2022-23, we have also outlined our plan to invest in upgrades to the arena in Mayo, build an earlier childhood development centre in Pelly, an elders complex in Old Crow, a health and wellness centre in Carcross, and more.

These are just a few of the examples of some of the community projects that our government is investing in, and we are ensuring that this work is getting completed. I listed some of these projects — really for the Member of the Third Party — because we are investing in recreation activities and really community development throughout the territory. It has been a cornerstone of our government's initiatives. We are doing it in all communities, and we're doing it in consultation — I have adopted the same approach that my predecessor in this role adopted, and that is to go around to the communities and have them prioritize what projects they would like to see developed in their communities.

So, we are taking that advice from the duly elected governments across the territory to advise us on what they think is the best way to invest in their communities, and we are doing that work.

To the members opposite, we do have a five-year capital plan. It actually lists the climbing facility in the five-year capital plan. The budget for that project is \$19 million to \$22 million. I encourage the Official Opposition to use that tool. I know that they do use it quite a bit. I welcome that use, and I encourage them to continue to use that wonderful tool that we initiated a few years ago to actually help communities know what is coming and for contractors to know exactly what is coming down the pike as far as the contracts that they can bid on.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: RCMP funding

**Mr. Cathers:** This morning, the commanding officer of the Yukon RCMP delivered a stunning indictment of this Liberal government's failure to properly resource the RCMP.

In a CBC Yukon interview, he made it clear that the police force is seriously under-resourced. Despite the Yukon's rapidly growing population and rising trend in criminal activity, funding from this Liberal government has not been sufficient.

When will the Liberal government start properly funding the RCMP in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak about the RCMP and our relationship with them here in Whitehorse and across the territory, including all of M Division.

I had an excellent conversation this morning with Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard. We spoke about the budget items that are in the 2022-23 budget — which are currently before this Legislative Assembly and are being debated — and the opportunities that the passing of that budget will bring with the increased funding to the RCMP.

We also spoke about future opportunities for us to provide resources to the RCMP through our discussions. I look forward to those continuing.

As I said, we had an excellent conversation, and I certainly conveyed our support for the work that the RCMP is doing here in the territory as our territorial policing service. I hope that the front-line officers also hear — we had a few of them yesterday in a very serious situation — our support and the opportunity for Yukoners to support the work that they are doing.

**Mr. Cathers:** Talk is cheap. The RCMP need money. The chief superintendent made it very clear this morning to CBC Yukon. They have requested more resources and are in serious need of more money and more RCMP positions. So far, the Liberal government and this minister have failed to meet these needs.

Chief Superintendent Sheppard noted that Yukon RCMP have not seen a single new investigative or front-line position since he took over the position in 2016. This is despite the fact that the Yukon's population has grown significantly and the challenges facing the force have too. Despite the fact that there are as many as five organized crime operations in the territory, this government still has failed to provide adequate resources to the RCMP.

When will the Liberal government start taking policing needs seriously and start providing the proper resources to the RCMP?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I appreciate the vigour with which the member opposite is bringing this question, but there were clear misunderstandings about the concept of the RCMP funding. Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard and I spoke about those this morning. There has been a 19.8-percent increase in actual spending from the 2016-17 budget for the RCMP to the 2020-21 and a 16.5-percent increase to their spending authority.

We have a number of very significant increases in this budget — the 2022-23 budget that is before the Legislative Assembly — including \$1.1 million to address additional concerns that they have about operations, including things like fuel, materials, and administrative costs that are required. We have a clear commitment to the RCMP for the contractual obligation that we have to fund every position that they have, including the O&M for those positions, and we reconcile the budget for the RCMP every June. We meet quarterly with them to discuss specific numbers and specific budgets. We support their work. We support the expansion of their work in the territory, and we will do so with a budget.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister can try to paint a rosy picture all she wants, but she knows very well that most of the increase provided is due to collective agreement increases and to cover inflation. Chief Superintendent Sheppard told CBC Yukon that they are struggling to make ends meet. They have had to pull resources out of other branches to try to keep up with the challenges facing the crime reduction unit.

In a startling revelation, he told media that this year they will be operating at a deficit. What is absolutely clear from the interview is that the RCMP is in desperate need of an injection of O&M funding and of new positions, despite what the minister tries to spin here in this House. None of this will be possible unless this minister and this Liberal government finally start taking Yukon's policing needs seriously.

When will this Liberal government start providing sufficient resources to the RCMP?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I really would hope that the member opposite, and everyone, will listen to the responses that I'm giving, because we have worked to ensure that the provision of professional, accountable, and appropriately funded territorial police services is responsive to the priorities of Yukon citizens, through the Police Council and otherwise.

We have worked and will continue to work closely with the RCMP about the issues that are funding- and resource-related. We can indicate that the historical cases unit, which came about with three full-time positions in 2018-19, has become permanently funded. There are two new officers permitted to the crime reduction unit through the budget that's before the Legislative Assembly now. They will be working primarily on the substance use health emergency. They will be targeting drugs, property crime, and organized crime. I can indicate that there is also a position that has been added with respect to the First Nation policing authority, and I certainly hope that the members opposite will be supporting this budget for the funding for the RCMP.

#### **Question re: Cost of living**

**Mr. Hassard:** Yesterday, Statistics Canada announced another massive spike in the rate of inflation, which was the biggest jump since GST was introduced in 1991. Here in the Yukon, the new inflation rate is a whopping 6.1 percent. That means the cost of living for Yukoners is going up even more. This is clearly the biggest issue facing Yukoners and yet the Liberals continue to ignore it. Their budget was stale the day after it was tabled, and it fails to even acknowledge inflation. The only new measures they have introduced is a trifling \$150 a year to help with electricity bills.

So, when will the Liberal government start taking this issue seriously and start providing real relief for Yukoners who are facing the highest cost of living in a generation?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, throughout the Legislative Assembly this session, we have been rising to our feet to say that — not only in this budget but in every budget since we began — our focus is on making lives more affordable for Yukoners, and we have accomplished that.

We have accomplished that by having balanced budgets before COVID to make sure that we had a massive amount of

money available for Yukon businesses and citizens during some of the most trying times in our generation. We absolutely recognize and we're conscious of the effects of rising inflation and those effects on families, and we have taken actions to address that.

Members opposite don't want to hear that and they're not listening to those answers. Budget 2022-23 invests in housing supply, universal childcare, paid sick leave, and a territory-wide dental plan. Budget 2022-23 is also notable for what it doesn't contain: no new taxes, no new increase to tax rates, and no new increases to fees.

**Mr. Hassard:** The only thing this government has accomplished is to show just how out of touch with Yukoners they really are. The fact is that the Premier's budget speech doesn't even mention inflation or the cost of living — not even once. There is absolutely nothing in the budget to respond to this growing inflation crisis. They have ignored the issue, hoping it will go away, but unfortunately, it is only getting worse.

Provinces around the country are taking action to address the inflation crisis, but all the Liberals here have been able to do is come up with \$150 per year. They have ignored our calls to cut the fuel tax. They have ignored our calls to support seniors by increasing the pioneer utility grant and homeowners grant.

So, when will the government recognize that Yukoners are struggling and start taking action to actually address the inflation crisis?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, again, for five years now, we have been talking about making lives more affordable for Yukoners. The members opposite can stick their head in the sand if they want, but we are responding to this every year, and we're going to continue to. We have had a plan, right from the beginning, to have balanced budgets. We have not increased any taxes and we have not increased fees.

The Council of the Federation, another example of moving forward, met on March 10 to discuss energy and fuel prices. We don't want to do flashy, politically expedient solutions; we want long-term solutions for Yukoners.

We discussed some strategies locally, as well, and we are going to continue to look at long-term energy solutions for security for Yukoners — not the "flash in the pan" type of parlour tricks from the Yukon Party past, but we're trying to find ways to explore long-term solutions, whether it comes to the things that I mentioned earlier: again, heavy investment in education, housing, extremely important endeavours throughout every single page and every single department of this Legislative Assembly.

As we respond to this, the opposition doesn't take our answers. They accuse us of not answering the questions, but here we are answering the questions, and they're still saying that we're being silent on this issue; we're not. We have a long-term plan when it comes to making lives more affordable for Yukoners.

**Mr. Hassard:** Unfortunately, it doesn't matter how many speaking points the Premier uses, it doesn't actually help Yukoners.

According to Statistics Canada, year over year, Canadians are paying almost 40 percent more for gasoline this month. It's even more here in the Yukon. Food prices are through the roof. Statistics Canada says that, year over year, prices of food have seen the largest increase in over a decade. Again, it's even more here in the Yukon.

One of the clear tools that the Yukon government has to influence fuel prices is the fuel tax. We have continued to ask the Premier to cut this tax to help the cost of living for Yukoners. Yet the Liberals continue to refuse.

When will they start taking seriously the cost-of-living crisis that Yukoners are facing?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Again, you have heard it from the Premier, and I will echo that: The response to what is happening is that it has been a multi-year response. It is with a long-term view. Just last week, you saw an investment in energy that brings us some of the best energy purchase costs that we have seen in decades to the Yukon. It is a long-term plan to keep energy costs where they should be.

The member opposite talks about how we are not helping folks. Well, please go and tell the 202 Yukon households that are receiving the Canada/Yukon Housing Corporation benefit — to help them with the rental housing — that those folks aren't being helped. This rental subsidy alone is helping a significant number of Yukoners to meet their needs. I hope we'll have support for the budget that we will pass next week, because with that program alone, we are looking at over \$1 million going toward that program to help Yukoners.

The other thing that the member opposite is not saying is that there was an increase in inflation. Of course, that does make things tougher for Yukoners, but what the member opposite did not say is that, when you look at the entire country, again, the Yukon was at the lowest point and is still not on the bottom of that list for the most part. I think it's number four. Again, we are looking at trying to make sure that we control costs. We are doing long-term investment, and we believe that is the best way —

**Speaker:** Order.

#### **Question re: Opioid crisis**

**Ms. White:** It has been three months since the minister declared a substance use health emergency and two months since she held a summit about how urgent the situation is; yet Yukoners have not seen the real action that they would expect when they hear the word "emergency." While there is technically a safe supply of opioids, the only place where people can access it is the Referred Care Clinic in Whitehorse, if they even know it's there. For folks living in communities, well, they are out of luck. One solution to support communities is to allow registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses to prescribe a safe supply of opioids.

Is this government doing the work to allow registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses to prescribe a safe supply of opioids?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The short answer to this question is yes. The Department of Health and Social Services is doing the hard work to expand the safer supply opportunities, not only

here in Whitehorse, but further in Yukon communities, offering Yukoners an alternative to the illegal and dangerous drug supply — truly poison. That is known as a "safer supply" and is one — just one — response that the Yukon government is taking to prevent Yukoners from dying due to the toxic drug supply.

In Whitehorse, as noted, clients of the opioid treatment services can access safer supply through prescribing physicians at the Referred Care Clinic on a case-by-case basis. The expansion noted by the member opposite in the preamble to the question requires extensive work with respect to scope of practice for nurses and licensed medical practitioners throughout the territory.

I can also indicate that the safer supply focus — one of the expansion focuses for the Department of Health and Social Services is an education program for medical practitioners and nurses so that they are more comfortable with the concept of prescribing a safer supply of opioid alternatives.

**Ms. White:** I am relieved to hear the minister is working on it. Unfortunately, like a lot of projects that the minister works on, Yukoners are usually the last to find out.

We have heard from countless folks who share that they were given no information, no leaflets, no contacts, and no support from this government when they tried to access a safe supply at the Referred Care Clinic. Safe supply is virtually non-existent, even in Whitehorse — the only place in the territory where it is supposed to be available.

Will the minister work on making safe supply effectively available in all of the Yukon, as opposed to doing the bare minimum needed to check off the box?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As always, I will urge members of this Legislative Assembly, should they have an individual or group come to them who has concerns about receiving a particular service provided by government, to contact my office — in this case, the Department of Health and Social Services directly — but more likely, they can come to me. Telephone, e-mail, letter — I would happily address that situation. We do, in many situations — but this one I think is timely and must be dealt with quickly, should an individual not be getting the service, as alleged here in this question.

The illicit drug supply is increasingly toxic and contaminated and unpredictable here in the territory. We are making evidence-based decisions to address the drug poisoning. Any person who consumes an illicit substance in the Yukon is at significant risk of drug poisoning. I take this opportunity to relay that message to Yukoners, because the street drug supply here in the territory can be dangerous. It is increasingly dangerous. We know this from the numbers of individuals whose lives have been snuffed out by the choices, unfortunately, or by the poisoning of drugs, and it cannot continue.

**Ms. White:** I would like to remind the government that when people bring things to us, they bring it to us because they trust us. Without consent, we can't bring that forward. The minister can say all she likes that they can contact her, but when we write letters on behalf of constituents with concerns and it

takes two, four, six, or eight weeks for a response, that doesn't seem like that's being treated as the emergency that they are.

So, as much as I like that the minister says that she is reachable and people can reach out, it has not proven to be the fact.

Can the minister please expand on how the government is expanding the safe supply of opioids in rural communities? Because right now, it's just not possible to access them there.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I beg to differ with the member opposite with respect to whether or not a service is being provided. I'm happy to address that specifically, and I would encourage that to be the case.

I also can assure the member opposite that, should we receive such a letter where there's a timely requirement for a service, that is given top priority. What I can also indicate is that we are continuing our expansion of the safer supply here in the territory, but actually, more importantly, I will say, on a national level, the conversation is occurring with the federal government, with ministers across the board who are dealing with the concerns of the opioid crisis in Canada across this country.

We must determine a way in which individuals can have drugs, should they be so addicted, that are not dangerous for them. There needs to be an opportunity for us as a country to address this and an opportunity for us to address it in the criminal legislation or in legislation that applies across the country. That conversation is happening inside the Department of Health and Social Services with respect to our response to the substance use health emergency, as well as nationally across the country.

#### Question re: Land costs

**Mr. Istchenko:** It comes as no surprise to Yukoners that the cost of land has increased, as well as everything else. A few weeks ago, I wrote the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the price of land sold by the Yukon government. In his April 11 letter to me, the minister said — and I quote: “Land sold through the Rural Residential Land Application policy, used for people seeking land for their primary residence, cannot be sold for any less than the appraised value as per the *Lands Act*”.

However, Mr. Speaker, the *Lands Act* actually allows for a fair amount of discretion to setting of land prices.

So, will the minister consider reviewing the policy decision that requires that the land be sold for the appraised value instead of the cost of development?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will share with the member opposite that, when the letter came to me and the department provided me with the draft response, I asked them to go back and review it a few times, because I wanted to make sure. So, I did already pose the question about whether this was a legislated requirement or not. I am happy to check in another time and see what the department says, but I will say that, in my experience working with the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources and, in fact, across the public service, they are pretty darn diligent to make sure that they are giving me the best information that is possible.

But, sure, with respect to the request that is being posed here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, I am happy to check back with the department again to see whether there is another possibility. At all times, we want to make housing more affordable for Yukoners. We have been doing that at every turn, whether that is through Community Services, Yukon Housing Corporation, or Energy, Mines and Resources. So, if there is an avenue that is available to us, I would be happy to explore it.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I do thank the minister for that.

In the minister's confidential briefing note from last fall on land availability, it outlines how the government sets the price. It says that the Government of Yukon — and I quote: “... sells lots for a value between development cost and the appraised market value.” So, it clearly appears that there is an ability for the minister to set the price by regulation somewhere between the cost of development and appraised value.

So, will the minister consider using the cost of development, instead of the appraised value, to make the land more affordable for Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I will just note for Yukoners that the notes that the member is referencing are because we changed the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and we have made our briefing notes available for members opposite, so that is what we are referring to here.

I think that there are two questions that we have to watch. One is the difference between what was written to me about the land, the rural land, and whether that is open, because I did actually pose that very specific question to the department, and I got back a very specific answer. So, again, I will look to pose the question again.

I appreciate what the member opposite is saying; in fact, one of the reasons why I asked the question several times of the department is because the costs looked high. When I asked what the difference was, it was that there had not been an appraisal in recent times, and I was told very specifically that it was a legislative requirement.

At all times, as a government, we follow the law, but as I committed to in my first response, I will go back again and check with the department as to whether or not there is an opportunity.

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, the *Lands Act* allows for the development of regulations to set prices at which land can be sold. Using market appraisal to set the value of raw land in rural Yukon is keeping prices high and it definitely limits the ability of Yukoners to access land and the ability for our communities to grow and create jobs.

What steps is the minister taking to ensure that land is available and affordable for Yukoners, especially those in rural Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I just stated, when the member wrote to me previously and a draft response was made, I reached back to the department and asked, “Are you sure? Because these numbers look high. Is there another avenue?” I was told no. I asked for comparisons with other properties nearby, and I was given a map showing all of those over time. So, I actually did dive into this question.

With respect to how we are doing this overall, we just recently had a meeting between the Department of Community Services and the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources to review all the processes to, number one, see how to reduce red tape; number two, to see how to streamline the process; and number three, see if there are ways in which we can bring the cost down for Yukoners. We are working at all times to find the lowest cost that we can for Yukoners, because we recognize that there is a crunch on housing.

We have invested very heavily. I believe that in this year's budget alone, it's \$26 million in lot development — about half in Whitehorse and half in our rural communities. This is to make sure that we have access to a supply of lots that are as affordable as possible. At all times, we are working to do that, so I thank the member opposite for his question.

**Question re: Teacher remuneration**

**Mr. Kent:** Yesterday, we raised concerns about outstanding pay owed to Yukon educators going back three years. It occurred when permanent school-based employees were moved to the same biweekly, year-round pay system as other Yukon government employees.

We have heard from education professionals that this error in calculation has resulted in individual claims for thousands of dollars. The Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission said yesterday — and I quote: "... that the information coming from the members opposite is not accurate."

Can he clarify what exactly was not accurate about our statements?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I really appreciate the opportunity to stand again. Yesterday, when I rose to speak about this — there was a grievance filed in September 2019. In January 2020, there was a decision in favour of the Yukon government, which was not what the members opposite had noted. That would be one of the problems with what the Yukon Party posed in their question.

Then I stated — and I made a mistake — that the matter was heard by the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board for adjudication several weeks ago. Actually, it was heard in March 2021. I misread the year — my apologies.

I did check with the Public Service Commissioner yesterday and this morning and was told that it has not yet had a decision issued by the adjudicator. As I stated previously, once that adjudication has been given to us — I offered to table it. I'll offer that again.

**Mr. Kent:** So, I do appreciate the minister correcting the record with respect to what he said yesterday. Again, he did mention that he understood that the Yukon Association of Education Professionals took this forward for adjudication a few weeks ago. He has corrected the record now to correctly refer to that initial adjudication taking place March 22-24, 2021, which, of course, was 13 months ago.

Can the minister tell us when we can expect a decision to be made on this matter? Can he also tell us how much Yukon educators are claiming that they are collectively owed from this error in calculations?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I just stated, this has gone to the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board for adjudication. I did speak with the Public Service Commissioner yesterday. I don't have a timeline. I'm happy to inquire of the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board for adjudication. I can let Yukoners know that the issue around the pay period was because, in the previous collective agreement for the then-Yukon Teachers' Association, there was a request that we move to this system, as I understand it.

In the current new negotiated bargaining agreement that we now have in place, we've moved back, as per the suggestion — again, as I understand it — from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals. We're working to support them. I'm happy to try to get more information for the members opposite.

**Mr. Kent:** As we've said, this was an election issue that we heard about on the doorsteps. Yesterday, both the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission seemed unaware of the situation as they scrambled to find briefing notes. We've heard that there were approximately 300 personal grievances filed last school year about this issue. I'm sure that this treatment of our professional educators doesn't help with recruitment and retention efforts in a field that is showing staffing shortages. The adjudication matter was heard 13 months ago.

So, why won't the Liberals just pay the teachers what they are owed rather than dragging them through this long, extended process?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** What I will say is that we will respect the process of the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board. I'm not sure if the members opposite are saying that they would not; that would surprise me.

As I noted previously, when the first grievances came, there was a decision in favour of the government's position, so I'm happy that it has gone to the labour relations board. I will, of course, respect what that decision is. We haven't received the decision.

So, I'm not sure — the members opposite are saying that they think that we should just bypass the labour relations board, which we would not do.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill No. 204: First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**French Language Services Directorate**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to make a few brief opening remarks and I will make some of them in English and French, and I will make sure to share with Hansard the text, but I want to begin by welcoming two colleagues here to the Legislative Assembly. Bienvenue, Manon Moreau, sous-ministre de la DSF — Deputy Minister Manon Moreau — and my colleague, André Bourcier, directeur de la Direction des services en français — the director of the French Language Services Directorate.

I am pleased to present the French Language Services Directorate budget for 2022-23. I know that we aren't always here very long, but I am pleased to rise. It supports the directorate's operations and the delivery of French language services and information to the public across the government.

J'ai le plaisir de vous présenter le budget de la Direction des services en français pour 2022-2023. Ce budget englobe les activités de la Direction, et les services et l'information en français dans l'ensemble du gouvernement. Nous voulons remercier le gouvernement du Canada pour son appui à la mise en œuvre de la Loi sur les langues du Yukon. Nous entamons la troisième année de notre entente de cinq ans avec le Canada visant à assurer l'offre de services en français jusqu'en 2024-2025. Avec cette entente de 28 millions de dollars, nous pourrions continuer d'améliorer les services en français, et mieux servir et informer le public en français.

I would like to thank the Government of Canada for its ongoing support toward implementing our Yukon *Languages Act*, and we are entering the third year of our five-year agreement with Canada to support the provision of French language services, just up to 2024-25. This is a \$28-million agreement which allows us to build on our previous successes

and keep improving how we serve, inform, and engage with the public in French.

The following estimates include Canada's increased contribution of \$5.75 million for this budget year and our investment of close to \$1 million.

Nos estimations pour 2022-2023 comprennent la contribution accrue du gouvernement fédéral de 5,75 millions de dollars et notre propre contribution d'environ 1 million de dollars.

I just wanted to say a couple more things, and then I will take my seat and see if there are any questions.

Mr. Bourcier just passed me a document that talks about the amount of translation that we do. Generally, over time — over the past several years — it has been increasing significantly. In particular, you can even see during COVID where things increased. This past year, the total number of words is down slightly just because, when COVID first hit, there were a lot of documents requiring a lot of translation, but you can even see the trends in cases. So, when we have more cases and there is more pressure, more policies, and more regulations being brought in, then there is more translation.

Overall, we have been increasing the number of documents that we have been translating, although some of the ones that we have been doing more recently contain fewer words.

I just want to say thank you very much to French Language Services for all of the work they have done to try to make sure that Yukoners were safe during COVID.

With that, I will take my seat and see if there are any questions. I'm living in hope.

**Ms. Clarke:** Thanks to the officials for being here and for the briefing earlier this Sitting. All of our questions were addressed there, and if we have any further questions, we will send them in writing.

Merci.

**Ms. White:** Merci. C'est un plaisir d'être ici encore une fois pendant le débat de la Direction des services en français. On sait qu'il y a eu de grands changements dans ce bureau. Grâce à ces changements, on pose peu de questions parce que les choses vont bien. Il y a une grande différence depuis les dix dernières années, les choses ont bien changé. Alors j'aimerais féliciter les personnes de la Direction pour leur travail et tous les documents traduits pendant la pandémie de COVID-19, qui a représenté beaucoup de travail. Donc, merci à la Direction. J'aime être au courant de ses activités. La Direction est entre bonnes mains. J'apprécie le travail que fait la Direction. Il est important que je puisse parler ici en français, grâce à la *Loi sur les langues*. J'ai hâte qu'on puisse parler les langues autochtones à l'Assemblée législative et que nous ayons leurs traductions. Merci et à la prochaine fois.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just want to thank both members opposite for their remarks and, in particular, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King for her thanks to the department for their hard work during COVID. It is appreciated.

If there are any further questions, as the Member for Porter Creek Centre suggests, we would be happy to answer them.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate?

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

**Ms. White:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 27, French Language Services Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**  
**Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$6,855,000 agreed to**  
**On Capital Expenditures**  
**Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to**  
**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$6,855,000 agreed to**  
**French Language Services Directorate agreed to**

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

**Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole**

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole as the Chair would like to take part in debate on the Yukon Development Corporation.

*Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises*

**Yukon Development Corporation**

**Acting Chair (Ms. White):** Order, please.

Is there any general debate?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will make a few remarks today in rising to speak to the Yukon Development Corporation. I will also just begin by welcoming the Deputy Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation, Mr. Justin Ferbey, who has been in the Legislative Assembly many times, and

Mr. Jamie McAllister, who is our senior policy advisor and who is here for the first time. I would like to welcome him. I thank them for their support today.

Earlier in the session — I think a few weeks ago — we had considered having the Yukon Energy Corporation and Yukon Development Corporation here as witnesses. We decided not to — or the Assembly voted against that — but I thought that possibly it would be useful for members opposite to share the opening remarks that they had prepared. So, what I will do is table those here for members so they have a chance to read them at their leisure. They provide some general information about Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

So, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the Yukon Development Corporation's operation and maintenance and capital main estimates for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The Yukon Development Corporation's mandate to develop and promote innovative energy systems, sustainable generation, production, transmission, and distribution of energy in the Yukon is an important topic as we all know.

The Yukon's on-grid electrical generation relies on a hydro system that has existed since 1958, which will continue to serve the Yukon well into the future. These hydro facilities are the backbone of our legacy renewable generation assets. Just yesterday, I was with the deputy minister for meetings in Carcross to talk about the relicensing of the Whitehorse facility.

The Yukon's growing population is putting increasing demands on our electrical infrastructure. That is why this government has made the commitment to invest in additional renewable generation capacity to reduce our dependence on thermal generating facilities. This commitment is clearly outlined in the Yukon's *Our Clean Future* strategy and in the confidence and supply agreement signed by us, as a government, and the New Democratic Party last year.

By continuing to invest in renewable electricity, we are simultaneously supporting economic growth in the territory and meeting our climate change commitments.

We also recognize that the Yukon's changing climate highlights the need to harvest additional sources of renewable electricity, including from wind and solar. Renewable generation can be added through new utility-owned assets or by purchasing power from local renewable energy projects owned by First Nations, communities, or businesses that are situated near the electrical grid or remote communities served by thermal electrical generation.

To help achieve these goals, Yukon Development Corporation's operation and maintenance budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year is \$6.125 million, and we have a capital budget of \$37.29 million. These funds support the development of community-led renewable electricity projects and help Yukoners maintain affordable access to electricity for their homes and businesses.

In our capital budget, the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative budget has been increased by \$1 million, for a total of \$2.5 million for the 2022-23 fiscal year. The change is due to the increased uptake of this successful program, which began in 2018. This initiative is a solid example of our government's



support for community-led energy projects. Through this program, we are encouraging both public and private sector investment in such technologies as wind, solar, biomass, geothermal, and small-scale hydro generation.

Not only has this program furthered the development of renewable electricity projects, but it has also allowed communities to develop capacity in emerging technologies that can provide both economic and environmental benefits. We look forward to the initiative's continued success this fiscal year.

I will leave my comments about the Arctic energy fund — although I am happy to answer questions.

I will mention that we have allocated \$3.5 million to the interim electrical rebate. This universal subsidy remains unchanged this fiscal year and will continue to provide all residential electrical customers in the Yukon with a rebate of up to \$22.62 each month for the first 1,000 kilowatt hours, and it's based on electrical usage. The rebate continues to help ensure competitive rates for our electrical customers.

The budget also provides the Yukon Development Corporation with \$2.625 million in Mayo B ratepayer support. These funds are the Government of Yukon's annual contribution to the interest payment for the Yukon Development Corporation's \$100-million bond. By providing this financial contribution, interest payments are shared between the Yukon government and the corporation to reduce impacts on the electrical customers in the Yukon. These two programs represent investment of over \$6 million and help ensure that Yukon remains an attractive place to live and do business.

This budget will help the Yukon Development Corporation continue to support renewable energy generation in all Yukon communities and will contribute to the creation of economic opportunities in important sectors, while promoting environmental stewardship across the territory.

I will leave my remarks there. I am looking forward to conversation about many things, including energy rates and some of the projects that we have been working on over the past year, and looking forward to questions and answers.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the officials for being here today and helping us out with this conversation, and thank you to the minister for tabling the opening remarks. I think that is a really efficient way of having that conversation in our limited time that we have left, and I think that is a great idea.

I would like to start by talking about the Atlin hydro project — very exciting news last week — or I don't know — very exciting news in the budget, the federal budget, about that. I am wondering what the next steps are and if there are further funding or regulatory hurdles that need to be crossed. I believe that I remember something about some negotiations with the Government of BC that were underway. I am wondering what is next for this project.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I agree that the Atlin project is an important and exciting project. We were very excited, as well, to hear from the federal government about their increased funding, because they had already — through SREP — and I will just get what SREP stands for. They had committed

\$50 million there to the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership. This is, of course, a project that is led by the development corporation of the Taku River Tlingit — and through the federal budget, topped that by another \$32.2 million, I think.

We have been in conversation with the Government of British Columbia about whether they would support the project financially as well, so that's an ongoing conversation. There is a portion of the project that is with YESAB right now, so the transmission line, which will be owned by Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, would run from Atlin up to Jakes Corner, where it would connect in with the Yukon grid. So, that portion of the project is going through YESAB right now. It may be that it's now into the governments for their decision. I would have to check on what stage it's at.

There is a power purchase agreement that has been drafted between Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership and Yukon Energy. That is now in front of the Yukon Utilities Board, so that has to be considered. I have previously spoken about that agreement. It's a very good purchase price for energy. Again, it's mostly winter energy that we'll be buying, and if we — there's an amount that is guaranteed, and there's a purchase price for that guaranteed amount. The price drops after a period of time, so it's more in the first several years and then it's lower later on and going off into the future — for decades.

There is also a cheaper price if we want to, or are able to, buy more energy at other — beyond that amount that we're guaranteeing.

So, we have a YESAA process. We have a Utilities Board process. We also have dialogue ongoing between Carcross/Tagish First Nation, whose traditional territory is there, and of course the Taku River Tlingit First Nation — it's their corporation that is putting the project forward, but there's still a dialogue happening across all governments on the project. Those are the next steps, as I understand them.

Just for the folks in Hansard, SREP funding stands for the "smart renewable energy pathways" program.

**Ms. Tredger:** Just to follow up a little bit, in the dialogue with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, has there been a discussion on the impacts on Agay Mene Park from the transmission line and whether there will need to be any mitigation — or I guess, what those impacts might be?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, the answer is yes. There is a conversation that has been happening. The Carcross/Tagish First Nation has written to us talking about wanting to be careful to protect especially the Southern Lakes caribou herd and minimize any impacts that would be there. As I stated earlier, there is dialogue that is happening between the proponents of the project, led by the Taku River Tlingit — the owners of the project and the builders of it — and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. There are also conversations with us, as a government.

**Ms. Tredger:** I also would like an update on Moon Lake, please.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The deputy minister and I have had a few high-level conversations with the Carcross/Tagish First

Nation. As I mentioned earlier, I was just in Carcross yesterday. We were talking about Whitehorse relicensing.

But I think that there is a conversation that happens as well about First Nation-led projects. So, this project is identified as an important project through Yukon Energy Corporation's 10-year renewable plan, but it is our hope that we work with First Nations with them in the lead on this project. We're just in the early days of conversation about the project. I will just leave it there for now. The conversations have been positive and they are ongoing.

The main aspects that we are looking for out of that type of project is that there will be some energy storage because what we have right now is an abundance of energy in the summertime and a high demand for energy in the wintertime, and that's what we're looking for with pump storage. There are a whole bunch of different possibilities that might exist, and so we're in those conversations right now with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that.

I would like to talk a little bit about the independent power producer program. I understand there is an upper limit — I think it's 40 gigawatts — on the amount that can be purchased through that program. I'm assuming that Atlin doesn't count toward that limit. Maybe the minister can confirm that with me.

I'm wondering where we're at with all the projects that have come online since the last time we sat, as well as some of the ones that are in the works to come online very quickly. How close are we to reaching that 40-gigawatt limit?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, the notional limit that we have in place is 40 megawatts. I have a challenge all the time — the difference between energy and capacity and these technical things. Sometimes we talk about gigawatt hours, but for the Yukon, I think that we are probably talking about megawatts.

I can also say that Atlin is outside of the independent power producer policy. It is from a standing-offer agreement and it makes sense for a few reasons. It is really going to be baseload winter power. It will get rid of diesel generators — the need for additional diesel generators. I think that four of them — that is the plan.

Sorry, let me just correct that; I am just getting a note. It is 40 gigawatt hours, not megawatts; my apologies.

The only new project — and I think that I mentioned this when I was in Committee of the Whole on Energy, Mines and Resources. There is one new project that has come onstream since we were last here and that is the Dawson Dome solar project. That is the one that is in the old landfill site. There are a whole bunch of projects that are in dialogue and potential planning phases at various stages. There is sort of like a continuum of projects from the concept stage to the heavy planning stage. So, it is quite a range, but the only new one that is now onstream is the Dawson Dome solar.

**Ms. Tredger:** This might be a difficult number to come up with on the spot, but I am wondering if it is possible to have an estimate — I think that there are seven projects under IREI and another three under the Arctic energy fund from last year. Once all of those come online, where will we be at out of that 40 gigawatt hours? How close to hitting that will we be?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** If we were to look at the pipeline right now of all of the projects and if all of them came to fruition, then we would be very close to the 40 gigawatt hours.

Now, what I should say is that many of these projects change and alter through the development and the planning phases. Some of them grow, some of them diminish, and some of them drop off. So, it's really difficult — I would say that the project list changes, especially at the early stages of planning. But the rough total at the moment, if they were all to go, would be close to the 40 gigawatt hours.

**Ms. Tredger:** I appreciate that and I appreciate the estimate. I know that lots will change between now and when all those projects come online.

So, what happens when we get to that limit? Does that mean we can't bring on any new renewable projects? What would happen when we get there?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will just clarify — when I said the Dome Road solar, that's the Klondike Development Organization that brought that one on. I just should probably mention the other projects that are there so it's not as if I'm missing them. They are the Old Crow solar project, the north Klondike solar project, and the Mount Sima solar project.

The 40 gigawatt hours was a target that we set under *Our Clean Future*. It was not meant to necessarily be a total limit. It was meant to be: "Let's try to achieve this amount through the independent power producer policy."

I think there are things that we need to think about and consider as this morphs over time. I am sure that we're going to seek more renewables than exist now, even in that pipeline.

But things that we really need to think about are — do we have energy storage? If we have seasonal energy storage, like Moon Lake, it really changes the dynamics of all of the renewables. It makes them much more efficient because sometimes renewables are better in winter, sometimes they are better in summer, sometimes they are more reliable, and sometimes they are less reliable, and storage makes a huge difference. Probably the grid-scale battery will help with that, but so would seasonal storage. There are also the differences around winter and summer and those issues that we have at play. Of course, technology is changing out there and the costs. Solar just keeps dropping in terms of its cost.

So, it is a dynamic conversation. The 40 gigawatt hours was really set as a policy target to try to get to through *Our Clean Future*. We are reaching it, I think — if the pipeline of projects works like the original ones have, then it looks like we are getting there faster than we anticipated, which is, again, all good. I think that we just need to balance things as we move forward.

At all times with energy projects, we are looking to make sure that they are clean, that they are affordable, and that they are reliable. Those are the three qualities that we are looking for. We really appreciate community-led projects. They, for us, are how we want to do this across the territory. I think that it is important for Yukoners to understand that we are making sure that how we bring these projects on is so they will continue to work toward this notion of a more sustainable future for the Yukon. As members of the House will know, we are working

to transition off of fossil fuels on transportation — shifting transportation across — and we are trying to shift heating across. Some of that is through insulation so that you would need less in the first place. But as we put those demands on the system, we also have to provide more renewables at the same time, so it isn't just to provide people access to e-vehicle rebates; it is also to make sure that we are increasing our renewables to match that load shift.

I should also note that we are reviewing our independent power producer policy with government, with utilities, and with proponents. That is all part of how this will change over time.

**Ms. Tredger:** That is actually a great segue into what I wanted to talk about next, which was this problem/opportunity of winter and summer power, which is of course what is so exciting about the Atlin project: It brings us winter power.

One of the challenges with solar projects — there are lots of benefits, but they also bring us power in the summer when we already have a lot of power for the most part. As I was looking through the list of the projects under the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative from last year, out of the seven, five are solar and one is hydro, which I assume is also summer power. I am just wondering what can be done to incentivize more winter power production, because solar is cheap — relatively. What can we be doing to encourage more wind, for example?

I will leave it there. What can we be doing to encourage more winter power?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I started to answer this previously when I talked about watching the balance of summer and winter energy projects. I also mentioned it when we were talking about seasonal storage — if we get seasonal storage. Another possibility is if we then go beyond and connect to, say, Skagway — they need summer energy, because they want to get cruise ships to go to shore power, so they would have a big demand in the summer. They have excess winter energy because the town quiets down over the wintertime, and if their energy projection is continuous through hydro power, there is a real good fit if we connect with them. So, those are possibilities.

Grid-scale battery is actually important for all of the intermittent renewables, because that really helps. Grid-scale battery does a couple of things. It shaves the peak off our thermal usage, so we need to have thermal usage typically in the wintertime, sort of early in the morning and just after work is sort of typically done — sort of early in the evening — and people are cooking or running their laundry or things like that.

So, those peaks — if we use the grid-scale battery to provide the energy then, then it will — and then recharge the grid-scale batteries at nighttime when we have more excess energy, then we will also reduce the number of diesel gensets that we need. So, again, it drops it by four.

So, these are all important questions. The answer to the question of: What are we exploring? It's how we balance all of these various puzzle pieces. It's also — we can talk about — in the future, we might incentivize winter power by saying that we would pay more for winter power or more than what we pay in the summer. That would then incentivize the public to move to

choose those types of solutions. Maybe it's that they tilt their solar panels at a higher angle and then they get more return from their panels, which would help us as a territory.

There's a range of ways that we are looking at it. I mentioned earlier that we are reviewing the independent power producer policy with government, utilities, and the private sector. So, there's a suite of ways. I will say that we are very conscientious about this difference of the excess energy in the summer and the need for energy in the winter. It's one of the things that drives a lot of the thinking around planning for the future.

**Ms. Tredger:** I appreciate there are a lot of pieces to the puzzle, and at the Moon Lake, it would be very exciting for that reason. If I remember correctly — and I can't remember exactly what year it would come online, if it happens; I think it's pretty far from a sure thing at this point; I think we're looking at more than five years away at least, but I would have to double-check the plan to be sure. I guess I'm thinking about more immediate solutions — for example, differential rates. I appreciate everything about that in the future, and I wonder if we could do that sooner — but I will leave that for the moment.

I want to talk a little bit about how we're supporting individuals and groups of individuals to make choices that help us all with our energy consumption. In particular, I'm thinking of a condo in my riding that decided, as a building, that they would have solar panels on their condo — that they, as a condo, collectively own — and then use that power and sell it back and purchase it the way an individual would but collectively, as a condo. Unfortunately, because they're doing it collectively, they're being charged commercial electricity rates, and they're being charged overage charges because they're using a condo-building's worth of electricity, and it's being treated as if it's just one family. To add insult to injury, when the electrical bill rebate happened — that \$150 — they got a single \$150 rebate for the entire building.

I'm wondering what YDC can do to support changes so that, when groups of individuals come together and invest their personal resources into energy projects like this, creating energy-friendly buildings, how can we support that? How can we create a system that supports people to do that?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, I know the building that the member opposite is referring to. It's a pretty great project in terms of efficiency. A few weeks ago, I was invited to go and tour it with the deputy minister. We spent a few hours — a couple of hours anyway — looking at the building and talking through some of the innovative ways that they've done to build a more sustainable building broadly. Then we got to talking about the challenges that are there. It really has to do with some of the situation that currently exists under the rate groups as set out by legislation and by the Utilities Board.

I'm informed that we have a meeting with the condo corporation, and we have them working with the Utilities Board to have a look at whether there is anything that can be done by the Utilities Board. We're in further conversations with them about trying to support this type of project more broadly, and we're looking at other jurisdictions — for example, British

Columbia — for how they have dealt with this similar sort of problem.

I think that when the rate classes were first contemplated and created, no one had thought about a more cooperative building type of — a whole-of-building approach. So, it has been caught up under a system that didn't anticipate it. We will work to see if we can find a positive solution that way.

I just want to say that we appreciated the folks from the condo corporation taking the time to sit down and explain it to us and to walk us through it, and we are working toward solutions with them.

**Ms. Tredger:** I am really glad to hear that there has been some movement and some work happening on that, because I do think — you know, tackling climate change is going to require us all, and when we penalize people rather than supporting them to make decisions about their homes that support the environment, we are going in the wrong direction. So, I am really glad to hear that it sounds like there is some movement there.

I am just going to highlight that part of the problem for them is that — this is actually a problem for all condos — is that common spaces in condos are charged commercial electricity rates, which just doesn't make sense to me, because if a single house has a hallway and a garage that they are heating, they get to pay individual rates for that, but somehow when we collectively own that garage and hallway, it is different. That just doesn't add up for me.

So, I am going to make another plug — as I have made a few times before a general rate review — and we can address some of this stuff. Actually, I would love to ask about that. We have had a number of back-and-forths about rate reviews. Are we looking at going back to one?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We brought in the interim relief and that was to last for — cover off a couple, few months. We have been in pretty close conversation with ATCO Electric Yukon, and we are working with them on potential relief options for Yukoners, and we are just in the phase now of exploring whether they can happen directly or whether it works through the Utilities Board. So, that will be a next step.

At the same time, we are in this deeper conversation about how to look at rates more generally, and at all times, when I have been meeting and talking with ATCO or with the Development Corporation or with the Department of Justice, which works more directly with the Utilities Board, we are exploring a range of options around rates.

I will leave it there. I am happy to answer further questions. We are thinking of it as a series of steps, some that take a little bit longer — like, if you go for a general rate application, that takes time. That takes typically a year or a year-plus.

So, we are trying to get interim steps in place ahead of that, which will help our ratepayers as they deal with other increasing costs. The other one I can maybe comment on is that we had a rate application that Yukon Energy Corporation had brought forward to the Yukon Utilities Board, which the Utilities Board has now ruled on. There is a compliance report that will come out shortly. That rate application was always designed to not increase the rates for our residential customers.

There are some things to iron out yet on that rate application, but overall, that is the outcome that is coming, so that one is keeping rates steady.

I think that the one that the member opposite is asking me about more is ATCO Electric and their earnings against what they were projected to earn.

**Ms. Tredger:** I guess I would just make a plug, as we look at those interim solutions and long-term solutions, that whether Yukoners pay ATCO directly or whether Yukoners pay taxes and the government gives them back money to give to ATCO, it's kind of the same thing at the end of the day. I do appreciate that people are going to have lower bills. I think that this is important, but I can't get on board with handing over excess profits to a private company.

With that, I will leave it, partly because I had a really wonderful briefing from the officials and got lots of information about some of the different renewable projects that are going on. There is lots of really exciting stuff. I don't have any follow-up questions on them, so thank you to the officials for their time here today and thank you to the minister. I will leave it to anyone else who wants to ask questions.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just a couple of things. I will say again that, with ATCO, what happened in the previous time when they were applying for rate — they have to project what they anticipate their earnings to be against things like mining, for example. What happens is that there is an estimation about how much mining is anticipated. As it turns out, mining has done well, so ATCO has done well. What happened is not wrong, but I can say that, in working with ATCO, they have identified that they would like to look for ways to support Yukoners and to help provide rate relief.

I just want to thank them for their work with us to seek those solutions. I think that is about rightsizing it for Yukoners. I'm not sure if the members opposite have more questions.

Okay, perfect. I will take my seat, and I will save my wrap-up for in a moment.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for the quick opportunity to ask a fairly brief question. I just want to understand a little bit more about the grant to THELP for the Atlin project. Can the minister describe the amount that the Yukon government is providing for that? Can the minister explain the logic or the background behind the decision to offer the funding to that project as a grant as opposed to a loan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Whenever we have energy infrastructure projects in the north, what you're typically looking at is that you have a small rate base — the number of people who are able to pay for those projects. With a small rate base, sometimes projects are just not even viable from an economic perspective.

If, in this instance, for example, it was Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership coming forward with the project — if they weren't able to get a certain percentage of the funding up front, it might not have been a viable project or the margins might have changed for them, in which case it would have come back to the ratepayer or it would have not gone at all.

So, Mayo B would be an example of a project where government paid for the capital side of the project — quite a bit

of the money up front — or the grid-scale battery — I think it's roughly 75 percent.

In this instance, there are loan dollars that are part of the capital expenditure — I think in the neighbourhood of \$50 million. Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership also put in some capital dollars. We are putting in \$50 million; \$15 million of that is in this year's budget. That was showing our commitment to this project. I think I gave that as a ministerial statement already during this session.

The way we're thinking of it is like a piece of infrastructure that is important for the whole of the territory. An example would be a road. When we build roads, the road — you could pay for the road by asking Yukoners, every time they drive on it, to pay a price, or you could pay for it straight out of the budget. That's what we're choosing to do with the Atlin project. That's one of the reasons why the power purchase agreement has come in at such a good price for Yukoners for the long term.

If we think about the cost of diesel — well, I should say what it was because, up until recently, we were running sort of 19 cents per kilowatt hour for diesel. We know that the price of diesel has gone up very significantly, but with the power purchase agreement, I think it was coming in at 13 cents in the first tranche, in the first several years, and then it was dropping down lower than that in future years. That's winter energy which is so important.

So, I guess my answer is that it is about the two things: to make the project viable and to not impact ratepayers.

**Mr. Dixon:** My question wasn't why the government is investing in the project. I understand why money is flowing into the project, but my question was about the nature of that money. Why is the \$15 million that we are putting into this budget given in cash as opposed to, say, a loan?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** If money were given as a loan, then in this instance, the proponent — Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership — would need to pay back that loan. In order to pay back that loan, they would have to charge higher rates to us. It's the same answer that I just gave. If you loan money and the project still goes, the net effect is that it would come back as a higher cost for ratepayers. I will have to get all the numbers together, but there is roughly \$50 million in loans. There is \$50 million in grants from the Yukon government. If you combine the smart renewable energy pathways program and the federal budget, which just came out — a little over \$82 million put in by the federal government — all of those things combined make the project viable, and they keep the rates low for Yukon residents when they pay their bills.

This will be a good legacy project for the Yukon because the price is coming in well under the diesel cost.

**Mr. Dixon:** I thank the minister for that answer. So, when will the remaining \$35 million of grant money from the Yukon government flow? Will it be next year, or will it be in subsequent years?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, depending on all of the other steps we have in front of us — with YESAB, with the Utilities Board, et cetera — the lion's share will be next fiscal year, but there may be some in the following fiscal year as well. It might

be \$25 million to \$35 million in the 2023-24 fiscal year; depending on how much gets spent out in the 2023-24 and how the project proceeds, there might be some expenditures in the 2024-25 fiscal year as well. If I just direct folks' attention to the budget package under the five-year capital plan, it's on page 5.

**Mr. Dixon:** Can the minister describe the nature of the consultations with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation on this project?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We've had meetings that have focused on, broadly, energy and land planning. We have sat down with the nation, I think, several times now — or I have sat down with them a few times now, but I think that there have been interim meetings as well. It's talking about how to support the First Nation with potential energy projects, whether it be the Atlin project or whether it be energy storage or whether it be other independent power producer projects. They are all in that mix. It's at a government-to-government level but pretty high level at the moment.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just want to thank all the folks who came out yesterday to work on the Whitehorse relicensing project. I think that they are back meeting today, actually.

We had the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and Yukon government and Yukon Energy Corporation meeting on the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, which was the host, to set that relicensing work off on a path, and I just appreciated all of the contributions. I was able to be there in person for some of it yesterday, but, of course, I had to come to the Legislature for the afternoon. I just wanted to acknowledge that work and say thanks to the folks there.

Thanks to the questions from the members opposite today. They are very insightful questions, and I appreciate the support from the Yukon Development Corporation staff.

**Acting Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation?

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried**

**Acting Chair:** The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**  
**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$6,125,000 agreed to**  
**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$37,288,000 agreed to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$43,413,000 agreed to**

**Yukon Development Corporation agreed to**

**Acting Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Health and Social Services — continued**

**Mr. Cathers:** I would just like to begin in resuming debate here today — we had some discussion regarding the bilingual health clinic. I just wanted to confirm my understanding with the minister so that we make sure that we have the details clear about whether this is, then, something where there is any prioritization for people based on either urgent need, such as, for example, kids with rare diseases — this has come up as one of the questions we have had from parents who don't have a physician and have challenges getting their health care needs addressed because of that. Is there going to be any prioritization for groups based on need or on language? Or is this simply going to be operated very similarly to another medical clinic, albeit with other health professionals there as well? Also, whether the operation of the clinic is based on a walk-in model — is it appointment-based or a combination of both?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would like to begin by welcoming the department officials who have joined me here today. We have, from the Department of Health and Social Services, Michael Hale, one of the deputy ministers of that department, and welcome to Rob Ganzer, who is the director of Strategic Finance. I appreciate their support here today.

The question I have now is about the bilingual health clinic. We have been working with the francophone community and other health system partners to delivery primary health and wellness services at a new health centre. We're looking forward to that.

Government continues to make progress on the development of the new bilingual health centre in Whitehorse. That will be integrated into the broader health care system. Most importantly, the priority right now is the physical space that will be renovated for the clinic and for some other

purposes. That physical space is at 9010 Quartz Road, which is beside the Whitehorse Health Centre — that's known to most Yukoners as the "Whitehorse Health Centre". We look forward to that clinic opening. Clients will have a designated primary care provider — either a nurse practitioner or a physician who will liaise with the rest of the clinic's health care team and connect them to additional health services that they may need and coordinate their care. The intention is that Yukoners will be able to receive the right care by the right provider at the right time.

We are in the process of looking for physicians and nurse practitioners who will work at the clinic. The recruitment is ongoing. We are actively recruiting for the positions, locally and nationally. Some positions have been filled with respect to the clinic, but we are still looking for medical practitioners. All the vacant positions are currently being advertised. We will hire nine full-time staff, including a clinic manager, nurse practitioners, a licensed practical nurse, a registered nurse, medical office assistants, a social worker, and we will contract with physicians to provide the service there.

We are working out the process of how patients will become attached to this clinic. We will prioritize not only individuals who prefer, or require, services in French, but also Métis individuals, First Nation individuals, French first-language individuals, and children under the age of nine. The data that we have is that individuals in that group are particularly in need of these kinds of services. The intention is to contract physicians, and they will also be expected to have proficiency in both French and English. The bilingual health centre will open once staff are hired and the physical renovations have been completed.

I hope that answers the question.

**Mr. Cathers:** Could the minister just clarify how the clients will be selected for the bilingual health clinic?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** That will be part of the negotiations with respect to the physicians and all the clinic staff. When we get to that stage of the process — for instance, if we have — we're looking for the opportunity for this to be new services for Yukoners. If a French-language or French-speaking bilingual individual who currently works in the Yukon as a physician wanted to go and have that position, we will negotiate with no intention that they would also bring all their current patients, for instance. We're looking for new opportunities for Yukoners to have medical care.

**Mr. Cathers:** What the minister just said — I see what she's saying as far as the new clinic, but that would also mean as a result, if the local physician or physicians being hired for this new clinic — that the minister would consequentially be requiring them to give up all of their current patients. To the best of my knowledge, all physicians who are currently in private practice here in the Yukon have a caseload of patients who depend on their services, and we all know that they can't receive those services elsewhere. So, can the minister confirm: Is she actually saying that if they hire local physicians, they're going to require those physicians to drop all of their existing patients, leaving those patients without service?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** No, that's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is we'll be having negotiations with physicians — it's why we are recruiting both locally but with an emphasis on nationally, so that we can expand health care services for Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the minister saying that's not what she's saying, but can she explain how the government envisions it working? If they hire a local physician or physicians who are currently presumably as busy as they are prepared to be with the work/life balance, with their current caseload, how does that person potentially move into the bilingual health clinic, create a situation where they can just increase their services? The logic behind this just doesn't seem to be lining up — that physicians or family physicians who currently have busy caseloads — and in many cases, we've heard have such a busy caseload that they're feeling overloaded — how does it — regardless of any negotiations that the minister points to, logically, how does the minister see that it works? Taking a doctor from a private practice, moving them into a public practice, and thinking that you are going to get anything other than a relocation of existing resources with either no new patients being served or current patients being dropped?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I certainly appreciate what the member opposite is saying. That is why the consideration of who might apply for these positions — and that is why we are actively recruiting both locally and nationally to expand services. It will also expand services by having nurse practitioners attached to this clinic — more than one — as well as other individuals who provide health care. The concept of which physicians will be hired will take into account the effect of those individuals coming to work at that clinic. I think that it is definitely a hypothetical at this point because the recruitment for physicians is ongoing.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, not to be too pointed on this, but the minister may call it "hypothetical", but it is a very real concern for any person who might lose a physician they already have due to this change. It is not a hypothetical question; it is a very important consideration about whether government is implementing a plan that is going to enhance services for Yukoners who need it or simply end up in a situation where patients who currently have a physician lose their doctor and are just added to the list of thousands of Yukoners who don't have a family physician.

The question is not hypothetical. The question is whether the government's implementation plan actually makes sense or is just going to lead to different people having a problem of not having a doctor.

My next question then is: With the bilingual health clinic, can the minister indicate how many clients this clinic will serve?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I just want to emphasize that the opening of the bilingual health clinic is designed and based, of course, on a different model of care than current privately owned medical clinics. This will be a government-supported and government-managed and -run public health clinic, with

the services of physicians being contracted. It will increase services for Yukoners here in the territory.

The model of care at full capacity should serve approximately 3,800 Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the minister indicating that it is expected to serve 3,800 Yukoners, but again, the question that I don't think we have clarity from the minister on is: How will these people be selected?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that I said earlier that it will be developed as a result of the professionals at the clinic and determining how individuals apply and are prioritized for services at the clinic.

**Mr. Cathers:** I guess I am not going to get more information from the minister on this right now, but I do just want to highlight the very real concern that I have that it is one thing to announce that a bilingual health clinic is being set up. For government, of course, it was a nice announcement in their budget and a nice talking point, but the very real concern that I have about this is what that actually means when they translate the concept into reality, especially if doctors hired for the bilingual clinic are already people practising here locally.

If those doctors simply move from an existing private practice and give notice to their current patients that they will no longer serve them, based on what we have seen recently with doctors here in the Yukon, it is not something — it certainly can't be assumed that another doctor is going to step in to take their place and take on those patients. There are risks with this situation where the bilingual health clinic is a good news story for 3,800 people, some of whom — maybe all of whom — don't currently have a doctor, but it may result in however many patients a physician currently has losing service or, if some of those people are able to transfer over, it would create a situation where the number cited by the minister is not fully actualized, because it's simply a reallocation of resources.

I'm going to move on from this area for now, but I just, again, would express very real concern with how that's set up and whether it just ends up effectively poaching doctors from current clinics. It's very similar to the problem that my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, highlighted earlier in Question Period around the concerns expressed by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce of how the public sector has grown at the expense of the private sector, making it extremely difficult for the private sector to continue to keep the staff that they need because of the way the government structures it. I would not want to see this become a situation where the government sets up the bilingual health care clinic in a way that doesn't really result in increased services to Yukon patients but instead undermines the viability of existing medical clinics.

I would also seek a commitment from the minister. Is she going to be consulting with the YMA before finalizing the structure of this and giving full consideration to any concerns that they have about whether the model for this destabilizes existing medical clinics or simply takes physicians away from those private practices?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I certainly understand the concerns expressed by the member opposite. I'm pretty sure he's not saying that we should not open the bilingual health clinic or

pursue that model for extended opportunities for Yukoners to have health care. I appreciate the concerns that he has highlighted. They are concerns that we share, which is why the concept of how this will be properly staffed is a part of the negotiations that will take place as we go forward. Consultation with the Yukon Medical Association will, of course, be a part of that.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate that indication. I will just flag for the minister that we will be watching this very carefully. We are certainly not against the concept of a bilingual health clinic, but we do want to see it done in a way that enhances our health care system and helps more Yukoners and not done in a way that simply results in other Yukoners losing their family doctor and in impacts to other providers within the health care system that would be negative and affect other Yukoners negatively. Doing this right is extremely important.

I will move on to another area here in terms of the obstetrics and gynecology program. There have been issues in the past and a wait-list. We understand that the program that is currently set up for two doctors is running with one OB/GYN and locums.

Could the minister indicate what the plan is for that position that is currently being covered by locums? Secondly, we have heard from physicians that there is consideration being given to expanding this program to better meet the needs that are there to include potentially a third OB/GYN. Could the minister indicate what work is ongoing in that area?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. Our obstetrics and gynecology specialists are based at an independent clinic at the Whitehorse General Hospital. That is currently where they are located, and Yukoners must be referred to an obstetrician and gynecologist by their primary care provider or other medical care provider, if it were an emergency-type situation — well, not emergency, because that would be obviously dealt with in the emergency department. Currently, Yukon has one obstetrician and gynecologist, with two more expected to be in place soon. We are actively having conversations with the experts and the obstetricians and gynecologists. There is currently a second locum — obstetrics and gynecology specialist — supporting the system until two additional permanent specialists can be brought in. The conversations are regarding a three-OB/GYN model, where three specialists would be employed to work at the Whitehorse General Hospital clinic and provide services to Yukoners.

The wait time to access non-urgent obstetrics and gynecology services at Whitehorse General Hospital back in February of this year — we can get some updated numbers if it has changed — was approximately 10 months. Wait times for obstetrics and gynecology supports are triaged according to the level of need, and the most urgent care needs are addressed first of course.

Obstetricians and gynecologists are highly specialized care providers who require dedicated clinic space and resources, and they are provided, as I have said, currently at the Whitehorse General Hospital.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate that indication from the minister and answer about the OB/GYN program.

I would also just note, in follow-up to the questions that I asked about the bilingual health clinic, on a related matter — related to the walk-in clinic. Again, the concern and question that I have there is based on what the minister had described earlier. It sounds like we are not seeing new family doctors come to the territory but are instead relocating existing resources to a government-run facility or relocating some of them to there.

Can the minister indicate, as the government is working on this and plans may be evolving: Is there any increase in physicians practising in the territory that is going to result from the establishment of the walk-in clinic, or is this just a case of getting doctors who already have a full patient load to provide care at a walk-in clinic?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the question. I think that the assumption in the question is that medical practitioners who will come to work on a scheduled basis or a roster basis at the Whitehorse walk-in clinic, which will be supported initially by government, will have a full caseload. They may not; we don't know. This project started as a result of, of course, work at the Department of Health and Social Services to consider options and from conversations with local physicians who came forward to say that they also saw a need and wanted to participate in filling that need, along with support from the department, as I have said, to initiate that. They have initiated a list or roster of individuals who are prepared to come there and provide medical care on a walk-in-clinic basis for the purposes of filling that need.

They will, of course, be remunerated properly through their contracts for service for care with the Yukon government, but I don't think that we can assume that those individuals are walking away from a day at their own clinic. That is completely up to them as to how they manage or want to serve there if they have signed up to be a participant at the walk-in clinic.

I think that it is important to note that the conversations came about quickly and were very supported by the individual medical practitioners who saw the need for individuals to be able to have a walk-in clinic where they can go for services if they are not requiring acute care services like they would have, or need to have, to attend the Whitehorse emergency department at the hospital. We look forward to expanding the services in this way.

I want take the opportunity to say that none of these solutions, on their own, are the ultimate answer. We must have many, many solutions to provide services to Yukoners.

Of course, always the opportunity for doctors to come, to be recruited and retained here in the territory to have private clinic-style hours and provide services to patients, but we are also in a very transitional phase of health care here in the territory, having adopted and accepted *Putting People First* for the purposes of seeing the future of health care here in the territory. I'm very pleased that many medical professionals are supportive of that route and ready, willing, and able to help support providing new services here in the territory.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, I do appreciate that there is some action being taken by government to try to address the issue of access to physicians, but it is very important that it be gotten



right, particularly when one of the issues that this government has seemed not to recognize — especially since committing to adopting *Putting People First* and particularly the polyclinics, without actually having a clear sense of what that would mean — that it creates uncertainty for doctors who are considering moving to the territory.

Whether you're fresh out of medical school or looking to relocate from somewhere, if you're considering more than one jurisdiction to locate in and one of the options, that being the Yukon, says that they're going to change the structure, but you don't know what that's going to mean, it's not very likely that many people are going to be as eager to buy a house in that jurisdiction, much less invest in buying into an existing medical clinic or setting up a new one, if they don't have clarity about what the future is going to mean.

In that area, it's not dramatically different from individuals choosing to purchase a home or any investor in any potential business area, if there is uncertainty created by government that leads to people typically making a decision not to risk their money and their family's financial future by making large investments in a jurisdiction that is in a period of change, which they have indicated, but have not actually provided clarity about what that change is going to mean and particularly whether, if someone chooses to set up a new practice or invest in an existing one, whether they can be confident that the financial situation will be stable enough that they can be confident that they will have a path forward to repay any mortgages that they take on related to that.

I just want to highlight that fact, especially with two clinics being set up by government — one bilingual, one walk-in — it is very important that the government work closely with the Yukon Medical Association — and not in a way that pays lip service to their concerns, but actually understands the impacts that this creates, including whether the government's plan will actually make things better or make things worse.

In my question about whether it would simply result in doctors who are currently practising reallocating their time to the walk-in clinic and dropping other patients as a result or having less time to serve them as a result, the minister indicated it would be up to them. It's important in this situation to not look at it through a siloed approach or with blinders on, but actually to understand what the impacts of government decisions are going to be. It's not enough to say, "We're doing our best." It's important that government listen and get it right in this situation.

I am going to move on to another couple of areas, and I will start with one where government's plans have not gone right and did not work out very well, which is the announcement the government made just over a year ago about regulating midwifery. We have now just passed the one-year mark where government brought in regulations that were intended to see midwives practising here in the territory, publicly funded and regulated. In fact, what has happened in the Yukon is that midwives who were practising previously — who were not regulated or licensed, since there was no regulation or licensing in place — were prevented from providing services over the last year. It has now been over a

year and counting, and Yukoners don't have midwifery services.

I am going to ask the minister two questions. Why has the government set up a structure that excludes the possibility of a midwife operating in private practice? Why have they created a situation where midwives are required to practise for a year outside the territory where, in the case of one midwife who was practising here until last year is now in a situation where she is fully able to provide midwifery services in BC, but not able to provide them here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am going to just go back for a second before I move on to the midwifery topic.

The member opposite has indicated that things have to be done right, and I appreciate that. I just wanted to note that, with respect to the comment that there is uncertainty being created by adopting *Putting People First* — or elements of *Putting People First* — I actually don't agree with that. Certainly, there will be change. Certainly, there will be adjustments to be made, but I think that it is important to remember that, if we are talking about the concept of a health authority that is new to the Yukon, of course, but there is a health authority in virtually every other jurisdiction in Canada — with the exception, I think, of Nunavut — there are polyclinics across Canada. They are a growing opportunity for individuals to be at the centre of the health care process and have wraparound services, including a number of services, including those that deal with mental health issues or other personal issues, such as those that a social worker might be able to help with. Polyclinics are not just here.

I am confident, and I know that the experts who work in this field are confident, that the Yukon provides a lifestyle and well-paid medical practitioners.

They can be confident that they will be well paid. They can also be confident that — if they were coming in the hypothetical, noted by the member opposite — if they were coming here as new practitioners, their patient load would quickly fill up and their business would be successful. We have amazing hospitals here in the territory, and we certainly are relying on the professionals and working with our partners to provide a number of different kinds of services.

There will be change, as I have said, but we have been very clear, and the report *Putting People First* is an excellent road map. Does it have every detail of programming or policy? Absolutely not. Are we working with our partners to make sure that is the case? Yes, absolutely — with Yukoners at the top of mind and at the centre of the care that should be provided.

I am going to come back to the midwifery question. I think that, quite specifically, why midwives would not be permitted under the regulations to open a private practice — the midwives themselves, in the consultation and engagement with respect to how to develop a midwifery program, indicated that they wanted to be employees — that this was a model that was appropriate for service here in the territory and that they had favoured. I can tell you, with respect to why individuals are required to have a certain number of hours, that it is, of course, to ensure safety and to protect clients in the regulation of midwifery.

I note that the one individual who, I think, is being referred to by the member opposite — although I don't want to guess — was supported by the Yukon government to have the bridging education funding provided for that person to achieve that bridging, but the total number of hours required was something that members might recall is an element of the regulations that were developed in consultation with experts in the field for the purposes of properly providing a midwifery program that protects patients.

I am really pleased to speak for a moment about the importance of integrating midwifery into our health care system as a free, regulated, and accessible health care service in the Yukon. I don't know if anyone can recall the last time — we have been trying to recall the last time — that a new medical service with this kind of scope and importance was integrated into the health care system. I welcome an example, if anyone has it, because it has certainly been a very, very long time, if ever.

This time last year — and it was mentioned by the member opposite — we passed and adopted the regulations for the profession. I'm very pleased to take a moment to discuss this today because there seems to be some misunderstanding about what that action meant about adopting the regulations.

Installing midwifery regulations was a significant hurdle that needed to be cleared, but it was not the flip of a switch. It was not that midwifery would happen overnight. It was the beginning.

The regulations allowed us to build the program and the services to integrate free, regulated, and accessible midwifery services into our health care system. We worked with local and national midwives and midwife organizations. We relied on their expertise and their advice on how to build our program.

Just some of the steps that were required involved integrating hospital privileges, and that required changes to the Yukon Hospital Corporation bylaws. There were changes to other government regulations that were needed. We had to obtain appropriate and renovate physical space and accommodations, and we had to recruit staff and professionals for the service to be integrated into the current health care system in the Yukon.

We have completed each of these important steps to build and to integrate midwifery into our health care system. The program, as designed with the expertise of midwives, requires that there be a minimum of two midwives to open our clinic. One has been hired, as individuals may have heard. We are actively dealing with the opportunity to hire an additional midwife. It's important that we have the appropriate staff ready to go when the clinic is opened.

We are currently in negotiations around a concept of what to pay midwives, which I think is an incredibly important concern. The Public Service Commission classified midwives at a lower pay rate than we all determined, at the Department of Health and Social Services, to be appropriate, and so the Department of Health and Social Services challenged that classification and the process is ongoing.

The Public Service Commission, in the interim, approved a market adjustment for each position of \$12,000.

I don't pretend to think that is necessarily the appropriate figure, but also, that market adjustment was challenged by the Yukon Employees' Union. There has been quite a bit of media, I believe, around this idea. My conversation recently with media indicated that could be a concern. It also could be a concern for individuals that the classification is lower than it should be, but we are working actively to have that amended and to work through that process so that we can have an appropriate professional fee available to employees, and of course, they will receive benefits.

We are currently in negotiations with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Employees' Union, so I won't say more about that other than the fact that I am looking forward to those negotiations being completed so we can focus on the recruitment and retention strategy with Yukon medical professionals and go forward for the purposes of continuing our work together to benefit Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** It is concerning to me that the minister seems to actually believe her words when she said that they haven't created uncertainty around the physician situation. It is disturbing in that it would suggest that the minister doesn't actually understand the file and doesn't appear to have talked to physicians about it. This type of change coming down the road, if somebody is looking at making a long-term investment that would require them to borrow money to set up a medical clinic or invest in one, any risk or uncertainty about the future is something that is a very real factor.

I will move on from that, but I would encourage her to actually reach out to the Yukon Medical Association and talk to them about that.

Also, I would just note, in the area of midwifery, I do have to remind the government that the Liberal government has spent more than four years committing to doing it; then they announced that they were regulating midwifery and have spent the past year-plus since regulations were put in place acting as if it has been a success and acting as if a new health service has been added, but Yukoners are still waiting for that to actually happen.

I am going to move on to another area that the government has committed to and talks about as if it is already in place, and that is the dental program that is pursuant to the Liberal government's confidence and supply agreement with the New Democratic Party.

Could the minister indicate and explain what this program is actually going to do? What will be covered under the program, who will be eligible, and what services will be available? Will there be a certain number of procedures or a maximum number of things that will be covered or a list of things that will be covered or won't be covered? Could the minister please explain? At this point, we have heard high-level descriptions, but no specifics.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am certainly not interested in getting into a battle of words with the member opposite, but I actually do believe what I say. I have come to this Legislative Assembly for the purposes of providing accurate information that I have available to me. While we are all entitled to our opinions, including the member opposite, I do actually see the

provisions of *Putting People First* and focusing on patients — not just doctors, but patients — through that process as key to our success going forward as a territory.

We, of course, recommend regularly the relationship that we have with the Yukon Medical Association and with individual medical practitioners in the territory. It is the basis upon which we will be able to make these adjustments. They, too, are very concerned about Yukon patients and the availability of medical services. I know this; I have had those conversations personally. I certainly respect their position and their expertise in the area of providing medical care and how we will do so going into the future for Yukoners.

The question now is about the dental program. Recommendation 5.8 of the *Putting People First* report includes “Create an income-tested, payer-of-last-resort public plan for extended benefits.” It is speaking about dental benefits. In response to the *Putting People First* report’s recommendation and, as part of our commitment under the 2021 confidence and supply agreement — which I note that the Yukon Party leader publicly indicated support for just last fall — we are working on implementing a territory-wide, income-tested, payer-of-last-resort dental program within the year of 2022.

As outlined in the confidence and supply agreement, \$500,000 was budgeted in the 2021-22 main estimates as an initial investment to develop this program.

We have used these funds to contract public dental health specialists and to modify and ready our internal systems to be able to support this work and this program.

There is an increase in the 2022-23 main estimates of \$1.3 million to continue the work on this initiative, and we are committed to ensuring program implementation in the 2022-23 fiscal year that provides dental coverage for low-income Yukoners who have no other form of insurance. Sorry, I might have said “earlier in the 2022 year”. Clearly, in the 2022 budget is the first amount — and the second amount — I stand corrected — for completion of the program in the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Many Canadian jurisdictions, including the Yukon, provide some dental coverage for lower income families or social assistance clients, and it is important to note that Yukon provides coverage already in certain ways for Yukoners. Yukoners who are registered in the pharmacare and extended health benefits program or social assistance clients or non-insured health benefit clients, as well as children from kindergarten to grade 8 in Whitehorse and in kindergarten to grade 12 in communities currently have access to dental care. The *Canada Health Act* does not include dental care as an insured service, other than through a hospital or emergency-type situation or perhaps oral surgery.

On March 22, 2022, the Liberal Party of Canada and Canada’s New Democratic Party also reached an agreement. *Delivering for Canadians Now: A Supply and Confidence Agreement* is the title of that agreement. This agreement includes launching a new dental care program for lower income Canadians, and we look forward to hearing more details of that program in the future and, of course, working to integrate the

program that will be initiated here in the territory, along with the federal one, so that they can complement one another.

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

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Ms. White:** I thank my colleague from Lake Laberge for sharing the floor today. It’s nice to see the officials — 50 percent plus one of the officials back. I look forward to having, at one point in time, the opportunity with the other deputy in the House as well, as mentioned before.

The last time we were here, we spoke about All Genders Yukon and, you know, my three-part question, I think, before it was time to leave this Chamber, but I want to talk about senior services, actually.

So, on March 28 of this year, when speaking about services for seniors, the minister said — and I’m quoting: “... the completion of an internal review of seniors services and adult protection services to ensure that these services continue to be effective and accessible.”

I just want to start off with — I just want to know: What happened to seniors services?

So, we’ve been hearing from seniors that, where once there was a social worker who could provide assistance with navigating the many programs for seniors — including housing, home care, drug coverage, dental coverage, financial support, et cetera — that position no longer seems to exist. In fact, from the best of their knowledge — the stories that have been told to us — it’s now called adult protection services.

What happened to seniors services?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I want to be clear that we have absolutely no information that services to seniors have been reduced as a result of the review or of any other reorganization or work in the Department of Health and Social Services, but we are certainly prepared to get more information about a particular social worker position that you have made reference to, because it is not something that I am aware of or have been briefed on with respect to that. I would like to note that we are working toward a person-centred, holistic, and integrated health care system and social services system. There are a number of supports available for seniors. I am not sure if the member opposite will be asking about these. I appreciate that the first question was with respect to the individual social worker position.

As I have said, we will confirm that information and get more details, but I am happy to speak about the pioneer grant,

the extended health care services, or pharmacare, et cetera, but I will perhaps await further questions or take the opportunity to do that. We do have some information that the service the member opposite is referring to is offered through the seniors information centre and it is still available, but again, I will make sure that this is exactly the same question as is being posed by the member opposite. I will look at the Blues and review her wording and make sure that we have that accurate information for her.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that.

Is it possible to see that internal review of senior services and health protection services?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I will certainly look to see it myself. The date of completion — it has not yet been forwarded to me for a briefing. Of course, both Deputy Minister Hale and Deputy Minister van Randen are relatively new to the department, and it's an opportunity for us to review that and to provide a copy to the member opposite or table it if it is appropriate to do so. I don't want to commit to that on the floor of the Legislative Assembly right now because, for instance, I don't know whether it includes personal names or some sort of information about personnel and their positions and that sort of thing. I have not reviewed it myself, but I will do so.

**Ms. White:** The opposition is used to getting many documents highly redacted, so if there was any personal information, I'm sure it could be removed in the redacted fashion as government documents often are.

The minister just mentioned a seniors information centre. Can she please expand on that? Where is the seniors information centre? Is it run by government? Is it run by a not-for-profit?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I understand that it is run by the Yukon Council on Aging.

I do have some information about seniors services and the expansion of those and, of course, the *Aging in Place Action Plan*.

The Yukon Council on Aging is the organization responsible for the seniors information centre through partnerships, of course, but I don't have much detail about that, but I am happy to return with it.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that.

In my recollection, in my meetings with folks at the Yukon Council on Aging, is that a lot of what is done there is on a volunteer position. There used to be a person within seniors services, where there was a social worker who would help link people up to services that they need. I am sure that anyone in this Assembly has tried to help people navigate and understands that it can be quite complex. You know, often when talking about seniors — whether I am talking about it through housing or health — is that there — I do think that we have a responsibility to folks who have chosen to age here to make sure we support them the best that we can.

I will just put that out. I am concerned that there used to be a position that was really critical for folks and now it doesn't exist in the same way.

The minister did mention the pioneer utility grant, so I will jump right into that. So, can the minister explain to me how the pioneer utility grant works?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am just going to look for one note that I think is here. I do have some information. The pioneer utility grant assists Yukon seniors with the cost of heating their homes, whether they own or they rent, so long as they are not living in social housing which is subsidized. The heating can be oil, electricity, wood, propane, or wood pellets — any form of heating. Yukoners must apply every year for the pioneer utility grant. Yukon seniors who are 65 or older, in the year that the grant is available to them, can apply. To be eligible, seniors must live in the Yukon a minimum of 183 days every year. Three months of the 183 days must be winter months and those are defined as October through March. I think that is a bit optimistic, but October through March, individuals must reside in their residence for 12 months prior to applying for the grant. Individuals are not eligible to receive the grant if they have received a housing subsidy, as I have said. The application goes in to government and is assessed on an annual basis.

I thought I had an additional note about what is sometimes called the "PUG". I will look for that and see if I can provide any additional information, but that's the criteria in a basic way.

**Ms. White:** So, two questions: Is that program means-tested? Is there a maximum amount per household — so, whether it's a couple or an individual?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have statistics or numbers from 2020. The 2020 maximum grant payable under this program, before income testing, was \$1,126 if you live within Whitehorse city limits and \$1,209 if you live outside of Whitehorse city limits. We base the grant on income, marital status, and residential address, so everyone's grant amount is different.

The Canada Revenue Agency notice of assessment determines an individual's income. Seniors with low income will receive the full grant, while those with higher income will receive less or may not be eligible, depending on their income.

**Ms. White:** Are the amounts of the \$1,126 for urban or \$1,209 for rural — is that per household or per individual?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't want to delay this. I have looked at the information that I have in my hands. We have sent a message to determine if that is the case. I think that it is per household, but I could stand corrected. I will get the correct information and provide it. I just don't want to wait any longer, as there may be further questions that we could proceed with.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate that. The reason why I am bringing this forward is that I have been contacted by seniors. The reason why they reach out is that they ask me, "Does it cost any less to heat a house if only one person lives in it?" The reason why they highlight that is that individuals who apply for the pioneer utility grant are paid less than couples. That is my understanding. The reason why they highlight that as a concern is, again: Does it cost a single person less to heat a house than it does a couple? My hope in highlighting that is just that, at some point in time, I believe it is important to look through programs to see if they are doing what should be done.

I know that Seniors Action Yukon is a great organization full of many retired public servants who would be happy to participate in that kind of program review, but it is just important to make sure that, when we talk about services for seniors, we take into account those things.

Where I live, there are two condo corporations that are just down the road from me, and it is all 55+ living. They are one-floor, fully accessible units. Does it make sense that a person stays there as opposed to applying to Yukon Housing Corporation? Absolutely. But if it becomes unaffordable because they are not given the same benefits as the couple next door, it becomes more challenging. I am going to move on, but I am open to more information, as the minister has it.

I actually want to talk about COVID logistics. I realize that COVID restrictions ended March 31, but I still have questions about how everything went down. So, can the minister walk me through the incident command structure that I believe was put in place for COVID logistics that we saw for those two years?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you to my colleagues for a few moments to turn my mind that far back to the COVID responses.

Let me first speak about the pioneer utility grant, just for a second, to say that it is clearly designed — I have heard the comments from the member opposite, and I appreciate them — to assist seniors, so we will be looking to the response to determine whether or not we are properly applying the criteria or in a fair way applying the criteria.

Let me move on to say that the incident command structure is an opportunity to approach a process in a certain way. What I can indicate is that a COVID response unit was set up with individuals, rather than following a strict incident command structure. A COVID response unit — or something known as the “CRU” — was set up early on in the process with experts from across government who managed and co-operated the COVID response through a central-type agency. It was connected very closely to the chief medical officer of health’s office and through other departments in government, including Health and Social Services.

Our government worked collaboratively on the approach to COVID-19 to adapt to the ongoing changes. Back in August 2020, we began work to establish the COVID response unit. As I have noted, a temporary branch of government was set up. As I said, it was known as the “CRU”. That provided ongoing operational support to the office of the chief medical officer of health. This unit replaced the Health Emergency Operations Centre.

As we transitioned into the next chapter of COVID-19 response, our high vaccine uptake allowed us to begin treating COVID-19 as a vaccine-preventable disease. I think we are partly there but of course not completely at that place yet. We can ultimately, hopefully, transition away from a formal structure.

The COVID response unit was somewhat dismantled and pieces were taken into the Department of Health and Social Services back in September 2021.

During the months of August and September 2021, the COVID response unit was folded — I suppose that is the proper

word — into existing branches of the Department of Health and Social Services, including testing, contact tracing, self-isolation capacity, and supports for vulnerable populations, so they have all been maintained. Those are all important elements and pillars of *Forging Ahead*. Yukoners can be assured that we remain committed to our COVID-19 response and to ensuring the health and safety of Yukoners.

I hope that answers some of the questions regarding the incident command centre approach to COVID. That is the way in which it was managed from, I want to say, mid-2020 when those responses were required by government, and it was managed through late 2021 in that way.

**Ms. White:** I do thank the minister for that.

It is my understanding when doing all sorts of reading about incident command system structures that they are supposed to be short-term emergencies. We see them in wildland fire. We see them in flooding. I am just trying to figure out if the incident command system structure that was used under Health and Social Services was used for a longer period of time. If so, why was that structure the one that was followed?

The reason is that I am just trying to understand how it works, because until there was the drive-through testing facility up at the car wash at Centennial Motors, my understanding is that there was a team doing rapid-test delivery, so they were couriering between communities, as required. So, I am partly trying to get an idea of how those positions were staffed. Were they auxiliary on call? Were they casual or term positions? Were contracts put in place? I am trying to get an idea about how all that worked out.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think some of the details of this question, and maybe the one before that, could be added to by the Minister responsible for Community Services and the Minister responsible for the Public Service Commission when the opportunity is there for those questions.

First of all, let me just say that I think the member opposite is correct about the incident command approach or structure. Those are used. First of all, they require specialized training for the leaders of those incident command processes. I, too, have been reading more recently, but back in the beginning of the pandemic, about the determination of how we could and should respond. The incident command structure requires professional training and professional individuals who usually carry out that kind of work. They are well-used for responses to things like fires, floods, and other disasters.

COVID-19, in the very early days, certainly looked like maybe such a disaster, but it very quickly became evident that it was not and it would be an ongoing situation, despite our wishes that it be otherwise. When I say “our wishes”, I mean probably everyone in Canada.

We take some time to thank the individuals who responded through the public service on a regular basis — not only the front-line health care professionals, not only the public service front-line workers who went to work every day at grocery stores and every day on our highways or every day to keep our community running smoothly and keep individuals in good health and in care.

We often staffed the positions — the vaccine clinic is one example. Of course, people needed to have professional skills and were called to come and work at a clinic like the vaccine clinic that was here in Whitehorse. We often put a call-out through the Public Service Commission — the questions might go to those ministers — and the call-out processes often allowed us to staff. They were staffed almost exclusively on temporary assignments. So, obviously, when we stood up — maybe not obviously — let me say it this way: When we stood up a testing clinic or when we stood up a vaccine clinic, the individuals who could come and work there would have temporarily left their other positions, whether they be in government or outside of government, to come and participate in providing those services to Yukoners. Many of those individuals, based on the current need and the current strategies going forward to respond to COVID-19 — and they are certainly ongoing — have returned to positions that they had otherwise or perhaps gone back to jobs outside of government.

I can also indicate that another good example of this might have been the enforcement provisions agency that worked through Justice. Those individuals came from other places in Justice, other places in the government, or outside of government, as I have noted. The temporary assignments would have been supplemented by auxiliary-on-call individuals or perhaps by casual people who came in that status to work. Many of those individuals, as I was saying, have returned to their other jobs or back to their jobs, but I note that our response to COVID-19 has made it clear that we might call on them again, should the need be there, and those individuals, of course, would be the first people we would contact because they have experience and they would have the opportunity to gain the skills in those temporary assignments or those temporary jobs.

My point about us often thanking them — it is just an amazing feat to see the individuals who chose to put aside their everyday current positions to come and help in this way.

Many of them were medical professionals. Many of them staffed the emergency response teams that would go to a community, if need be, to do an investigation to seek out individuals to be tested and to provide those tests and/or those vaccines. Some of them were folks who worked at, perhaps, the testing distribution that we've had recently — and that we will have until the end of April, actually — at the tourism building here in Whitehorse. They may have had jobs with those kinds of skills, or they might have had jobs where they were required to be nurses, for instance, at the vaccine clinic and those kinds of things. So, that's the way in which those positions were primarily staffed.

**Ms. White:** I do appreciate the intention behind the thanks, but it's my understanding that quite a few of the folks who staffed some of those front-line positions were actually casual employees and that — I'm trying to figure out the way to say this — communication wasn't great on the ground about what the expectations were. For example, folks didn't know that positions were ending at the end of March and that they just stopped.

It is also my understanding — I'll put this out there, and hopefully people within the department can sort this out — that there are people who are still owed money, that people worked hours that they haven't been paid for, and that they are missing cheques because everything was two weeks behind. I'm urging folks within the department to make sure that those front-line people who we had come in — those casual positions, those term positions, those AOC positions — to do that work, to work in the testing centres, to do the delivery of the rapid tests and who were there for us are fully reimbursed for the work that they did, because that is a concern that I have.

I'll leave it there in hopes that it can be addressed and that it doesn't involve me filing ATIPPs soon. I'll put that out there.

I want to move on to the shelter. The minister has said previously that the intention has always been — that there was always the intention that the shelter would be run by an NGO. Can the minister tell me what the status is of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Thank you for the comments by the member opposite. I just want to note with respect to casual work or the concern about an individual not being paid up to date — or properly, if that is the issue — I am aware of one situation that came to my attention. We immediately looked into it in the department. A resolution was reached where the person was ultimately paid, but we will still look into it to make sure that this was the case. That is the information we have at the moment — that it was resolved. If there are any others, I would appreciate knowing about them, of course.

In the case that I am aware of, there was some misunderstanding about the classification of the person having the job — whether they were moving to an AOC or moving into something else. I don't want to speak too much about it because it is a private matter and also because I don't want to be incorrect. I am aware of one matter, and it was properly resolved, I hope. I would be happy if the member opposite brings any other specific cases. We try to resolve those almost immediately.

I am actually happy that the member opposite mentioned ATIPP. Yesterday, I was here in relation to the budget debate regarding the Department of Justice. One of the last questions involved an ATIPP application or process. The member opposite had some documents. I wanted to have the opportunity but didn't yesterday to say that if these are documents that are otherwise going to be released or going to be provided, please ask the department or ask my office about them before the necessity of going through an ATIPP process.

I had the honour of previously being the Information and Privacy Commissioner for this territory. It is advice that I gave to departments on a regular basis. It is advice that I gave to individuals seeking information on a regular basis, and that was always to just ask. Ask if you can have the documents. I think that the process for ATIPP is much improved, but I appreciate that it is sometimes cumbersome and there may be an opportunity for a delay because the department might have up to 30 days to respond and have other work responsibilities.

I just want to provide that piece of advice to the member opposite because I recall that the document that she referred to

yesterday would have been provided to her probably quite quickly — or could have been. I am happy if that were the case.

I can speak about the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Work is underway for us to have an NGO — or a combination of NGOs — to work and manage the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. It is the reason — and the conversations that are ongoing — I will say they're ongoing; I don't think I can say much more about that. Individual organizations have their own responsibilities in that conversation, and I think it's important that we respect that in an ongoing way.

But that is the reason that there are currently 37 approved term positions at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter — now this is back on April 20 — 35 of which are currently filled. The term positions represent the majority of the employees at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter immediately. They receive full benefits. They are eligible under our benefits plan through Canada Life, and this includes health, dental, life insurance, and accidental death and long-term disability benefits. Through the work that they are doing — and the intention is — and they are fully aware that the term positions are structured as they are because of the ongoing conversations about the responsibilities of who will manage the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

I should note that the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter additionally employs a roster of on-call employees to cover shifts, when needed. Certainly, there has been an important opportunity during COVID for us to manage staff. I don't think it's any secret that staff have been affected. All workers have been affected from time to time, particularly during this last part of COVID.

I also think individuals are taking seriously the need to stay away from work if they are unwell, and that will reduce the spread of COVID-19 as well. We hope that is just one of the ways in which we can do that. We have worked to expand the existing staff complements at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, including our management and supervisory team, to ensure that staff and clients are well-supported. Any staff member, including the AOC positions — the auxiliary on-call positions — that are involved in a traumatic event are provided with supports and access to counselling and services through the mental wellness unit.

I want to note that there is a health care aide position at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. It was COVID-19-funded and was put in place in recognition of the urgent need to support those with complex health care needs who were living at the shelter, or staying there, and particularly with 20 permanent Housing First units.

In March 2022, the health care aide position has been transitioned, and we wound down the COVID-related supports, but going forward, personal care at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter will be provided through the home care program. The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter has been collaborating with Home Care to determine how to best provide services to meet clients' needs. Between January and March 2022, handover assessments were completed for all of the clients who require ongoing supports. As clients' needs are identified, a referral to Home Care is made, and the services for home care clients are prioritized based on assessment and need.

I also want to note that, as part of the response to the substance use health emergency, we have increased other services at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. At the moment, they include the assistance of physicians. I think that it is 1.5 days a week. It includes increased Emergency Medical Services attendance at that location.

I think that we have the licensed practical nurse from the safe consumption site working there partly during the week for the purposes of providing services and also information about opioid use and the serious public health crisis that we have here in the territory. I am very pleased that those services have been increased at the shelter. We will continue to work with the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and the Housing First program as well as with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend the services that are available to individuals. I can note that we have expanded some drug testing into rural communities as a result of the substance use health emergency, and we continue to expand availability in Whitehorse.

One of the opportunities at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter is for drugs to be tested and for individuals to have additional information provided to them there, because developing a substance use harm reduction action plan will include the work that is done at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter.

As well, I'm not sure if those are all the questions or if that helps with some of the information that I can provide, at this time, to the member opposite.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### **Chair's report**

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.*

**The following sessional paper was tabled April 21, 2022:**

35-1-41

Report on Subsistence, Travel & Accommodations of Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly 2021-2022 (Speaker Harper)

**The following legislative returns were tabled April 21, 2022:**

35-1-42

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: COVID-19 testing at border crossings — Klondike Road Relay (Pillai)

35-1-43

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: COVID-19 testing at border crossings — ArriveCAN app (Pillai)

35-1-44

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to a ministerial statement re: COVID-19 testing at border crossings — Chilkoot Trail (Pillai)

35-1-45

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 204, First Appropriation Act 2022-23 — Conrad historic site (Pillai)

**The following document was filed April 21, 2022:**

35-1-65

“YDC / YEC Witnesses Planned Opening Remarks — 07 April 2022” (Streicker)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 71

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Monday, April 25, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Monday, April 25, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

**Speaker:** We will now proceed with the Order Paper.  
Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Could we please welcome to the gallery today for our tribute to Agnes Seitz: Agnes's partner, Gertie Scharrer, Al Foster and Claire Desmarais, Linnea Rowlett, Sue Meikle, Michelle Christensen and Graham Van Tighem, Jess Sellars, Elena Robertson, Brigitte Parker and Brad Barton, Lisa Chevalier and Rob Scoble, Shiela Alexandrovich, Linda Anderson, Astrid Vogt, Michelle Clusiau, Dawn and Dave Bouquot, Werner Rhein, Michelle Harper, Christel and Peter Percival, and Karen McKenna — if we could welcome them to the gallery today.

*Applause*

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I ask my colleagues to help me welcome today Jillian Hardie, who is the executive director of Opportunities Yukon, and Cynthia Lyslo, the manager of Residential Services. They are here for the ministerial statement today. Welcome.

*Applause*

## TRIBUTES

### In remembrance of Agnes Seitz

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Every Yukon community is unique. They are full of character and characters, and the community of Mount Lorne is, I think, the earthiest of our Yukon communities.

Late last summer, Mount Lorne unexpectedly lost Agnes Seitz. If you had to pick one person over the past decades who was at the heart of the earthy community of Mount Lorne, it would be Agnes, so it is with sadness and respect that I rise today on behalf of the government and the Official Opposition and all the folks of beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes to commemorate Agnes for how she helped grow the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, you may know Agnes, or at least her voice, as she was, for many, many years, CBC's community reporter for Mount Lorne. Every few months, CBC would have Agnes on the morning show to talk about what was happening in Mount Lorne, and it always seemed that there was a lot happening in Mount Lorne.

If you met Agnes in person, the first thing you would see was a smiling, welcoming face and greying, curly hair. You would probably have been greeted with some delicious local food made with ingredients out of the garden, presented to you

at the community centre — maybe even Agnes' famous German chocolate cake.

Agnes ran the community centre. This was why Mount Lorne had so much going on. It was because Agnes was amazing at coordinating volunteers, involving youth, and building community. I met Agnes when I was running the Marsh Lake Community Centre, and we worked together to coordinate events across the Southern Lakes.

Organizing a community centre is one of the toughest cat-herding jobs I know, and Agnes was the executive director of the Lorne Mountain Community Association for a decade and a half. She was so organized, so welcoming, and so efficient. To say that she will be missed is a bit of an understatement. Whether it was TED Talks or fiddle dances, the Mount Lorne ski club annual loppet complete with cookie medals, Agnes made it happen. Whether it was wellness cafés, community summer markets, Canada Day celebrations, youth cooking classes, or the always fun New Year's Eve skate where they would turn off the lights and give everyone sparklers and it felt you were a bit like shooting stars in the Yukon sky, Agnes always made it happen. Whether it was youth astronomy, the delectable Ingestible Festival, Ember Fire Academy training, paper lantern walks, craft fairs, or a forest skating path, Agnes made it happen.

Last fall, Agnes was awarded the 2021 community recreation leadership award posthumously. Al Foster and Lyndi Proudfoot accepted the award on her behalf. As Lyndi said — and I quote: "She has shaped the Mount Lorne community as the water has shaped our valleys. She will be deeply missed by her community and the Yukon as a whole."

Agnes and her partner Gertie lived off-grid in a little cabin down the Annie Lake Road. Their simple homestead was surrounded by a garden — a garden that, in fact, spilled into the boreal forest. Agnes loved growing things. She was a proponent of permaculture and she was working with the boreal as a way of hosting and promoting more edible things and living respectfully on and with the land she loved.

Agnes was a master gardener. She grew sorrel, burdock, mint, and nettles, gooseberries, currants, haskaps, and saskatoons, sour cherries, pin cherries, Siberian pear, and Manchurian plum.

Agnes and Gertie partnered with the Yukon Literacy Coalition to create a learning garden to teach Yukoners to plant, care for, and harvest from a garden alongside workshops and teachings about traditional healing plants. My wife, Susan, and I were enlisted as volunteers to help build the Mount Lorne community teaching garden just behind the community centre. The last time I saw Agnes, she and Gertie were at the community centre garden. I remember that a few kids were there doing crafts — making hearts, I think — to decorate the garden fencing out of material salvaged from the free store at the Mount Lorne transfer station.

Agnes asked me to look at funding models for the Agriculture branch to support community gardens. Agnes made it happen.

Mr. Speaker, this past Friday was Earth Day and I find it so very fitting to commemorate Agnes today, given her deep love for growing things, sustenance, and a nurturing planet.

In honour of Agnes, I would like to read a short poem with some small adaptation by Marianne Williamson: “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, ‘Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?’ Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of [creation]. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you ... We were born to make manifest the glory of [creation] that is within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Mr. Speaker, Agnes will be missed by Gertie and by the Yukon.

With apologies for my German: Wir haben unser Herz in Mount Lorne verloren.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of my colleagues and myself and the Yukon NDP just to add a couple more thoughts. It’s a true honour to remember the beautiful force of Agnes Seitz and the impact that she has left behind.

Anyone who ever had the pleasure of meeting Agnes will have distinct memories of her because she was memorable — from her contagious laughter to her love of community. My colleague’s earliest memory of Agnes and Gertie was from when they first opened the Cranberry Bistro and of the blueberry scones. She still talks about those scones.

We know that Agnes had a lasting impact on those around her. Moments in the garden, the kitchen, or over laughter and food — each memory that she helped create are all dear.

Thank you, Agnes, for sharing so much of yourself. Our condolences to Gertie and to everyone who misses her.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling a page from the Conference Board of Canada’s website from June 18, 2020. It notes the Yukon having the strongest growth in more than a decade.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have for tabling, pursuant to section 39(4), *Environment Act — Performance Audit 2015-2018*. This audit will be available on [www.yukon.ca](http://www.yukon.ca) as well.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Pursuant to section 55(2) of the act, I have for tabling a review of the *Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act* interim progress report.

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter from the Mayor of Carmacks, dated April 4, 2022, regarding the Carmacks grader station remediation.

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

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the *Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*, dated April 25, 2022.

**Speaker:** Are there any petitions to be presented?

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 12

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, I have for presentation the following petition that reads:

This petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT residents of the Raven’s Ridge and Fish Lake areas of Whitehorse are growing increasingly concerned about road safety on the Alaska Highway in the Rabbit’s Foot Canyon area;

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Yukon to:

(1) reduce the speed limit in the areas of Raven’s Ridge and Fish Lake Road from 90 kilometres per hour to 70 kilometres per hour;

(2) install signage and physical barriers at each end marking the turning lanes; and

(3) add southbound right hand turning lanes off the Alaska Highway at the Fish Lake Road and Raven’s Ridge intersections.

I would note that this has 71 signatures.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respond to the 110-percent increase of harassment, vandalism, and violence against Jews in British Columbia and Yukon identified in the *Annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2021* by condemning anti-Semitism and all forms of religious discrimination.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to work with the agriculture sector to respond to the closure of the abattoir operated by YBAR Meats by finding solutions to provide year-round abattoir services and increase livestock processing capacity.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Village of Carmacks to implement their official community plan by:

(1) planning for the soonest possible removal of the decommissioned Government of Yukon Carmacks grader station; and

(2) planning for the timely environmental remediation of the grader station site.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to subsidize the cost of period products for Yukoners in need by providing free menstrual products in all Yukon government-owned buildings.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support food security in the Yukon by:

(1) ensuring a more robust mobile abattoir capable of travelling to all Yukon communities multiple times per year for inspected, certified slaughter;

(2) create transport incentives to help bolster sales of inspected Yukon-grown meat products between communities;

(3) increase access to resources for equipment and training to support food-safe and ethical on-site slaughter; and

(4) work with local meat producers and abattoirs to ensure the viability of year-round slaughter.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Opportunities Yukon Cornerstone project

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I rise today to speak about the Cornerstone project by Challenge Disability Resource Group, now known as Opportunities Yukon.

Opportunities Yukon is a not-for-profit organization that provides employment, housing, and inclusive programs to people with diverse needs and abilities.

Their recent name change signals a shift to recognize the positive nature of their work. Words matter, and this organization has taken that to heart and is embracing their positive potential as Opportunities Yukon. Their people-centred approach to their services makes sure that their clients have the tools they need to live fulfilling, rewarding lives.

Opportunities Yukon is growing and integrating its services into our community like never before, in partnership with the Yukon government. Between 2017 and 2019, the Yukon Housing Corporation provided \$1.9 million to purchase the land for the project, as well as for the project's design and development.

Between 2020 and 2022, Yukon government provided an additional \$5.77 million in capital grants and \$3 million in loans to support the project's construction.

The Cornerstone project is designed to be a unique mixed-use, 53-unit building. Forty-six of the units will be affordable rental units and seven will be market housing units. There is also commercial space on the ground floor. The intent behind the commercial space is to provide business opportunities for local not-for-profit organizations. This concept presents an opportunity to involve the greater community and speaks to the collaborative nature of this project.

Our government has supported Opportunities Yukon with this initiative for several years, and we are excited to see it take shape in the downtown core. Completion of construction is imminent, with the first residents planning to move in next month.

In addition to providing funding and support for the new physical space, our government supports Opportunities Yukon programming. The Department of Health and Social Services works with Opportunities Yukon to support clients and we look forward to continued collaboration on a range of programs and services. The Cornerstone project is a unique mixed-use property that represents our continued commitment to collaborating with local organizations to promote, protect, and enhance the well-being of Yukoners and improve our communities.

Thank you to the staff of Opportunities Yukon for their work on this project and the work that they do every day to inspire and make a difference in the lives of Yukoners.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to begin by congratulating Opportunities Yukon on the construction and completion of a much-needed supportive housing project for the Yukon. The Cornerstone project at the end of Main Street will provide 45 supportive housing units to the market. Our caucus and staff had the chance to tour this beautiful building late last month, and it seems to be a very well-designed and well-planned structure. It will provide stable and supportive housing for tenants in need, as well as office space for non-profit groups, and, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are looking forward to eating at the new Bridges Café.

We are pleased that this new facility is ready to serve the community. However, the minister's statement today has drawn attention to a number of concerning elements of this project. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this Liberal budget was out of date before it was even tabled. We have demonstrated, earlier in this Sitting, how the Liberals failed to introduce measures that help Yukoners with the massive inflation spike that is seriously harming the finances of Yukon families. In fact, the Premier failed to even mention inflation even once in his budget speech, but the Cornerstone project is another example of how this Liberal budget is already stale-dated. We were surprised that there is no budgeted funding for the operation of the new Cornerstone supported living programs. During the tour of the building, we learned that the government is negotiating with Opportunities Yukon to provide funding to supply the new programming.

So, it appears that this Liberal government funded the capital build on an important new piece of infrastructure, but failed to budget the O&M, purposefully opening this year. We

are disappointed that the minister felt it was appropriate to do a ministerial statement on this project and simply re-announce details of the capital investment, instead of bringing news of the O&M funding.

As the minister noted, clients are supposed to move into this facility next month. You would certainly expect that Opportunities Yukon would be provided funding certainty well in advance of the May 1 move-in date.

So, can the minister tell us if there is a funding agreement in place, and if not, when can the clients moving into Opportunities Yukon expect those services to be available?

In closing, we are supportive of this new project that will provide homes for Yukoners who are in need of supportive housing, and we want to thank all those involved from Opportunities Yukon, the planners, and construction crews for this work on this project.

**Ms. Tredger:** The Yukon NDP caucus and I were lucky enough to tour Cornerstone both during construction and then again last month, and both times, we were blown away. The building has been designed with such thought and care to create beautiful, accessible apartments and vibrant community spaces. Every detail, from the stovetops to the shape of the balconies, is intentional and well-thought-out. A piece that we are particularly excited about is the thought that has gone into how to support the tenants, how to build skills and create community. We hope the standards set by this building for accessibility and community support will be incorporated into future projects and that the Yukon government will take an active role in making that happen.

We want to extend an enormous thanks and congratulations to Jillian Hardie and the whole team at Opportunities from staff, to board, to volunteers. You saw a need, you saw a gap, and you moved to fill it. You have worked so hard to get this wonderful space to where it is, and it is so appreciated.

Somehow in the midst of this massive project, they found time for a rebranding from “Challenge” to “Opportunities”, and I have to say that I love the new name. The name “Opportunities” evokes empowerment, social justice, and an inclusive society.

I would like to end with a quote from Jillian Hardie — or at least my memory of a quote from Jillian Hardie, Opportunities’ executive director — during the tour that has really stuck with me. As we toured the building, we heard story after story of people who had fallen through the cracks, and each of the people we were told about now has an apartment with their name on it — a beautiful, bright, sunny apartment and the supports they need to stay there. As Jillian said during the tour: “Do people need beautiful living spaces? Maybe not. But do they deserve them? Absolutely.”

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** For over 45 years, Opportunities Yukon has worked to end stigma, promote inclusion, and help to empower Yukoners with the skills they need to find meaningful employment, to live independently, and ultimately to strengthen our communities.

The organization works with employers across the Yukon to connect them with an untapped workforce of people who have diverse skills and abilities and will be offering an opportunity for Yukoners to gain work experience and expand their skillset.

The Cornerstone community will provide an avenue for an inclusive space that will house Yukoners with diverse needs and abilities with a place to be safe, to learn life skills, and to contribute to our community.

We know that providing a secure home is the foundation of a better life and opportunity for growth. For some residents, this will be their first home of their own. The positive impact and the opportunities that can come from this are countless. The unique multi-use concept of this beautiful building is the future of supportive housing in an equitable, integrated community. I look forward to seeing future projects that follow Cornerstone’s example.

When we give people the tools that they need to succeed, we strengthen our communities, we create more jobs, and we build a stronger local economy. We should all be proud of this project and supportive of this new living and community space for Whitehorse and the Yukon. I would like to acknowledge the undying commitment of Jillian Hardie for her leadership and dedication on this project and to thank the board of directors for Opportunities Yukon for their vision and perseverance. This has not been an easy road, not to mention COVID, supply chains, the invasion in the Ukraine, and all the effects that they have had on this unbelievable project.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to recently see this beautiful space and to hear about your programs and operations. We continue to work to support Opportunities Yukon. Seeing this project come to life is a great achievement and will contribute to the strong community in Whitehorse for generations to come.

On behalf of all of us here, I would like to welcome all the Yukoners who will begin moving into the Cornerstone building next month. I hope that they enjoy their new homes, that they gain the valuable experiences that are awaiting them, and that they find employment that will support them and their future.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: RCMP funding

**Mr. Cathers:** Last week, the chief superintendent of the Yukon RCMP told local media about the lack of adequate resources that this government has provided. Instead of agreeing to support the RCMP, the Deputy Premier dismissed the facts and criticized the RCMP CO, suggesting that he must be confused. This is the same Deputy Premier who tried to blame the RCMP for the mishandling of the Hidden Valley school situation and her own failure to ensure that families were notified. At the time, the RCMP said that they were getting used to being thrown under the bus by this Liberal government. It is clear to anyone who has been following that the Deputy Premier has a strained relationship with the RCMP.

Can she tell us today what she meant when she said that the RCMP was confused and what aspect of the RCMP's budget she is claiming that the chief superintendent is confused about?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I don't think that it will surprise anyone that I don't agree with the preamble of what has been said at the beginning of this question. I am very pleased to indicate that I have spoken with the chief superintendent. I think I said this last week, but I'm happy to repeat that. We have had a great conversation. We definitely spoke about the important items that are in the 2022-23 budget for the RCMP and to support them going forward. We spoke about the resources that have been put in place over the last number of years to support the RCMP.

I continue to support them, not only in my conversations with the chief superintendent and his officials with respect to M Division here in the territory, but I have said that publicly on many, many occasions.

The opportunity for the Department of Justice to support the RCMP, both financially for their resources and with respect to how they have been carrying out their work, particularly in response to the substance use health emergency, is always a proud moment for me as I have the opportunity to stand here in the House and repeat that.

**Mr. Cathers:** Well, unfortunately for the minister, dismissing the facts doesn't change the facts. Here is what the RCMP superintendent said: "We haven't kept up with the cost of policing. And it's all sort of coming to a head now. We need an injection of O&M and we need more members."

In response, the Deputy Premier picked a fight with the RCMP and suggested that they are just confused. She said that they are wrong and that the RCMP do have adequate resources.

So, who should Yukoners believe — the RCMP, who say that they are in desperate need of more resources, or the Deputy Premier, whom this Legislature has already asked to resign and who is clearly deeply out of touch with the needs of those on the front lines of policing?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Department of Justice and this government work to ensure the provision of a professional, accountable, and appropriately funded territorial policing service that is responsive to the priorities of Yukon citizens and worthy of the public's trust.

Despite the conversation that is coming from the other side of this Legislative Assembly, we are deeply committed and trustworthy of the Yukon RCMP M Division.

Our government funds significant ongoing investments in police resources through a territorial police service agreement with the RCMP. The Yukon has a territorial police service agreement of 20 years that will expire in 2030. The RCMP forecast and anticipated human resource and operational funding is a topic of conversation quarterly that the Deputy Minister of Justice has with the chief superintendent.

This government is supportive of the RCMP financially and supportive of the work that they are doing to make our communities safe.

**Mr. Cathers:** Here's what the chief superintendent of the Yukon RCMP said: "... just to make ends meet. We've

been running vacancies for years just to pay the bills. So, it's been really, really tough. But we spoke with the Justice Department and we said, listen, we can't go on like this."

It's clear that the RCMP have been asking for more resources and more support from this Liberal government. What has the response been? Well, according to the chief superintendent, the response from this government has been to play silly little games with the RCMP's request for more resources.

Instead of playing silly little games and picking a fight in the media with the RCMP, why doesn't the Deputy Premier actually take the needs of the RCMP seriously and provide them the support that they are requesting here in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Yukon government, under the agreement that I have just noted with the RCMP, are contractually obliged to pay for every position that is filled by the RCMP M Division here in the territory. We reconcile every June of the year, including the O&M increases for those individual positions at M Division, which are across the territory. We have \$1.1 million in the 2022-23 budget for the purposes of administrative costs. That amount went into that budget after extensive conversations with the RCMP.

What I can also advise is that we have increased the budget of the RCMP over the last five years — every year, with the exception of one.

What I can also indicate is that there are additional positions at the RCMP now as a result of decisions made by this government, including staff for the historic case unit and, in this particular budget before the Legislative Assembly now, the crime reduction unit.

I very much look forward to the members of the opposition supporting this budget so that those funds can flow to M Division RCMP.

#### **Question re: RCMP funding**

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Earlier this Sitting, I raised the issue of property and drug crime that has been affecting Whitehorse over the past several months. Last week, we learned that, due to the lack of support from the Liberal government, the RCMP is struggling to keep up with the increased activity that we have experienced.

The chief superintendent of the RCMP described the crime reduction unit as being ad hoc and cobbled together by taking members off the front line or from other positions.

Does the minister believe that the RCMP's current structure for the crime reduction unit is sustainable, and will the minister provide additional resources to strengthen the crime reduction unit?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** There is funding in the 2022-23 budget to strengthen the crime reduction unit. Let's be clear that the RCMP are in charge of their operations. We work very closely with them to determine the kind of funding they need to do the work that they are required to do to keep our Yukoners safe and to keep the community safe. The funding of \$420,000 is a permanent increase to fund members who are working with the historic case unit and the crime reduction unit in the

2022-23 budget, which I sincerely hope the members of the opposition support, absolutely.

We have allocated an additional \$1.1 million to offset increasing operation and maintenance costs for RCMP M Division. Further, our government continues to strengthen relationships with First Nations and First Nation governments through the continuation and expansion of the First Nation and Inuit policing program.

I look forward to providing more information to Yukoners about this important issue.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It's clear from the comments by the RCMP that, due to the lack of support from the Liberal government, they are struggling to keep up with drug trafficking in the Yukon. The chief superintendent indicated that the Yukon could use a dedicated drug enforcement unit to help address this.

Will the Yukon government work with the RCMP to fund the creation of a dedicated drug enforcement unit?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think that it's incredibly important. It is an excellent question, but it's incredibly important to remind Yukoners that the members of the Yukon Party opposition voted against the changes to SCAN, which was an expansion of scope for the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit, which works as part of the Department of Justice and works to keep on a complaint-driven process to keep Yukoners safe. Individuals can call the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit for the purpose of providing information about situations in their community that make them and their neighbourhood feel unsafe.

The SCAN unit has been extremely successful in making sure that changes can be made to Yukon communities. The Yukon Party opposition did not think, apparently, that this was an important part of crime reduction and the ability to do that. Absolutely, it is.

The conversation that I had the other morning with the chief superintendent, and several notes back and forth since then, have committed us to working together going forward as we always have. Some individuals may not know this, but the chief superintendent and I came to these jobs that we currently have at the same time and we have worked closely since that time.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** According to the RCMP, there are now as many as five organized crime groups operating in Yukon. These organized crime operations are contributing to the surge in drug trafficking as well as spinoffs such as property crime. While Yukoners are certainly well aware of the huge spike in property crime over the last few years, many were shocked to hear the level of organized crime. Many more were surprised to hear that, in the face of this rise in crime, the Liberals have been underfunding the RCMP.

Does the minister really believe that the RCMP has adequate resources to combat the rise of organized crime in Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As part of the 2022-23 budget, the Department of Justice has proposed a number of items to support policing and to improve community safety and well-being. This year, for the first time, the wages of the RCMP's

regular members are being adjusted so that recruitment and issues with opportunities here in the north should be strong. I can indicate that, since 2016, we have increased the policing budget by a total of \$463,000 in 2017-18, over \$1 million — almost \$1.1 million — in 2018-19, by \$251,000 in 2019-20, and by \$93,000 in 2020-21. We are working together to determine additional resources that could be available to the RCMP. There are a number of items that they have requested and that we have discussed with them and that are in the 2022-23 budget. I look forward to the passing of that budget so those funds can flow to the RCMP and they can have the adequate funds to do their jobs.

We are working closely with them on additional fund requests as we go forward because we do — we meet with them every quarter — and we are always discussing the resources that they need and providing them as best this government can.

#### **Question re: Managed alcohol program**

**Ms. Tredger:** It has been months since this government announced the substance use emergency, but for people on the ground, not much has changed. Last week, we talked about how safe supply is virtually non-existent in the territory. This government may think that their lip service is better than the Yukon Party's outright dismissal of harm reduction, but at the end of the day, it is the same outcome. People on the ground are going unsupported, and the issue is not just opioids. There is a serious crisis of alcohol abuse in the territory. One program that could make a big difference in many people's lives is a managed alcohol program. So far, the government has outright refused to open a managed alcohol program.

Now that the government recognizes that we are in an emergency, will the minister reconsider her position and say yes to a managed alcohol program?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The substance use health emergency has been indicated here in the territory since January 2022. Of course, we know that the substance use health emergency has been occurring long before then and that every community in the Yukon is affected.

Of course, I don't need the member opposite to tell us about alcohol as an issue here in the territory. We specifically chose the title of "substance use health emergency" to include the abuse and use of alcohol and of all kinds of drugs. We specifically chose the title to indicate that this is a health emergency — a health issue — and we have ultimately expanded a number of harm reduction programs in order to address the substance use health emergency.

It is also an ongoing issue. The declaration of a substance use health emergency was a call to action to all Yukoners — to governments to commit their resources and their energy to addressing this issue, to making Yukoners safe, and to providing the services that Yukoners need to deal with addictions. The opportunity for us to do that together is what is critical.

**Ms. Tredger:** It took hundreds of Yukoners across the territory taking to the streets for this government to even declare a substance use emergency. What is it going to take for them to actually act on it? While the minister is busy having



endless conversations, other people are taking action. The Kwanlin Dün First Nation, for example, is planning to open the territory's first managed alcohol program, but the Kwanlin Dün First Nation can't care for everyone in the Yukon.

Why won't this minister open a managed alcohol program?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The substance use health emergency here in the territory is a health problem. We absolutely need to work together. I am pleased that the member opposite mentioned the response by Kwanlin Dün First Nation because that is their leadership and that is their contribution to addressing the substance use health emergency, as are a number of other contributions made by First Nation governments across this territory. We need to take action. We need to take it together. Far too many Yukoners are dying from overdoses and toxic drugs that have been deliberately poisoned. We need to face the challenge with resolve and with compassion, ending the stigma of substance use so that people get the support that they need.

Addressing this crisis requires leadership and coordination across levels of government, communities, and health care professionals. As we work together, we will make a difference to address substance use and to make our communities healthier and safer, which is the goal. Declaring a substance use health emergency is a commitment by our government and a call to action to all — a call to action to all Yukoners to do whatever small piece they can to help someone to change their communities, to support the work that is being done across government, not only by government but by communities.

**Ms. Tredger:** The minister says that alcohol abuse is a health issue, and we couldn't agree more, but instead of offering supports for people who are in crisis because of their addictions, this government is choosing to criminalize them. In the last two years alone, there have been close to 2,000 overnight stays at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre for intoxication. This equals almost three people a night, every night, for two years. Instead of expanding treatment options, this government is allowing people to be taken to jail to sober up. That doesn't help anybody.

So, when will the minister stop criminalizing intoxicated people and implement real solutions that actually help, like a managed alcohol program?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** A managed alcohol program is certainly one of the potential responses to the substance use health emergency. As we've seen, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation has decided that this is an issue for them to address and they are doing so. I thank them for that. I know that their community is better and thanks them for that.

We have been working with respect to all communities on a number of topics with respect to responding to the substance use health emergency. Our budget here — of 2022-23 before the House — has additional funds to respond to the substance use health emergency.

Over \$5.5 million is in this year's budget that will support the government's immediate response to the substance use health emergency and includes over \$1.1 million to enhance the supervised consumption site here in the territory and to expand

into rural communities and increase the availability of the safer supply program.

It won't be that long ago that we recall that the Third Party was indicating that perhaps we should be delivering alcohol as part of a response to COVID, including restaurant food deliveries. That's not where we are proceeding. There are many, many responses. The communities are working together, and the substance use health emergency declaration —

#### **Question re: International mining company regulatory oversight**

**Ms. Tredger:** In a few short months, the Coffee Gold project is going to be underway in the Yukon. The project is being led by Newmont Goldcorp, one of the largest mining companies in the world. Although their employees at the Coffee Gold project are building positive relationships on the ground, those at the top are another matter entirely.

Allegations of human rights abuses have followed this corporation wherever they go. When indigenous communities in Peru opposed Newmont Goldcorp's mine site in their country, they received death threats. When one farmer refused to sell her land near the mine site, she was shot outside her home.

Can the minister tell us why he's turning a blind eye to these horrific human rights violations while opening the door for this corporation to operate in the territory?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Each and every time that I have met with Newmont and the folks from the Coffee Gold project and we have sat down and talked about the project, my first question has always been about how their work with the communities is going. I think that this is how we should judge the work of this project. I know that they worked hard to get an agreement in place with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. While the project was being considered by YESAB, they also got an agreement with the White River First Nation.

I think it is very important that we make sure that our mining projects work to support our communities, the environment, and social and governance models. It's all very important.

What I can say, from my experience with the company here in the Yukon, is that they have an excellent relationship with the communities.

I am concerned if the member opposite feels that they do not, but I look forward to hearing those concerns and I'm happy to answer further questions.

**Ms. Tredger:** Well, it sounds like the minister is saying that we should ignore their human rights abuse records and wipe the slate clean. There is a mountain of evidence on Newmont Goldcorp's abuses. In fact, their own internal report proved that these abuses happened under their watch near their mine sites internationally.

So, while the local mining industry keeps pushing for ethical, sustainable practices, this government continues to allow multi-billion-dollar parent companies that commit human rights abuses outside of Canada to do business in the territory. The minister can hold these corporations accountable,

or he can risk tarnishing the entire industry's future in the territory.

Does the minister agree that international human rights abuses and environmental harms should be taken into consideration when the government makes a decision about an application?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I guess what we are hearing from the members opposite in the NDP is that they are not supportive of this project, and I will let the member opposite rise to confirm yes or no on that. We are looking locally here on how First Nations and mining companies work together.

When it comes to this particular project, we are thrilled to see the level of engagement that has happened, not only with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and other First Nations in the area, but also with White River First Nation. We believe that the relationship that has been fostered by this company in Canada and in the Yukon absolutely is one worth supporting.

The member opposite talks about international concerns about this company, and I think that this is what we are hearing from the NDP — that is what they are going to determine as to whether or not mining should be happening in Yukon. I respectfully would say that, in my perspective, we are going to take a look at the socio-economic status and the regulatory process. We are going to look at the First Nation relationships. We are going to make sure that any company that works in Yukon works hand in glove with the First Nations whose traditional territories are affected, but also works through the regulatory process in the context of Yukon.

**Ms. Tredger:** Actually, I am glad that the Premier mentioned regulatory processes because right now there is no process to protect the Yukon from predatory mining companies. Under the current act, YESAB can't consider anything that happens outside of our border, so when corporations commit human rights violations abroad, they don't fall within the scope of what YESAB can assess. Even when the allegations are as serious as murder, systemic rape, and genocide, corporations get a free pass in the Yukon. YESAB's hands are tied. Any abuses by corporations abroad simply vanish when they come into the Yukon, which is why we were so glad to hear from the Premier that he was working with Yukon First Nations and the federal government to amend YESAA. Will these amendments include human rights violations under the scope of what YESAB can consider?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to YESAB, we are working with First Nations and with the federal government to look at improvements to YESAA. That work is ongoing. Second of all, we have successor legislation underway, so when it comes to the regulatory side — our side of that — it will be through new mining legislation. We are working on that front. With Newmont, as a company, I know that they are in other projects across Canada, including in British Columbia, which has an NDP government. I just note that for the member opposite.

I think what we are talking about here is something slightly different. I can talk with my federal counterparts. I will be having meetings with folks from Ottawa soon. I can ask them what is typically done when a company is coming into Canada

and how we ensure that they have a strong international record. That isn't something that we work on. We have focused on making sure that the companies that come here and work in the Yukon are doing so, working well and supportively with and for First Nations, with and for communities, with and for the environment, and we will continue to do that.

**Question re: Conflict of interest re Old Crow wellness centre**

**Mr. Dixon:** Section 10(4) of the conflict of interest act reads as follows: "A former Minister shall not make representations to the Government of the Yukon in relation to a transaction or negotiation to which the Government is a party and in which he or she was previously involved as a Minister if the representations could result in the conferring of a benefit not of general application."

Can the Minister of Highways and Public Works tell us if the former Minister of Health and Social Services has ever contacted the Government of Yukon in relation to the Old Crow health and wellness centre?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, conflicts of interest are handled by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. As part of our government's commitment to openness and transparency, the Yukon government passed the *Lobbyists Registration Act* that sets out clear rules for how these activities are governed. It is the responsibility of lobbyists to register under the act, to understand the rules, and to act in accordance with the law.

To the member opposite's question, my ministerial colleagues and I did not meet with the designer/builder nor the former minister and instead directed them to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Our understanding is that the former minister is now working with the designer/builder in the role of the director of strategic operations on the Old Crow projects. The designer/builder was directed to the operational level. It is my understanding that the former minister, along with the design/build team, met with the Highways and Public Works staff on a number of occasions. These types of meetings are part of routine project administration.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the former minister has indeed contacted the Government of Yukon regarding this contract that she was responsible for as Minister of Health and Social Services. Has the Government of Yukon sought legal advice about whether the former minister is in contravention of the conflict of interest act in this respect?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The designer/builder wrote a letter to a select number of Cabinet ministers in which the former minister was copied, asking for a meeting on this project. My minister and colleagues did not meet with the designer/builder or the former minister and instead directed them to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Once again, my understanding is that the former minister is now working with the designer/builder in the role of director of strategic operations. The designer/builder was a director at the operational level and it is my understanding that the former minister, along with the design/build team, met with Highways

and Public Works staff on a number of occasions. Once again, these types of meetings are a part of routine project administration.

As the member opposite will know, conflicts of interest are handled by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and as part of our government's commitment to openness and transparency, the Yukon government passed the *Lobbyists Registration Act* that sets out clear rules for how these activities are governed. It is the responsibility of lobbyists or potential lobbyists to register under the act, to understand the rules, and to act in accordance with the law.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has confirmed that the former minister did reach out to the Liberal Cabinet and did make contact with the Government of Yukon with respect to this project.

Will the minister release all correspondence and representations between the former Minister of Health and Social Services and the Government of Yukon with respect to the Old Crow health and wellness centre, a project that the former minister was previously involved with as a minister?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, I suppose I will repeat myself. The designer/builder wrote a letter to a select number of Cabinet ministers, of which the former was copied, asking for a meeting on this project. My ministerial colleagues and I did not meet with the designer/builder or the former minister and instead directed them to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

My understanding is that the former minister is now working with the designer/builder in the role of the director of strategic operations. The designer/builder was a director at the operational level, and it is my understanding that the former minister, along with the design/build team, met with Highways and Public Works staff on a number of occasions.

These types of meetings are part of routine project administration. I would also say in the general sense that the work on the 10-unit mixed-use housing project, the health and wellness centre, and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation elders complex are all proceeding after some early challenges with respect to the winter road. So, this is fantastic infrastructure for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger):** Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

*Member for Porter Creek Centre rises*

### Department of Community Services — continued

**Acting Chair (Ms. Clarke):** Is there any further general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services?

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to thank the minister for bringing this department back for debate and, of course, I thank the officials for joining us again today.

I would first like to ask the minister if he has been able to pull together the breakdown of the \$52 million in the ICIP — Investing in Canada infrastructure plan — funds.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I do have a list in front of me and I'm going to table it with the Clerk's office tomorrow.

**Ms. McLeod:** I thank the minister for that. I look forward to seeing that.

I just want to go back to a couple of things that we briefly touched on. One is the pool in Ross River. Can the minister tell us what work has been done to date in the remediation of that pool?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Department of Community Services works to update facilities to meet current safety requirements — to modern safety standards — and has undertaken assessment or repairs over the past two seasons in Ross River, Beaver Creek, and Carcross. I am happy to report that the pool in Ross River is ready to open. It's fully capable of handling visitors this summer; we just need to recruit a staff member to run the facility. Provided that happens, we will open in Ross River.

**Ms. McLeod:** I can appreciate the broad statement. Having done some work there, of course, we knew that. I was looking for a list of what work had been done. I understand that

the pool had been at some stage of readiness when Environmental Health stepped in, so I am looking to find out what work was done. If the minister wishes to return that information by way of a legislative return, I would be happy to accept that.

Does the minister have an estimated opening date?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, we have been — I don't want to say that we did structural repairs to the pool; we fixed a number of structural repairs to the building itself. We did system upgrades to meet the Environmental Health upgrades that were necessary to make the pool acceptable in a modern era. The drinking-water fountain had to be fixed as well, so we did that work. Now we're in the current process of hiring operators for all of our pools in one fell swoop — provided that's successful — and the pool is a seasonal building, of course. Provided that it's warm enough to run this season, we will have that structure open this summer. That's our intention. So, we're looking to hire those staff down to Ross River and get the facility open this summer for the season.

**Ms. McLeod:** I want to have a little bit more of a discussion on EMS. The last time we spoke, the minister said that, due to vaccination status, some of the EMS personnel would not be able to return to their full scope of duties. Obviously, that would leave some communities short of EMS personnel. Can the minister give us an update of what the EMS and fire personnel numbers are for the communities of Ross River, Teslin, Faro, and Mayo?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have eight volunteers in Faro. We have eight volunteers in Mayo. We have four volunteers in Pelly Crossing. We have four volunteers in Teslin. So, that's Faro, Mayo, Ross River, and Teslin. I think that answers the question.

**Ms. McLeod:** Let me just run through the numbers. There are eight volunteers in Faro; there are eight volunteers in Mayo — or the minister could correct that; and there are four in Teslin. I did not get a number for Ross River.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I believe the member opposite was looking for the number of volunteers in Ross River. That was EMS, and there are two. We do not have any active volunteers in the fire department in Ross River. The other communities are all run by municipalities. I don't have the numbers of the municipal fire departments, but all the numbers that I have given are for EMS, and there are two in Ross River. We do not have any active fire volunteers in Ross River at the moment.

**Ms. McLeod:** With two EMS members in Ross River, are those two members able to fully take up their duties?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The information that I have at the moment is that they are fully active members — those two volunteers in Ross River — and so they are fully capable of undertaking their duties. That is the latest information that I have.

**Ms. McLeod:** It would seem to me that having two personnel in EMS is probably not providing the coverage, I guess, that a community like Ross River might desire. So, can the minister just tell us a little bit about that? Does the minister think that having two EMS personnel for a community of that size is sufficient?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I will preface my remarks this afternoon by saying that we could always use more volunteers in every community. Volunteerism is the heart of our communities. So, do I think that two are enough? I think that two are great. I would always like to see more.

That's one of the reasons why we have the clinical educators who have been hired. We had this discussion earlier in the month. We have clinical educators hired to go out and recruit and train more volunteers throughout the territory. It's an important part of the budget, and it's an important part of the modifications that we have made to the way we do work, both in Watson Lake and throughout the territory.

We always are looking for more volunteers in the community. We are trying to recruit and drum up more through the clinical educator program that we have just put in the budget this year and worked on. That's, I think, the best answer that I can give today.

We have two active volunteers in Ross River. I think that's tremendous. Can we use more? Absolutely, and I hope we can find some more through the clinical educator program.

**Ms. McLeod:** The minister mentioned that there were eight volunteers in Mayo and Faro. Is that a combined total of EMS and fire, or is it one or the other?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** That's all EMS. The fire departments are run by the municipalities. I don't have those numbers; that's run by the municipalities of Mayo and Faro.

**Ms. McLeod:** We've had a discussion before about the recruitment officer, which is a new position. I'm wondering about the effectiveness of that position to date. How has recruitment been handled for Yukon communities? What has the result been?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I can say that training and education are essential in supporting the delivery of emergency medical services throughout the territory. So, we're using a variety of training measures to deliver programs for the recruitment and retention of community responders and to support these folks throughout the territory. We have a training centre, a mobile training unit, high-fidelity training mannequins, online learning platforms, local training nights, certificate courses, two dedicated clinical educators that I have spoken about this afternoon, in addition to peer support groups and mental wellness supports with a focus on the psychological health and safety of our first responders.

We are also providing accredited COR training and certification for EMS community responders through the Emergency Care and Safety Institute's emergency medical responder program. All of this is to say we have increased monetary compensation as well to four hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage community responder attendance and to support biweekly training nights. We're providing equipment. We're funding the volunteer ambulance society and we're working with community ambulance stations to maintain an ongoing biweekly trade training night. So, we're doing an awful lot around training of our emergency medical responders throughout the territory. It's good work. I'm hearing good things about the program, but as of now, we're waiting to see what the results are. This is a work in progress. I think we're

doing as much as we can to try to pull more volunteers into the service to make them feel comfortable to go to work on behalf of Yukon citizens on a volunteer basis.

**Ms. McLeod:** I appreciate the work that's being done on the training front, especially on the mobile training unit that is able to provide training in the volunteer home communities. Of course, that's an issue that has been raised many, many times.

But I am curious still to know whether or not the recruitment position has netted any results for rural Yukon to date. I will leave my questioning there and turn it over to my colleague.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** What we have been talking about, though, is a clinical educator who is focused on increasing volunteer participation in the community, making it easier for these people who want to take up the mantle of emergency medical responders to feel comfortable doing that, so that is really what their goal is. They are clinical educators and they are focused on increasing the volunteerism. I, like the member opposite, would love immediate results on this thing, but at this point, we are still working through these programs. We are in the process of recruiting people across the territory, and I am certain that I will hear more questions this fall about how successful our efforts have been since January right through to now.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for the opportunity to ask a few follow-up questions on the Department of Community Services. I would like to begin with psychology. I know that the minister did answer a few questions a few weeks ago when we were in Committee, but I did want to check in for an update because I understand that there have been a few developments between the association and the government.

I wonder if the minister could start by giving us an updated timeline for the process of regulated psychologists in the territory.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I guess, first of all, let me say that I really do appreciate the member opposite's optimism in us handling this file in three weeks. We are working very hard on this file, of course, and I'm sure that progress is being made by the good folks in Community Services as they work through this problem, trying to reconcile the needs of the territory and the needs of the territory's psychologists with the legislative regime that we have inherited and are working to fix.

I can say to the member opposite that, since we last talked a couple of weeks ago, between September 21 and March 22, the department has worked with the Yukon Medical Council and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association and two contract registry experts to assess the Yukon's current system for regulating health professionals and begin to build viable options for improvement.

One of the contractors is Harry Clayton, an internationally recognized expert on professional regulation whose recent work for the British Columbia government served as a basis for their ongoing regulatory reforms. We have also met with Dr. Richard Spelliscy, registrar and chief executive officer — and apologies to that fellow if I have mispronounced his last name — of the College of Alberta Psychologists to learn more about the support they provide to the governments of Nunavut

and the Northwest Territories in regulating psychologists. We have also met — as have I — with Dr. Reagan Gale, the vice-president of the Psychological Society of Yukon, to share information regarding the Yukon government's commitments in this area and to hear her perspective on the need for regulation of psychologists.

I can say that she gave me a very compelling argument for the need for getting some control and some regulation around psychologists in the territory. It is an important file. It's one that I have directed the department to work on. They are doing that, and I hope to have more to say to the members opposite in the fall.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister made a few interesting comments at the outset there. He indicated that there is a broader review of the overall regulatory framework for health professions. Can the minister provide us a bit more information about what is being considered with the review of how the Yukon regulates health professionals going forward?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** It's in my mandate letter to look at this. We have just taken action with the optometry at the hospital. We are currently working on a number of different files because we realize how important regulating health professions is in the territory. As I said, it's in my mandate letter, and we are working very, very hard on this file to find a way forward where we can actually regulate health professions in a way that opens up the fields to start providing the care that is delivered in other jurisdictions. That is part of the benefits that I hope to see through this work that we are doing right now. I am sure I will have more to say to the member opposite in the fall after we have had a summer of working through this file.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister mentioned the name of an individual. The name escaped me, but that's not important.

The point was that it sounded like they have contracted an individual to do this work. Can the minister give us an overview of what that contract looks like, what the terms of reference are, and what the timelines are for the review?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my earlier remarks — and I will get the names to the member opposite, certainly through Hansard, which will be asking for the spelling of these individuals' names, I have no doubt.

We have contracted this specialist to work with our policy folks. We have a dedicated policy resource to work through some of this work. They are working with us to help us navigate the really specialized fields that we are trying to regulate, so that is really what the contract is for and I will work with my department to provide whatever information to the member opposite that we can under the rules surrounding provision of information by the Government of Yukon. I have no problem doing that. I don't have those contracts with me right now. I guess what is happening is that work is happening. We have specialists hired to help us with the policy work and help to navigate this very, very complicated field to make sure that we get the best regulations in place for our health professions in the territory as quickly as possible.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's comments and commitment to get us further information. One of the questions that I asked was the timeline for when that review will be

conducted and when it will be completed, but I appreciate that he has indicated that he doesn't have the contracts here and he will look into that and get back to us. I will move on from that now, but I will note that I would appreciate it if the minister could get back to us with a response.

Earlier, he also made a reference to optometrists. I am wondering if he can explain his comment in the current context. Are you looking at the regulation of optometrists as well?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, optometry is one of the health professions in the territory and I have been in touch with the optometrists over the last five years several times. I have learned some of the issues and some of the services that they would like to provide in the territory. We are working with as many health professions as we can; optometry is one of them.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, to return to the original question about psychology then, is a decision about the model and the path forward for psychology going to be made after this review is conducted by the individual who is conducting the review of the health profession's regulations?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I think the member opposite is getting ahead of the train perhaps a little bit. We are doing the due diligence and the work that we need to do to make decision on health professions as soon as possible. I know that psychologists have been working very closely with the Department of Community Services. I know that they have been in touch, certainly, with me and with some opposition members as well.

We know how important this file is. We're working very closely to resolve it as quickly as possible in the framework of better regulating the health professions in the territory.

**Mr. Dixon:** I will move on. I'll move on to flooding, if I can.

I have seen some public discourse on flooding and flood response from the Government of Yukon. I was under the impression that the Department of Community Services was conducting an after-action report for the 2021 Southern Lakes flood response to look at lessons learned.

Can the minister confirm that? Can he explain what the nature of that review is? When will it be completed? Will it be made public?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In early 2022, we hired a contractor to work — to do interviews with responsible agencies, including those from other jurisdictions and our own stakeholder staff who were responding to the crisis, the flood last year. That contractor is currently in the process of working — finalizing the interviews that she had been doing. She will then write a report for the Department of Community Services that will include recommendations and findings. We'll use that information and the information that we've already uncovered through some of this process to improve our community response going forward.

**Mr. Dixon:** When is that report anticipated to be done? Will it be made public?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am hoping to see the report in the next month or two. We will have a look at it, and then, as I've done throughout my term in government, any information that I can make public, I will make public.

**Mr. Dixon:** The reason I ask about the timing is that I tuned into Whitehorse City Council a few weeks ago and the EMO director — the name escapes me, but Trudeau is the last name — was giving a presentation. They had indicated that the report would be done by the end of April, so I was just curious if there has been a delay or if the minister is a little bit off in terms of his anticipated time of receiving that report.

I would like to ask a little bit about some of the government's early response. I know that even though they haven't received those recommendations yet, I have taken note of a few tenders that have popped up on the Bids and Tenders site. One is for the supply and delivery of two sandbag-filling stations to Yukon government. I am wondering if the minister can explain what the plan is for those. Would those be owned by the Yukon government, or would they be given to a municipality or other groups to allow for use? Once they own them, will they rent them out, give them out, or loan them out to community organizations, or will it be operated by Yukon government?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, we are in the process of procuring a couple of sandbagging machines. They will be owned by the Government of Yukon. As is common practice in the territory — certainly in last year's flood and I'm sure in 2007 — we will deploy the resources that we have at our disposal to affected communities as needed.

**Mr. Dixon:** The other contract that caught my eye is the standing offer agreement for the supply of sandbags. Among other things, there are the large super bags. There are the smaller sandbags, which are what we would traditionally think of as normal-sized sandbags. Then there are the larger Tiger Dams.

According to the SOA document that is on Bids and Tenders, the government is seeking 300,000 tie-string polypropylene sandbags. One of the issues that we heard about last year when we were — all of us — out volunteering to do sandbags was the use of the polypropylene sandbags and their relative environmental impact compared to the canvas ones that disintegrate after use.

Can the minister explain why the decision was made to source polypropylene sandbags as opposed to canvas sandbags?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Yes, indeed, we have a standing offer agreement on the Bids and Tenders system. I directed the department, early last week, that we are going to give a preference to burlap bags. We have 300,000 burlap bags currently in storage in our facilities, here in our warehouse. The reason being — this government has been committed, and I know that my colleague, the former Minister of Community Services, has also — we spoke, as well, last week — neither one of us wants to see more plastic bags in the environment. That is certainly a direction that the territory is going to go in, so we are moving to limit the amount of plastic in the environment through many government programs, including this one. We are going to source burlap, and I have asked the department to take another look at the standing offer agreement because, like the member opposite, we don't want plastic in the environment.

However, the caveat to this is this. The standing offer agreement allowing us to buy sandbags — let's say there was massive flooding some place in North America and we were unable to get burlap bags for some reason. What do we do in that case? So, we have the provision to be able to get sandbags of any type if we needed them.

The preference, of course, is going to be for burlap and to have environmentally sensitive sandbags, but I am cognizant of the need that if, for some reason, we used all 300,000 burlap bags, 600,000 burlap bags, and totally ran out of bags here and had to get more and there were no burlap bags to be had, we would have to use some other material.

I am cognizant of that issue, but the Department of Community Services is going to make its priority to buy, deliver, and deploy burlap and environmentally sensitive products in the Yukon.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's words, but I would remind him of how the SOA process works. There is a document on the website that calls specifically for polypropylene sandbags, so that's what the government is seeking to purchase when they include that directly in their specifications of their contract. I can appreciate that the minister wants to buy burlap or wants to buy some other product, but unless they issue an amendment to the tender document, which they may be doing — it sounds like perhaps it is something that we can expect to see — what they're going to get is polypropylene sandbags.

Can the minister explain that a little bit further? Is there going to be an amendment issued for the document that's on Bids and Tenders right now?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** To be absolutely crystal clear like the great waters of the Yukon River, yes, that's exactly what's happening as of last week when this came to my attention from my colleague, the Minister of Community Services. I issued a directive to the Department of Community Services to amend the contract so that we obtain environmentally sensitive sandbags for the territory.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you to the minister for that explanation. That is clear. I look forward to seeing that amendment come forward.

The next question that I have is about the Tiger Dams. The document calls for the purchase of one hundred 50-foot-by-24-inch Tiger Dams. I was just curious about the choice of wording here again. "Tiger Dam" is a specific trademarked type of dam, as opposed to a more general inflatable dam that could be used of a variety of trademarks or types.

I'm wondering why the name brand Tiger Dam was chosen as opposed to any other type of inflatable dam.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question.

I'm informed that the department is using the term "Tiger Dam" as an example because these are well-known. You are right; it is a trademark name. But, as the member opposite knows through procurement, if contractors have any questions or concerns, they can certainly approach the department procurement officials. If there is an issue with that, they have other examples. We'll certainly consider those examples, and

if we have to, we'll amend the contract to reflect what local contractors can get in the territory. This is pretty standard operating procedure in the procurement when we're doing these things. We will take a look at that if those concerns are brought to our attention through the procurement folks.

**Mr. Dixon:** Unfortunately, the minister is correct; it is standard operating procedure for some of these contract specifications to be unclear, and that's why I asked.

So, I would like to move on from that aspect of flooding to the cleanup that is anticipated for this spring. I know that there were a number of bags that were left in place — a number of structures, bags, and other things that were left in place — at the end of the year and that many Yukoners, either on their own property or directly adjacent to their properties, will be cleaning up sandbags, zip ties, poly sheets, et cetera, that are all in place along waterways, either on the rivers or lakes of the Southern Lakes. I just wanted to know if Community Services has any plans for cleanup in place for cleaning up, like I said, zip ties, sandbags, poly sandbags, or poly sheets that have been left in place along the waterways.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Infrastructure Development branch has commissioned Stantec to support the identification of long-term mitigation solutions for communities, starting with Army Beach and M'Clintock. Data collection occurred in the fall of 2021 and is being analyzed. Options for the Marsh Lake area are expected to be available for revision by the spring of 2022 and additional communities will follow as required.

We are actually continuing to take a look at the flood outlook for the territory, especially in the Southern Lakes — well, throughout the territory. Once we are certain that the flood mitigation berms in place today are no longer necessary, Community Services will work with residents in those communities to remove those structures so that it is restored to its pre-flood condition. We would at least remove the measures that we took to protect those homes and communities. Once we know more about this year's flood season, we will be in a better position to take action to remove the flood mitigation efforts that we have, and then we will work with those communities and residents to restore their properties in the face of the new reality of the territory.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that answer. So, it sounds like the plan is for the government to leave in place things that were put out last year to see if they are needed again this year. I think that is a fairly reasonable response.

I did want to ask, though, about one of the tools that the government deployed, which was concrete Lock-Blocks. Those were deployed in a number of different areas around the Southern Lakes in 2007. A number of homeowners and property owners in the area who had those installed on their properties that were owned by government were given the opportunity to buy the Lock-Blocks from the government rather than have them removed afterwards. Will that be offered again this year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** At the moment, we are working with Yukon Housing Corporation on the recovery and what the future looks like in flood-ravaged areas of the territory. We are still working and waiting on the reports that are being compiled

by Yukon Housing Corporation, which is responsible for that aspect of the flood recovery. Once we have that information from Yukon Housing Corporation on their approach going forward — how they can purchase and go forward — then we will discuss that with residents. We expect that work to be done in the coming — I'm thinking in the next six weeks or so. We will see.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, the concrete Lock-Blocks that were installed by the government on various properties and along roadways and properties in the Southern Lakes are owned by Yukon Housing Corporation; do I have that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** No. They were deployed by the Yukon government, but it is Yukon Housing Corporation that is actually spearheading the response to the flood in terms of the long-term mitigations for residents in the Southern Lakes area. It is the agency that we have commissioned to actually do the work with homeowners going forward. That's the agency — not Community Services.

**Mr. Dixon:** If someone has concrete Lock-Blocks or Jersey barriers that were installed by the government on or near their property, who should they reach out to in order to inquire about the possibility of purchasing them?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** At the moment, we have a flooding response line that members of the public can go to — online or a phone call. I know that my colleague, the former Minister of Community Services, has referred many people to the flooding site on yukon.ca and the information line. They can make their requests for things like concrete blocks into that line and the officials will then coordinate the response. The information that I have just been given is that [flooding@yukon.ca](mailto:flooding@yukon.ca) is the e-mail and 867-332-7084 is the number that residents can call if they would like to ask questions about things like concrete blocks. Then we will coordinate the response to the proper authority to determine who it is, because if it is on someone's property, we will have to determine which agency is actually doing the determination of whether things like concrete blocks stay there. If it is offside a property line, it may be Community Services and we will have to figure that out, but if they phone this line — 332-7084 — we will get it to the proper authorities to answer those questions.

**Mr. Dixon:** I had thought that the minister might be providing the cellphone number for the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation, but that sounds like a good choice of information to provide. I have had a number of people reach out to me from the Southern Lakes about that and so I will pass that information along.

I would like to move on then to infrastructure funding. Back in the old days of 2014, the provincial-territorial infrastructure component fund, or PTIC fund, was one of the primary sources of infrastructure funding for the territory, and indeed, the fund underneath it was the small communities fund, which I know funded a lot of projects from 2014 until now.

Can the minister tell us what the current status is of the small communities fund? The way the program worked before was that Canada entered into the funding agreement with the territory and then the implementation was led by the territory — in this case, the Department of Community Services. So, can

the minister just bring me up to speed as to the status of the small communities fund? How much has been spent and how much is left in that fund?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The small communities fund was signed in 2015 and is generally allocated to highways, bridges, and community infrastructure, such as water, waste water, roads, and cultural recreation projects. In total, \$254 million was allocated to this fund back in 2015. They have all been assessed and applied for, so the entire fund has been allocated to projects throughout the territory. As I said, the total is \$254,000,202. The deadline for claiming that money is December 31, 2026.

As of now, the fund has sunset, so it is now past its best-before date. We are just waiting for all the money to be spent. It is expected that all the projects will be finished by December 31, 2026.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that. I previously understood that the funding application deadline was set for March 2024, which, of course, was 10 years after the fund was first created. Obviously, the Yukon signed it in 2015. Do I understand it correctly that any project that has been funded under this has to be fully submitted for funding to the federal government by December 31, 2026 — is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** That is absolutely correct. The deadline for claims is December 31, 2026. The Government of Yukon asked for — and obtained — an extension to that date, so December 31, 2026 is now the deadline for claims under the small communities fund.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that information from the minister. I think the extension was from March 2024 to what the minister has said here, December 2026, which makes sense.

I will move on. Whistle Bend phase 7 — the tender was released last year and then cancelled. It has since been put out again this year. Can the minister tell us why the first one was cancelled last year? What has changed between last year and this year in terms of the scope, and what is the current status?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The phase 7 redesign work considered a number of different factors that we sought to improve for the tender going forward.

There is stormwater-main ditching required for phase 6 drainage that was not completed in 2021. The inclusion of the clearing of roads in phases 8, 9, and 10 was required in winter of 2021-22 to allow for phases 8 and 9 construction in 2022.

Scheduling of phases and site management delays to phase 6 completion — which was originally scheduled for 2021, but now has been pushed to 2022 — triggered access issues to other phases. Phases 7 and 8 were re-jigged to enable a staged method for delivery of work to avoid access issues through an existing construction site and to better coordinate all the phase work. Two subphases of phase 7 were built into the tender to allow lot completions in 2022 and the summer of 2023. That phase 7 work has been tendered and awarded.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister just indicated that it has been awarded. Can the minister tell us what the value of that was?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We will get that information for the member opposite.



**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's willingness to get back to us with that.

Just before I move on, I just wanted to follow up on the last questions I had asked about the small communities fund. The decision to push the date back from 2024 to 2026 — was that a decision made by Canada or Yukon, and when was that decision made to push the date back?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As far as the decision, or Ottawa's decision, to extend the small communities fund deadline, that was done through the integrated bilateral agreement, which is how we go about identifying and asking for changes to the Government of Canada's management and deadlines of our infrastructure funding programs. We identified a need to extend the small communities fund out, and Ottawa agreed to that extension through that process.

As for the Whistle Bend phase 7 contract, it was awarded for \$13.7 million.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that. When will phase 7 lots be released, and how many will be released?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Phase 7 will include two phases — 7A includes 87 lots: 44 single-family lots, 41 townhouse lots, and two multi-family lots; and 7B includes 46 single-family lots. So, that is what phase 7's two phases encompass, and construction will begin this summer.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, when will those lots be released? When will they go out for lottery?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, in this year, we have Whistle Bend phase 6B: 101 lots are expected to be finished this calendar year. Whistle Bend phase 7A, there are 87 lots, and Whistle Bend phase 8, there are 16 lots. The total lots released in this fiscal year 2022-23 is 204 lots.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, I don't think I was clear about that. When will the 87 lots for 7A be released?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The plan is to have the building lots for Whistle Bend phase 7A this summer to be completed this calendar year and then to be released this fiscal year, so by March 2023.

**Mr. Dixon:** Then for 7B as well — is that the same?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** 7B would be for the coming summer, so that would be the next season. Right now, as I said, for this calendar year, we have 204 lots scheduled for completion this summer and for release to the building season of 2023. So, that's really what we're looking for.

Then, in Whistle Bend 7B, there are 46 single-family lots, and they are scheduled for completion next summer. So, that's when we're looking to get those done.

**Mr. Dixon:** I thank the minister for that. I'll move on.

I had some questions about Whitehorse City Hall. Obviously, there is — it's headline news over the last couple weeks that this project was cancelled by the City of Whitehorse.

That project did include funding from the territorial government. It is my understanding that \$15.7 million of that was to come from the small communities fund, which we spoke about earlier. I am wondering what happens to that \$15.7 million now that the project has been cancelled.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have said on the floor of this House many, many times that municipalities are governments in their

own right. They have the right to make their decisions. The City of Whitehorse has decided not to proceed with the City Hall reconstruction, which included washroom facilities, a transit hub, and all sorts of different things — improvements to the building's heating and cooling systems — so the City of Whitehorse City Council decided to not proceed with this building. We learned about this last week. We are now assessing what happens to the funds for that project, going forward. That is something we are looking at, too.

**Mr. Dixon:** Would that money be available for other City of Whitehorse projects, or does it go back into the general pool of infrastructure money that is available to the Yukon? In other words, can it be used in projects outside of Whitehorse or for other communities, or is it earmarked specifically for Whitehorse?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my previous answer, this is a live file. We are working on this right now to understand what the City of Whitehorse's plans are. They are a responsible government, and we are talking with them about what their thoughts are going forward.

I can say that the small communities fund, of course, is an infrastructure fund that is no longer live; it has expired. The extension was granted to 2026 — December 31, as I said in my previous answer. As of January 1, 2027, any unspent funds will be diverted into the Canada community-building fund, formerly the gas tax fund, for distribution under the agreed-upon sharing formula. So, that is what happens then to the funds that have been allocated to the City of Whitehorse project through the small communities fund.

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate the minister's comments about the City of Whitehorse, but the \$15.7 million that would have come from the small communities fund presumably would have required a Management Board submission from the Yukon government. So, it is the Yukon government's decision about whether or not they will allow that funding to flow to another project or to this project. We know that this project is no longer a project — it has been cancelled.

So, will the government entertain other applications from other communities for the \$15.7 million, or is it earmarked specifically for the City of Whitehorse?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I would just like to beg to correct the member opposite. Because the small communities fund has now expired, we do not have the capability to allocate this funding under small communities to other projects in the territory.

So, the funding was allocated and agreed to. This roughly \$16 million was allocated to the two projects at the City of Whitehorse. That's what Ottawa agreed to spend that money on. Those projects are now in flux. I cannot take that money now and allocate it to another project because the small communities fund no longer exists.

Management Board did meet. We did approve the funding for the City of Whitehorse for these two projects. Ottawa agreed to give us some money for those two projects. Now that the small communities fund is a closed door, we cannot go back into the small communities fund and say, "Hey, but there are these other projects we can now allocate it to." That ship has

sailed. This money is dedicated to those two projects until 2027. As soon as January 1, 2027 comes, if they haven't spent it on those projects they have identified, then that money will flow to the gas tax fund or the former gas tax fund. It is now, as I said, called the "Canada community-building fund", and that is where that money will flow in 2027, if it isn't spent on the two projects that were identified by the City of Whitehorse several years ago.

**Mr. Dixon:** I thank the minister for that. I appreciate the explanation. I don't fully understand, if there was an extension of the small communities fund until 2026, why can there be no further amendments or changes to this. If that is the case, that means that this money will not necessarily be spent, because this project was cancelled. My question then is this: Does the City of Whitehorse have the ability to re-profile their project and then allow this money to flow to a different re-profiled project of some sort of similar nature? If so, what are the parameters on the city to do that?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As the member opposite may or may not know, the small communities fund launched in 2015. Under that program, as with most federal infrastructure programs — are by application. We take projects from across the territory, refine them with the municipalities and our community leaders. Once we get the program to a certain stage, we send it to Ottawa for approval. All of the small communities fund — the amount I cited earlier, some \$250 million, I believe it was. I don't have it at my fingertips right now, but I can get it.

Anyway, the small communities fund dollars were all allocated fully. All money was spent, all projects submitted. Some of the projects had not yet gone to tender. We asked for the tender. Ottawa agreed to the extension to December 31, 2026 for those projects. That fund is now closed; it's done. There are no more applications going through. That whole thing has been dismantled. We cannot get applications for the money allocated to the territory through the small communities fund; it is done.

So, now the City of Whitehorse has cancelled this project. We are currently looking to see what the City of Whitehorse does going forward. It's site-specific, so whether or not they come up with some sort of — if they retender the project or something — perhaps that money can be spent on the project at that point. We're looking into that from this point of view. It's sort of a grey zone. We expected the project to go ahead; it didn't.

So, now we're in a process where we have all these funds allocated to specific projects around the building and around the transit hub — high-efficiency buildings, a transit hub to help with civic transit. All of those things are part of the project. That's what was approved. It's a fairly specific ask. It was approved by Ottawa. We're working with the City of Whitehorse to see what it's going to do next.

The City of Whitehorse, going into this cancellation, knew that if they didn't go ahead with this project, that money was gone — more than likely gone. They made the decision with that full knowledge, as far as I'm aware. I have had conversations with the city administration about this, as have my officials. The City of Whitehorse knew that this money was

at risk if they didn't proceed with the project. They still made the decision. So, as a responsible government, I respect the decisions that they made on behalf of the citizens of Whitehorse.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you to the minister for that answer. So, in the event that nothing happens between now and December 2026 and this money rolls into what was formerly known as the gas tax fund, will it be allocated to the City of Whitehorse in their allocation of gas tax funding, or will it be just into the general pot of gas tax?

I apologize for the name of the fund. I realize it's not the gas tax fund anymore. I can't recall the name of it.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** "Gas tax" was so easy to remember. Now we have this — what is it? It's the Canada community-building fund; that doesn't roll off the tongue as easily as "gas tax", so I totally sympathize with the member opposite. It is a difficult fund to remember.

Anyway, the bottom line is that this is where the money will go. The City of Whitehorse will get a portion of the money but not the full amount in any way, shape, or form. There is an agreed-upon sharing formula for the gas tax. That is what will be followed if this money flows into that fund. It will be pennies on the dollar for the City of Whitehorse if that happens in 2027.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thank you to the minister for that. That is very clear. That \$15.7 million, if nothing happens between now and January 1, 2027, will go into the fund and will be distributed on the allocation formula that the fund has — understood.

I will move on. Whitehorse has indicated as well in their capital budget earlier this year that they are planning on building a new fire hall in the north end of Whitehorse. Will the Government of Yukon be supporting this project financially, and has there been a request from the City of Whitehorse to fund that project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The City of Whitehorse fire hall, as I understand it, is now the new focus of the member opposite's questions. I can tell the member opposite that I have not received any correspondence or any questions in my dealings with city council.

On the fire hall, this is something that hasn't come to my table nor to my officials' table at the moment.

**Mr. Dixon:** Just to be clear then, that project — the fire hall at the north end of Whitehorse — won't receive any federal or territorial infrastructure funding?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** My officials and I are checking the current infrastructure funding under the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan. We do not see any application from the City of Whitehorse for the fire hall at the north end, and none of us can recall any ask for funds for that project at this time.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that. I noted that, in the city's budget, they have also identified upgrades to the underground infrastructure in Hillcrest, which was valued at around \$13.5 million. I was wondering if the government was supporting this project or contributing financially to that project.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** For the underground infrastructure in Hillcrest, yes, the governments of Yukon and Canada are supporting that project.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that. Is the minister able to tell us how much the Government of Yukon is contributing to that project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Under the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund, we have indicated our support for Whitehorse on this project through that infrastructure fund. It is 75-cent dollars from Ottawa. We have not yet received a formal request from the City of Whitehorse to tell us how much they are looking at for that project through ICIP.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, if the total value of the project is \$13.5 million and 75 percent of that comes through the federal government through the fund that the minister referenced, what would the breakdown be for the final 25 percent? How much would Yukon government contribute and how much would the City of Whitehorse be expected to contribute?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have received this request as a priority of the City of Whitehorse. The initial estimate is \$13.5 million, but the project still needs to be scoped and properly defined for the federal government. Once we get that scoping work done and all the detailed work has been done, we will make an application to the federal government on behalf of the City of Whitehorse for approval. We will then find out how much of the project the federal government is willing to fund. Once we have that information, we will then know how much is applicable for 75-cent dollars. Generally, once we know that, as the territorial government, we support 25 percent of the eligible costs for the remainder of the project.

That's really how it goes. Right now, we have notification from the City of Whitehorse that the Hillcrest underground infrastructure is a priority for the City of Whitehorse. We are now awaiting them because they are leading the charge on this project. We will find out the detailed work from the City of Whitehorse and then make that application to Ottawa. We will then get information back from Ottawa saying how much of that project is eligible for the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund support and then make further discussions with the City of Whitehorse as to how much we will contribute to the project.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister for that answer.

The government has funded a few pieces of infrastructure on the other side of the bridge, in Riverdale. The F.H. Collins track and the skateboard park are both very popular as well. However, in that area, I think a number of user groups have noted that there are no washroom facilities in that area. User groups are required to pay out of pocket for the renting of porta-potties. We've heard from a few who were interested in the possibility of the construction of outdoor bathroom facilities that would service both the skate park and the track and field there.

Have there been any discussions with the Yukon government about this? Is the government aware of any proposals to construct washroom facilities in that area?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** So, both these projects were funded by Community Services and then transferred to the City of Whitehorse in the case of the skateboard park and Education in

the case of the track and field facilities at the education complex in Riverdale.

I appreciate the information being brought forward by the member opposite. I have not had any requests myself for bathroom facilities. I think it's always great to have public bathrooms available to people. It's a critical piece of infrastructure, but I haven't had those requests yet, and we have no plans or funding requests into Ottawa to provide such facilities at this time.

**Mr. Dixon:** I would like to ask one more question on a constituency front. It's an issue that I wrote to the minister about, but I would like to ask on the floor today.

The City of Whitehorse has indicated that they will be launching a planning exercise for lots 519 and 520, which are known to folks in the Copper Ridge area as the "greenbelt behind Copper Ridge Place". It is actually two lots. One is owned by the City of Whitehorse and one is owned by the Yukon government. In their budget, the City of Whitehorse has allocated planning dollars to do planning for their lot, and there is some question about whether or not the lot that is owned by the Yukon government will be included in that planning exercise. I was hoping that the minister could explain whether that lot will be included in that planning exercise, what the government's plans are for that lot, and what sort of input the Yukon government will have, if it is asked what it wants to do with the lot that is owned by them in that area.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** My information from the Department of Community Services is that it will be included in the city planning exercise.

**Acting Chair:** Would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Dixon:** I appreciate that. I will move to a few community infrastructure projects. I would like to start with the Dawson recreation centre. Obviously, this is something we discussed in Question Period earlier this Sitting, but I wanted to follow up on it. The community has arrived at a design for their new rec centre. The cost is around \$40 million to \$45 million.

I am wondering what level of support the Yukon government is budgeting for that project.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question this afternoon. Before I carry on, I just again want to give thanks to my two colleagues to my left here, Phil MacDonald and Matt King, the deputy minister, for their support of me this afternoon. We got into it so fast that I didn't do the proper

introduction. I just want to say that they and the good folks at Community Services who are in the background listening to this discussion this afternoon are doing exemplary work. I want to thank them for their support.

So, we have the Dawson City recreation centre, which, as the member opposite and I know, goes back a very long time now — decades. The option selected by the City of Dawson is the 6,346-square-metre facility. As we have discussed earlier, that's what we are working on.

The five-year capital plan has identified up to — and confirmed — a commitment of \$25 million for the project, including roughly \$20 million from the Investing in Canada infrastructure program and \$5 million from the Yukon government. We have done that in writing.

We now know that the project is probably going to be more than that. We have committed to the City of Dawson that we will work with them to cover the remaining costs. I know that the City of Dawson is looking for money, and we have committed to funding the project on behalf of that community and we will do so.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, \$25 million has been allocated so far — or identified, at least. Where will the balance come from? Will it come from another federal funding pot or will it come from Yukon government? Is there an expectation for the City of Dawson to contribute to the project?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We have had preliminary talks with the City of Dawson. I think that the City of Dawson has had conversations as well with other community stakeholders — the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and others.

At this point, it is very difficult to stack infrastructure funds, as the member opposite will know. We were talking about submissions to Community Services from municipalities — on Hillcrest. The same applies to the Dawson City recreation centre. We will have a look at what they have when we actually have a proper submission before us. We will look to find out where we can get funding for the project. It may come from some of the gas tax money that the City of Dawson has. It may come largely from the Yukon government's funds. We may be able to find other stakeholders — perhaps the First Nation community. We're just not sure, but we are looking for those funds at the moment.

As I said, the commitment from the Yukon government is to fund the project, so we will get the Dawson City recreation centre built.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister said that they would assess this once they receive a proper submission from Dawson. Is that what we are waiting for? Are we waiting for a submission from the City of Dawson to request funding?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** There has not been an application yet to the federal government on this project. The City of Dawson will determine the timeline for the project, but we have to do a conceptual design. Then there will be a final public consultation, and the City of Dawson will decide if that is necessary or not. Then we will go to the federal and Yukon governments for final funding approvals once we have the conceptual design and final consultations through the books.

From there, it will go through the environmental screening, YESAB, detailed design work, contracting, and issuing and awarding the construction tender, but at the moment, we are working with the City of Dawson on conceptual design. This is all hoping for and working toward a completion date of 2026. I believe that is the date we're looking for, so we're working back from that timeline.

**Mr. Dixon:** So, if there hasn't been an application sent in yet, how was the government able to determine the \$25 million that was identified for this project? Meaning the \$20 million from Canada and the \$5 million from YG — how was that determined if there hasn't been an application yet?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** What happens with the Investing in Canada infrastructure program — we submitted a list of priority projects identified by municipalities across the territory. The Dawson City recreation centre was one of the priority projects from the City of Dawson. The identified budget was based on other similar projects across other Yukon communities. We've now worked with the community over the past few years. We have a better idea now of what the City of Dawson is looking for in terms of its recreation facilities. So, we are now working on that new scope, which is a project of a 6,346-square-metre facility in the town of Dawson. That is the project that they have come up with, and we're working with them to find funding for that project. Once the more complete design is ready for a detailed submission to Ottawa, we'll make that submission to Ottawa.

**Mr. Dixon:** Thanks to the minister. I will move on.

The minister was copied on a letter from the Village of Carmacks to the Minister of Highways and Public Works with regard to the grader station in the community. Obviously, getting that old grader station out of the way is a priority for the community and unfortunately the Minister of Highways and Public Works' response to the Village of Carmacks was fairly disheartening for the community, noting that there are no plans to move that grader station until 2025. I am wondering if the Minister of Community Services can offer some comments on the plan to remove the grader station in the community of Carmacks and if he understands the importance of this to the community.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the member opposite's interest in this project — this land development project in the centre of town. I was in Carmacks recently — time sort of flows together, but in the last several months, before this Sitting began — and I have been in regular communication with the Mayor of Carmacks. I actually was toured around the town. He showed me several places of interest within the Village of Carmacks. The old grader station is certainly one of them.

They have grand plans for that site, and I certainly understand the importance of that site to the Town of Carmacks. It is centrally located. I think they have some really interesting ideas for a mix of commercial and residential development in that area, so I do understand the importance of that site to the community of Carmacks.

I also know that it was a former grader station, so there will have to be some remediation work on that. That's not something that is going to be quick or easy to deal with.

So, yes, to the member opposite's question, I am certainly happy to work with the community of Carmacks in realizing their dream for development of their town. Like many communities in the territory, with the unprecedented growth we're seeing in the territory right now, development issues — land development, residential development, and commercial — is certainly of prime importance to many communities across the territory, including Carmacks. I am tasked with helping them realize their goals on that front and I will certainly do that.

**Mr. Dixon:** Will the Minister of Community Services agree to urge his colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, to accelerate the demolition of the grader station in Carmacks?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The current Minister of Highways and Public Works is — as a matter of fact, every one of my colleagues on this bench work very closely with one another on a regular basis. I have been in touch with my colleague about the importance of this project to the citizens of Carmacks. It is one of many, many projects that this government is undertaking to improve the lives of Yukoners. We will prioritize and get to them as quickly as possible, triaging and putting precedence on the most pressing needs in the territory, as we have done for the last five years. We will continue to work very closely and happily together on these files.

**Mr. Dixon:** I'll leave it there. I do have some more questions, but I know that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King is interested in asking questions as well, so I will cede the floor to her at this time.

**Ms. White:** My first question for the minister has to do, actually, around rural ambulance services. What is the stipend that folks get when they're on call now?

**Deputy Chair:** Member for Takhini-Kopper King, could you repeat your question? It was difficult to understand.

**Ms. White:** My first question is: What is the amount that volunteer EMS workers are paid? What stipend do they get per hour?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Third Party. It's not an easy answer for the Leader of the Third Party on the amounts. It depends on training; it depends on their certification levels; so there are various criteria that actually go into the amount we pay emergency medical services responders.

I can tell the member opposite that \$1.3 million has been budgeted for honoraria payments to volunteer Emergency Medical Services responders this year. I have a list of rates of pay here that I can give the member opposite. Standby pay is \$3.71 per hour; call-out for a level 1 responder is \$21.20 per hour; call-out for a level 2 responder rises to \$25.44 per hour; call-out for a level 3 responder is \$28.62 per hour; call-out for a level 4 responder is \$30.74 per hour; and non-operational meeting or training is \$19.00 per hour.

We have supervisors who are paid \$636 a month. Approved training for supervisors, or recertification, is paid at \$19.08 per hour. I hope that helps answer the member opposite's question. It is a fairly long list.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that answer.

What I was looking for was the hourly rate when a person was on call. When was the last time that number was reviewed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I am told that the rates were reviewed in 2018. We increased them since the last election, so the rates we are charging now are the new rates. Part of my mandate letter was to increase the honoraria paid to emergency medical responders, so we have actually increased the rates recently.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that answer.

Can the minister explain to me the current status of the Haines Junction EMS crew? Is it a combination of volunteers and paid positions — by that, I mean government-paid positions — or is it solely volunteers?

**Deputy Chair:** Member for Takhini-Kopper King, could you repeat the last part of your question?

**Ms. White:** Sorry, Deputy Chair. I wanted to know if the rural EMS, or the EMS in Haines Junction, was solely a volunteer station or if there were paid Yukon government folks in that EMS station.

**Deputy Chair:** You speak quite slowly to help with our sound system. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The Haines Junction Emergency Medical Services staff are volunteer in Haines Junction. We have three communities that are a blend of volunteer and paid: That would be Whitehorse, Dawson, and Watson Lake — are the only three that are the blended; the rest are volunteer services.

**Ms. White:** I will try to adapt, as required.

How many volunteers are currently in the Haines Junction station?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Nine.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that answer. A number of years ago, there was a real struggle in the Haines Junction EMS station. Have those issues been resolved?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have been in the role for a year now and I am aware of no strife or problems within the Haines Junction Emergency Medical Services outfit.

**Ms. White:** I appreciate the minister's answer, but it's that one-government approach. One of the challenges that the Haines Junction station was having was volunteer burnout. As you can imagine, they have a lot of calls in the summertime and their area is quite large. I just wanted to know if the nine folks who are volunteering for their community there have all the support that they need from Yukon government.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** If anybody on the Haines Junction crew has concerns or issues, I would encourage them to bring it up with their supervisor and make it known. Of course, I am looking at the Haines Junction call volume and the number of active volunteers that they had in 2021. As of January 28, 2022, as I have said, they have nine volunteers. That is certainly in line with the call volume in other jurisdictions, other communities in the territory.

We certainly offer all of our employees with Emergency Medical Services the same supports — that includes peer support and counselling, if necessary. I read off a list of some of the supports that we offer to our volunteers and to our EMS

crews in an answer to the Member for Watson Lake earlier this afternoon.

As I said, no concerns have been brought to my attention or to the attention of the officials with me this afternoon. That's all I can say about that this afternoon.

**Ms. White:** Thank you to the minister for that answer. Can he tell us how many calls the Haines Junction station received in 2021?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** In 2021, the Haines Junction crew responded to 112 calls.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. I'm sure that the minister remembers a series of — or, I would hope — most of the editorials he wrote when he was the editor of the *Yukon News*, but he had a particularly interesting one that talked about bolstering support for rural ambulance workers.

Before I continue, is he familiar with that editorial?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I'm afraid the member opposite has been delving into my writings a lot more than I have of late. I think I wrote — my estimate was more than two million words in my career at the *Yukon News*. So, she has me at a disadvantage. I'm not familiar with that particular editorial that I wrote years ago.

**Ms. White:** I'll remind the minister.

So, we were talking about the number of volunteers. For example, there are two currently in Ross River, four in Teslin, eight in Faro, eight in Mayo, and nine in Haines Junction. One of the things that he wrote was that: "Ambulance service in rural Yukon is currently based on volunteerism, like coaching sports.

"Alright, not exactly like coaching..."

"But calls to the community this week suggest the service is once again in crisis."

The member goes on to describe that we base the health and safety of rural Yukon on volunteers — and you do a comparison with how it's similar to other volunteer positions, but it's not.

I know we've talked about the training that has been changed, and it has gone from having no on-call amount of money to — now it's \$3.71. But what kind of check-ins does the department do with communities to make sure that they are adequately supported when it comes to volunteer EMS?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I really do appreciate the trip down memory lane that the Leader of the Third Party is taking me on. I see that she is reading an awful lot of my material, and I hope that she takes the time to provide some of it to me so I can actually go back and have a look at what I wrote more than a decade ago in my career as a journalist. I appreciated the comments that she read into the record this afternoon — my impressions as a far younger man, published here in the territory. That's tremendous. I really appreciate the time that she is putting into reading all those great stories from the *Yukon News*. Maybe she can go to *The Globe and Mail* and *Up Here* magazine and others that I wrote for over my tenure as a writer.

Thank you for that. I will say that the territory has moved on since, obviously, I was writing, but we still do rely on volunteers. Volunteerism in the territory, as I said in an earlier answer, is very, very important to the Yukon. It certainly keeps

the community spirit that we see across the territory — keeps our communities running and safe. I really do extend warm thanks to all those who step forward to help their neighbours, friends, and loved ones in the territory.

Today, we have — the world has changed, as I said. We have cellphones; we have modern communications — the communications infrastructure throughout the territory is way, way more robust than it was when I began writing for the *Yukon News* back in 1989. We received papers from Vancouver the day after they were published and had to check; they were out of date the moment they hit the stands if they were coming from out of town.

Things have changed in the territory since then. We have managers assigned and dedicated to our volunteer Emergency Medical Services staff. We provide training; we provide equipment and online and in-person training as well to all of our EMS staff throughout 15 communities.

The other thing that has changed in the territory — and for the better — and it's reflected in the new nation-leading Yukon workers' compensation health and safety legislation that we recently passed in the House — is mental wellness and making sure that our folks are well looked after from a mental wellness point of view. We have mental wellness supports available for all of our EMS staff regardless of whether they are paid or volunteer staff. They are all paid, I suppose, whether they are full-time or volunteer staff. We offer those services — all the services — to the entire cadre of the Emergency Medical Services staff across the territory. So, that's important as well.

I'm sure that there's always more that we can do and we are certainly looking at ways to improve the services we provide to those selfless and dedicated people who step forward to help their community on a regular basis.

**Ms. White:** To the minister, I actually am not interested in the articles that you wrote, but I am interested in the criticism that you launched at government in your time as editor. How many ambulance calls did Watson Lake get last year?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** The remarks of the Leader of the Third Party cut so deep. She is not interested in what I wrote so many years ago. It somewhat pains me.

In Watson Lake, there were 353 calls in 2021.

**Ms. White:** Can the minister remind me how many volunteers are in Watson Lake and how many paid staff are in Watson Lake for EMS?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Currently, in Watson Lake, we have eight paid staff and we have two volunteers supporting those eight paid staff. Those are the numbers I have here before me.

**Ms. White:** I thank the minister for that. For anyone who is interested, it is worthwhile to read this editorial where the current minister criticizes the government of the day for the handling of EMS services knowing that, at the time of the writing of this article that year, there were 400 call-outs with eight volunteers. Now we have 350 call-outs with eight staff and two volunteers. The question he asked was if it was sustainable. I guess the question I ask is: Is it sustainable the way EMS is being done now?

Again, the minister made the comparison that volunteering was like coaching but not quite like coaching. So, the question

that I will leave hanging, I guess — and the minister can choose to respond or not — is whether or not it is sustainable. With that, understanding the complications of doing this remotely, I will cede the floor.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite, I suppose, for that. I am not sure, again — it wasn't mentioned when my editorial was written — how many years ago. It had to be at least 11 years and perhaps more than that. The territory is a vastly different place than it was 11 years ago. As a matter of fact, EMS in Watson Lake is vastly different from what it was 11 years ago, because we now have eight paid staff people and two volunteers. That is a vastly different thing, and we have also changed the entire model for paying for and delivering emergency medical services care in Watson Lake.

We have recently — as a matter of fact, it was just in the last — just this year that we have actually gotten that through Management Board and have started these changes that we have going here. I am very happy to have brought that new model to Watson Lake, and we are going to see how it works and see if we can't continue to improve emergency medical services in the territory and all sorts of other services in the territory that citizens rely on, going forward.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services?

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$107,023,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$116,715,000 agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$223,738,000 agreed to***

***Department of Community Services agreed to***

**Deputy Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

**Department of Finance**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I won't spend a lot of time in any preamble today, other than to welcome Scott Thompson, my Deputy Minister of Finance, who is here to help support me this afternoon, and also, just a note about the dynamic team that we have in Finance. Putting together an annual budget represents a herculean task, that is for sure — each and every year, even the supplementaries as well, and the department does this with a relatively small team.

Over the years, I have been very fortunate to attend multiple in-person and virtual all-staff meetings, pancake breakfasts, and events with the department. Each time, I am welcomed with open arms, and each time I get a glimpse into what makes the Department of Finance so special, and it is the people. Not only does the department continue to hire the best at what they do, but it is also clear that they love doing it — so much so that, back in January, I helped present a departmental lifetime achievement award for an individual who has been with the department for 40 years. I don't often name public servants in the Legislature, but I think it's worth acknowledging Betty-Anne Stubbins and her contribution to public service over the last four decades. I had the pleasure of hearing a bit about Betty-Anne's story over her career, and it's hard to imagine a time when smoking was still happening at people's desks and budgets were being put together without computers, but those were some of the stories we were hearing from Ms. Stubbins' experiences.

While an organization may only see a handful of individuals stay within one department for their whole career, I was also struck — and this is important to state on the record, too — by how many people in the department have been there for more than 10 years and 15 years as well. That is a credit to the department. It does work like a family, that's for sure. With this amount of experience and dedication, you can really see the expertise and institutional knowledge that is reflected in their work, based upon the dedication of these public servants.

The department continues to do the background work to make sure that money gets where it needs to go to support Yukoners through COVID, for example, and through other issues as well. The department tracks the latest federal, provincial, and international trends to ensure that our tax rates are consistent and appropriate for our current environment. It also does a fantastic job to make sure that rural Yukoners have access to banking services so that they don't need to make the

long drive to Whitehorse — or Dawson City or Watson Lake, for that matter — for their financial needs.

I will end by just saying that the Department of Finance counts every receipt issued and every cheque, and they track all financial transactions that enable us to reconcile the entirety of the accounts for the Government of Yukon each and every year, and they do it with incredible precision with a roster of just 78 full-time equivalent positions. They do it with a responsible and sustainable budget, as well, of \$11.8 million in this year — which is nearly identical to last year's total as well.

With that, I will end my comments to begin with and open the floor up to the opposition for some questions.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to thank the officials from Finance for their work on the budget for their department and otherwise.

At this point in the Sitting, as members know, we are reaching the tail-end and need to prioritize which questions we're asking for which departments. I will be — the questions that we would have otherwise, time permitting, have asked during debate on Finance, we'll be addressing through written questions or letters.

With that, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 — pardon me, Deputy Chair. I am ahead of myself here.

At this point, I'll be saving those questions for written questions in a letter and moving that we wrap up debate in the interest of moving on to other departments.

**Deputy Chair:** Is there any further general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 204?

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

**Mr. Cathers:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried, as required.

### **Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried**

**Deputy Chair:** The Member for Lake Laberge has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

#### ***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$11,764,000 agreed to***

#### ***On Capital Expenditures***

***Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$32,000 agreed to***

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$11,796,000 agreed to***

***Department of Finance agreed to***

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*. Is there any further general debate?

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

#### *Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*. Is there any further general debate?

#### **Department of Health and Social Services — *continued***

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I just wanted to put on the record a couple of statistics with respect to the Health and Social Services budget, and then I am happy to continue to entertain questions for the few minutes that we have in today's schedule.

The estimated budget for the Health and Social Services department of Yukon government for the 2022-23 fiscal year is \$510,285,000. This represents a 4.09-percent increase from last year. The 2022-23 main estimates also include an increase of 63.5 FTEs over the 2021-22 main estimates. The FTE count for 2022-23 will total 1,590 FTEs. There are 103.4 temporary FTEs, 82.8 temporary FTEs for the COVID response, which are being actively utilized across the department, as well as 20.6 temporary FTEs for the substance use health emergency.

There are more than \$11,600,000 in this year's budget dedicated to the health and social resources necessary to manage the ongoing risk of COVID-19 in our territory. As I have said earlier, it includes 82.8 temporary FTEs.

I will certainly have more statistics to provide on line items in the budget, but I am happy to entertain questions, should there be any. If I don't have time to answer them, I will be happy to take them under advisement and provide further information.

**Mr. Cathers:** In resuming debate here today, I would like to ask a question of the minister just prompted by the issue that I raised earlier today about Opportunities Yukon. We understand that they are still waiting for a contribution agreement for the current fiscal year, as well as the new housing project that the minister gave a statement on in Question Period. There is, as the minister knows, a long list of NGOs funded by the Department of Health and Social Services. Those NGOs typically receive funding through a contribution agreement that begins on April 1.

My question is: How many of the NGOs funded by Health and Social Services have received a funding agreement for the current fiscal year, and how many are still waiting for a funding agreement for the current fiscal year?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I can see if I have the actual number. I can certainly indicate that all of the NGOs that are supported by the Department of Health and Social Services have received at least a cost-of-living increase for 2022-23. I am just trying to see if I have the actual figure for how many of the transfer



payment agreements or MOUs are already signed for this particular year.

As the member opposite knows, it is not unusual — particularly in the cases when we are negotiating for new programming or new situations or changes in the programming — for there to be a period of time after April 1 but where the negotiations continue and ultimately the transfer payment agreements or the MOUs are finalized — a short period of time after that — then, ultimately, they are signed and the individual organizations proceed, as they had in the past, with new funding agreements. In particular, with respect to Opportunities Yukon, we are working on finalizing the changes to their work and how we will manage to support them in that way.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

**The following sessional papers were tabled April 25, 2022:**

35-1-42

*Environment Act — Performance Audit — 2015-2018 — Yukon Executive Council Office Government Internal Audit Services* (January 2022) (Clarke, N.)

35-1-43

*Review of the Public Interest Disclosure of Wrongdoing Act Interim Progress Report* (March 2022) (Streicker)

35-1-44

*Fourth Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees* (April 25, 2022) (Clarke, N.)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 72

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Tuesday, April 26, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly**  
**Whitehorse, Yukon**  
**Tuesday, April 26, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I ask my colleagues to please help me welcome a number of special guests here for a very special tribute to Adeline Webber. First and foremost is our guest of honour, Adeline Webber, and her husband, Bill Webber; her niece, Sharon Shorty; her nephew, Dan Shorty; her sister-in-law, Helen Holway; and, from the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, Chief Amanda Leas, who is also attending today on behalf of Kluane Adamek, the regional AFN chief; from the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, we have executive elder Judy Gingell; from the Teslin Tlingit Council, deputy Naa Shaáde Háni Alex Oakley — welcome; from the Teslin Tlingit Council, executive elder Barb Hobbis and her husband, Dave Hobbis — welcome; from the Council of Yukon First Nations, Grand Chief Peter Johnston and also a member of the Teslin Tlingit Council — welcome; from the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, Sharon Shadow; Natalie Taylor, executive director; Susan Power, admin and project coordinator; and Jerry Soltani, secretary treasurer. We also have the Deputy Minister of Education and the Deputy Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity Directorate, Nicole Morgan. Welcome. Thank you so much for being here today.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We have another tribute that is going to happen today, honouring Anne Lewis. Anne is here with some guests. Could we please welcome Leneath Yanson, Bonnie Dixon, Candice Gottschall, Jennifer Walters, Andrea Kenward, Monica Nordling, and Jasmine Sangria and, from the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board, we have Heather Burrell and Wendy Tayler, and from Anne's family, Randy and Stuart Lewis.

Can we welcome them all, please?

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Adeline Webber

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to someone I am proud to call a mentor, a colleague, a friend, and one of my heroes — Adeline Webber.

Earlier this month, Adeline, a member of the Teslin Tlingit Council, along with 12 indigenous delegates, travelled to Rome to hold historic talks with Pope Francis to discuss the Roman Catholic Church's role in residential schools. She made our entire territory proud as she made the long journey to Rome and represented our region. She went on behalf of survivors and those who did not survive, their families, and for future generations.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank other Yukoners who also went to Rome to support the delegates: her husband, Bill Webber, who always takes his spot at her side — at the side of our beloved Adeline — to support and encourage her; as well, cultural leaders, Elder Frances Neumann and her nieces, Marilyn and Megan Jensen, who drummed and sang to hold up our delegation in St. Peter's Square as they entered and emerged from the Vatican — thank you.

It is because of the bravery of this delegation that we witnessed the Pope delivering a long-overdue apology to the indigenous people of Canada.

This apology could mark the beginning of a new relationship. It is an acknowledgement of the hurt and the suffering that our communities have experienced through residential schools. I am hopeful for the future, but there is still a lot of work to be done, as Adeline well knows. She has been doing this work nearly her entire life. Adeline has lobbied and advocated for the rights of indigenous people for many decades, with a particular focus on indigenous women. Her tireless work to advocate for the support, equality, and dignity for indigenous women has played no small part in major achievements in our history: the Yukon regional roundtables, the national inquiry, and now Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

She is a respected auntie and friend to countless youth, and I know that she is a role model and mentor to many women and girls in the Yukon and throughout Canada. Adeline is a living testament to the strength and resilience of indigenous women, so I am thankful for the path that she has paved for me and many other indigenous women in leadership positions.

Our government remains committed to supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. We are also committed to working with our partners to implement Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

I raise my hands to Adeline Webber. Thank you for your wisdom, your strength, your tenacity in seeking equality, dignity, and justice for our people.

Günilshish. Thank you.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to honour Adeline Webber. Adeline was chosen as the Yukon representative for the Assembly of First Nations' delegation to Rome. To have an audience with the Pope at the Vatican is something that certainly has an impact, and last month that took place.

Adeline was born and raised in Whitehorse and is a member of the Teslin Tlingit First Nation. Adeline is a residential school survivor — seven years of her life in that system. Being taken from her home and sent to the Whitehorse

Indian Baptist Mission School was one thing, but I understand that she was also separated from some of her siblings, as they were sent to different schools. Adeline's career is, quite frankly, outstanding. She worked for the Council of Yukon First Nations as an enrolment officer and chair of the Yukon Enrollment Commission. She was instrumental within the Council of Yukon First Nations during the land claims settlement. Then, as Yukon district director within the federal government, Adeline helped to create the northern careers program. She retired, but that didn't stop her passion to give and share her expertise.

We would like to recognize Adeline for the incredible work that she has done throughout her career advocating for indigenous and aboriginal women's rights. She is the founder of the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, which is a forum for aboriginal women to socialize, network, support, and address issues of interest and concern. She worked tirelessly for the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre as a board member and as a president, of which she is now an honorary lifetime member. Adeline was appointed Administrator of Yukon in 2018 and has been extended for another term.

The list is so extensive that our allotted time is not long enough to list all of her accomplishments and work, let alone her awards and recognition for that work. So, to a leader, an advocate, a volunteer, a hard-working community citizen, and a very respected elder, we thank you for all that you contribute to Yukon and for representing Yukon First Nation people on the international stage. Of her visit with the Pope, she said — and I quote: "I just really hope that he is very serious about dealing with us." Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that, when dealing with Adeline, he sat up and took notice.

I would also like to recognize those performers who joined the AFN delegation in Rome from Yukon, including the mother-daughter duo from the Yukon, Marilyn and Megan Jensen from the Dakhká Khwáan Dancers. Thank you to Marilyn and Megan, and thank you, of course, to Adeline for representing Yukon in Rome.

Günilschish. Thank you.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** It is truly an honour to pay tribute to Adeline Webber on behalf of the Yukon NDP.

As shared by the previous speakers, when meeting with the Pope, Adeline Webber represented not just the Yukoners who survived Yukon residential schools, but she also represented the generations impacted by the legacy of residential schools from across Canada. A moment that stood out for me was seeing her take the tiny beaded moccasins that her mother had made and share them with the Pope. Seeing her hold those lovingly in her hands and knowing the family's story, it is an image that is more powerful than any words.

This wasn't a one-off for Adeline. She has worked, and continues to work, day in and day out to support survivors of residential schools and to research and shine a light on the injustices that so many experienced so that there truly can be reconciliation and healing.

Our heartfelt thanks to Adeline and all those in our communities who recognize the impact of residential schools on so many and are working to bring us all closer to truth and reconciliation.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Women in Mining Canada 2022 Trailblazer Award recipient Anne Lewis and Yukon Mining and Geology Week**

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise today to pay tribute to Anne Lewis, a lifelong Yukoner, who is this year's recipient of the Women in Mining Canada Trailblazer Award. The award recognizes women who embody the trail-blazing spirit, the leadership mindset needed to make extraordinary personal strides to navigate the Canadian mining industry.

You could say that Anne joined the mineral industry at an early age. Starting at just six months old, she began travelling with her father Randy to Yukon mines and contaminated sites, seeing first-hand at an early age mine reclamation and remediation, training and education, and indigenous and community economic development. These early experiences must have made an impression. After completing university, Anne spent the past 15 years working to make the mining industry in the territory more diverse and equitable. In 2009, Anne joined the Yukon Mine Training Association as a training coordinator. During her two-year tenure, she launched the first-ever heavy equipment operator simulator in the Yukon.

She also managed inclusive wage subsidy programs and developed training programs for Yukon First Nation residents at mineral exploration and mine sites. Since 2011, Anne has served as the executive director of the Yukon Mining Alliance to help build the Invest Yukon brand, promoting the Yukon's competitive advantages and opportunities for international investments. Just this morning, Anne was sharing stories with me about flying in with investors to beautiful Yukon locations without a tree in sight.

Building on this model, Anne went on to create Invest Canada North with the help of leaders in government and the mining industry from the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut. This project put the north's competitive advantages for mining in the spotlight of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, the mining industry's largest annual gathering.

In 2012, Anne founded Yukon Women in Mining, and she has been involved with the organization's board ever since. She became the organization's president in 2018. Anne has championed the recognition of female leaders in the Yukon. She helped lead a successful push that saw Kate Carmack inducted in 2019 into the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame, recognizing her critical role in the discovery of gold that spurred the Klondike Gold Rush.

Yukon Women in Mining also does more than advocate for greater equity and diversity in the mining industry, Mr. Speaker. For example, it's helping to organize events for Yukon Mining and Geology Week coming next Monday.

When it comes to women in mining, the Yukon is firing on all cylinders, leading the pack, breaking glass ceilings: Tara

Christie from Banyan Gold, who hosted an event for Every Student, Every Day just last week; Lorelee Johnstone and Brianne Warner, the president and executive director of the Chamber of Mines; Brooke Rudolph, the executive director of the Klondike Placer Miners' Association; and Heather Burrell, chair of the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board. Mr. Speaker, to all of these leaders — and in particular, Anne — thank you for all of your hard work to make the mining industry more equitable, inclusive, and productive.

*Applause*

**Mr. Kent:** I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 2022 mining week and to congratulate Anne Lewis, the founder and president of Yukon Women in Mining, who has been honoured with the national Women in Mining Canada 2022 Trailblazer Award.

Yukon Mining and Geology Week takes place this year from May 1 to 7. Yukon Women in Mining, as the minister mentioned, is hosting events this year, and it looks like there will be something for everyone, and, of course, it will be much welcomed to be held in-person this year.

Workshops on equity, diversity, and inclusion, as well as a speaker's luncheon, will take place at the MacBride Museum on May 3. Perhaps the most anticipated event during Yukon Mining and Geology Week for Whitehorse students will take place on Friday, May 6. This year, the exploration and discovery camp will be held indoors at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre.

For many years, students and children have gathered for some hands-on learning about all things mining and exploration. Past events included crafts, cracking geodes, gold panning, science experiments, history, robots, and much more.

Mining has played a leading role in helping our economy navigate the pandemic, and for that, we thank the entire industry. Those same companies support so many of our community initiatives, no matter the cause, and for that, we also thank them. From prospectors to producers and everyone in between, we wish you all a successful year and look forward to gathering again at geoscience in November for an update.

Now turning to Anne's award, which is much-deserved and due in large part to her commitment and leadership to the industry, I was so pleased to be asked to join a number of individuals in nominating Anne for this prestigious award and even more pleased when I heard that she was the successful recipient.

As I mentioned in my nominating letter, if individuals want to know what's happening in the Yukon mining industry, a call to Anne is a great first step. Her contributions have helped to advance the role of women in mining in the Yukon, to create new partnerships across the north, and so much more. Her work with the Yukon Mining Alliance helps to promote Yukon mining projects and companies to a national and international audience.

Anne is the second Yukoner to receive this award, only entering its 10<sup>th</sup> year. In 2017, geologist and Yukon women in mining champion Sue Craig garnered this recognition. So,

congratulations to Anne on this incredible achievement and this award, and best of luck to you going forward.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP to congratulate Anne Lewis on winning the Women in Mining Canada's coveted Trailblazer Award. As we heard from my colleagues, Anne is a force when it comes to the promotion of inclusion and innovation in northern mining. With deep roots in the industry, she has taken what she knows and used it for the greater good.

From the inception of Yukon Women in Mining to the global stage with the creation of the Invest Yukon brand and the even broader Invest Canada North project, Anne isn't one to sit back and let others do the work. She has and continues to be at the forefront of responsible industry. Anne's work is rooted in the importance of inclusion, diversity, and culture within the Yukon's mining industry, which is all the better for it.

The Trailblazer Award comes just ahead of mining week, which starts the first week of May. As we continue to push for sustainable and ethical mining practices, it's people like Anne Lewis who are doing the work to get us there. We admire her tenacity, grace, and perseverance.

Congratulations on your well-deserved award, Anne.

*Applause*

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

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Today, I have for tabling three documents. They are all legislative returns in answer to questions from the Member for Watson Lake.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have for tabling a legislative return regarding the Education Appeal Tribunal and a question that arose during budget debate.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have for tabling the Yukon Law Foundation annual reports for the years ending October 31, 2020 and October 31, 2021, which are tabled pursuant to section 150(2) of the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*.

I also have for tabling the 2021 Workers' Advocate Office annual report, which is tabled pursuant to section 109(7) of the *Workers' Compensation Act*.

**Ms. Tredger:** I have for tabling, an article from October 11, 2021 by realtor Adrian Bell called "Why Don't Whitehorse REALTORS Represent Buyers?"

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

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Mr. Dixon:** I have for tabling the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

**Speaker:** Are there any further reports of committees to be presented?  
Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 12 — received

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly, I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 12 of the First Session of the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on April 25, 2022.

The petition presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Speaker:** Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 12 is deemed to be read and received.

Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 12 shall be provided on or before the fifth sitting day of the 2022 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address housing affordability by reviewing the *Real Estate Agents Act* and working with stakeholders, including the Yukon Real Estate Association, to allow for buyer's agency practices in Yukon.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Community fire halls and recreation infrastructure

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise before the House to highlight our investments in community fire halls and recreation. Our government continues to invest in the well-being of Yukoners, and we do so in partnership with Yukon First Nations and municipal governments to plan, design, and build projects across the territory.

I am pleased to highlight several projects that are already underway in the Yukon. We are currently project-managing fire halls in Faro, Teslin, and Carmacks. The new Faro public works building and fire hall was initially scheduled to be completed at the end of August of this year. The project is ahead of schedule, with a completion date now anticipated for mid-July.

The new fire hall and Emergency Medical Services facility in Teslin is on track for completion at the end of July this year. The project, announced in August of 2019, remains on budget and on schedule. The construction of the Carmacks public works building and fire hall is also underway, and we anticipate completion in November of this year.

In addition to investments in community fire halls, we are also proud to invest in recreational infrastructure in our communities. The Pelly Crossing pool is in the final stages of construction with interior finishing work ongoing at this time. The remaining sub-grade work, such as septic and solar water-heating system, will be completed once the ground is thawed.

The Carmacks arena replacement project is on track for completion this year, and we look forward to seeing it in full use by the community for our winter sport season.

Other recreation projects that we have supported, and are in progress, include: upgrades to various boat launches across the territory; a new gymnastics climbing facility in Whitehorse; the Dawson City recreation centre project; upgrades to electrical and snow-making at Mount Sima; Mayo arena upgrades; the Whitehorse biathlon facility; and a new irrigation system at the Mountain View Golf Course.

We also look forward to the many recreation infrastructure legacy opportunities to come, as we continue to advance our bid to co-host the 2027 Canada Winter Games with the City of Whitehorse and to find ways for the games to benefit the territory as a whole, as we continue to invest in our communities.

Recreation and emergency response infrastructure are vital investments to support Yukoners to live active, healthy, and safe lifestyles. We are committed to continuing our collaboration with the federal government, municipalities, and Yukon First Nation governments to make key investments toward our collective infrastructure priorities that will strengthen communities and continue to build the territory that we are all proud of.

**Ms. McLeod:** Considering the strained relationship between rural Yukon and this Liberal government, I am surprised that community infrastructure investment is the topic of today's ministerial statement. There have been many projects in the communities that have riled up residents because of Liberal mismanagement, and I don't have to go far to find examples. The closing of community transfer stations at Silver City, Destruction Bay, Keno, and Johnsons Crossing have flown in the face of area residents.

The minister had to back down from his marquee better building program legislation last fall because of pushback from Yukon communities. In both cases, the minister had failed to properly consult and failed to actually listen to Yukon communities. Even the Ombudsman agrees, as that office said just last month that residents affected by the landfill closures did not have — and I quote: "... an avenue available to present their views..." The Ombudsman added that it was an unfairness. Residents upset about the transfer station closures even signed a petition calling for the minister's resignation.

We've heard this Sitting how the minister has ignored the community of Carmacks' request to dismantle the old grader station. The minister highlighted a number of recreation projects, but we know the Liberals have delayed construction of the Carmacks arena and have unreliably budgeted for a new recreation centre in Dawson City.



The projects highlighted today are fire halls and EMS stations, and we do support those, but we are concerned that this minister continues to dismiss many of the concerns facing rural Yukon. Residents in communities have written several letters to this Liberal government; unfortunately, rural Yukoners have received delayed, little, or no response. We know the projects highlighted by the minister are welcome in the communities; however, this minister's track record on consultation shows the final product often doesn't provide communities with what they want or need, and this minister's track record on accurate information is possibly the worst this Assembly has seen.

This session, we've seen the minister actually just make up budgeting numbers out of the air. Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are excited by the 2027 Canada Winter Games, but the minister is doing a disservice to Yukoners when he quoted that the games will cost \$100 million and then, the next day, he admitted that he made the number up. So, it could be plus or minus \$50 million.

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

#### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, under section 19(g), which talks about false or unavowed motives, in the extensive Standing Orders, it says that we should never suggest that the members of this Legislative Assembly are misleading or lying. Just twice now, I've heard the member opposite talk about the minister in that fashion.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** I think the minister has misunderstood. I don't believe my colleague did in fact contravene Standing Order 19(g).

#### Speaker's ruling

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The temperature of the debate is rising, and members are using language that is likely to cause disorder. I caution all members to temper their remarks.

**Ms. McLeod:** Now, Mr. Speaker, guesstimating isn't a reliable, responsible way to budget, and the minister, we hope, will end this unreliable practice. Unfortunately, the information being provided by the minister has made communities frustrated with this combative approach. So, we'll be following these projects closely to ensure that they are on time and on budget. I want to thank the minister very much for his update today.

**Ms. Tredger:** The Yukon NDP thank the minister for highlighting in a ministerial statement what we and Yukoners believe any territorial government should do — that is, to work with other levels of government and invest in infrastructure to support the territory. We hope that this government will truly

listen and work with all incorporated and unincorporated communities in the Yukon to ensure that their needs are met.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the Third Party for their remarks this afternoon. I have to disagree with the Member for Watson Lake this afternoon and her remarks in response to my ministerial statement this afternoon. I had thought we had been having cordial relations on the floor of the House for the last several hours in response to the Community Services budget, and while I appreciate her thanks given at the end of her remarks, they didn't really mirror the tone of the initial response.

This government has spent an enormous amount of money on our rural Yukon communities. I believe, in conversations with my colleague, we're spending perhaps as much as twice or more what has been spent in rural Yukon before, and we have done so in consultation with our rural Yukon communities, and we're very happy to be doing that — and our First Nations as well.

It's important that we have that information, that feedback loop into our government, so we can actually deliver on the needs of the community, and that's very important to us and has been a sort of hallmark of our government since the very early days.

We know that when we invest in strong communities, we are in turn investing in and supporting Yukon families and a strong, growing local economy. This year, the Government of Yukon will be investing \$70 million to continue a range of infrastructure projects across the Yukon. The funding is cost-shared, for the most part, by Canada and the Yukon on a 75-25 split under the federal small communities fund and Investing in Canada infrastructure program, which we talked about yesterday in budget debate. I had a great conversation with the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Through the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, the Yukon will see \$600 million in funding over the lifespan of the program for public transit, green infrastructure, as well as recreational, social, and cultural infrastructure.

At the end of the day, we are moving forward with unprecedented investments in infrastructure projects across the Yukon. Shovels are getting in the ground and projects are being built, something that the Yukon Party failed to do in their more than decade of governance.

Through these investments, we are providing jobs for Yukoners, creating strong, sustainable communities, supporting local businesses, and laying the groundwork for continued economic growth. Through the 2022-23 budget, some of the projects that our government plans to invest in are: more than \$71 million for repairs and improvements to bridges and highways throughout the Yukon; more than \$51 million to modernize our airports and support airline access to the territory, which is something that I believe personally is very important; \$27 million for the Dempster fibre project to make sure that our Internet is more robust; more than \$25 million for the Dawson City recreation centre, which is a project that has been on the books for decades, and we are going to deliver on that project and actually make sure that Dawson has a good

recreation centre; close to \$11 million for Yukon Resource Gateway projects; close to \$4 million for the White River community centre; up to \$3.7 million for new boat launches and dock replacements across the territory, which is something that I know the Member for Kluane has spoken to me about for more than five years; and up to \$26 million for the new Teslin Tlingit Council community hub.

That is just a handful of the projects that we have outlined for our investments in 2022-23. I want to thank all Yukon communities and First Nations for their feedback and support.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Conflict of interest re Old Crow wellness centre

**Mr. Dixon:** Yesterday in response to my question about the representations that the former Minister of Health and Social Services has made to the Government of Yukon in relation to the Old Crow health centre, the Minister of Highways and Public Works admitted that the former minister has had several meetings with department officials. The minister also said that his Cabinet colleagues directed department officials to meet with the former minister.

Did the Minister of Highways and Public Works seek advice from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and, if so, what was that advice?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** As I said yesterday, conflicts of interest are handled by the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. Part of government's commitment to openness and transparency, the Yukon government passed the *Lobbyist Registration Act* that sets out clear rules for how these activities are governed. It is the responsibility of lobbyists to register under that act, to understand the rules, and to act in accordance with the law.

Our understanding is that the former minister is now working with the designer/builder in the role of director of strategic operations on the Old Crow projects — the tenplex and the wellness centre. The designer/builder was directed to the operational level.

It is my understanding that the former minister, along with the design/build team, met with the Highways and Public Works staff on a number of occasions. These types of meetings are part of routine project administration.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister has simply read the same note that he read yesterday indicating that this is an issue that should be dealt with by the conflicts commissioner.

My question is very simple. When this came up to him, he was aware of the conflicts act. He was aware of the possibility of a contravention of the act, so why didn't he seek the advice of the conflicts commissioner?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will keep this answer fairly brief.

When I heard about the ongoing contract administration which was occurring with respect to the two projects, at that point, I was advised by the department as to what was occurring. At that point, I was briefed that the contract administration was dealt with by the contract administration

people — the very skilled professionals at procurement and contract administration at Highways and Public Works. In that respect, I didn't really have any concern as to who was — I said, at that point, that I would not be dealing with anybody from Ketza Construction because there were issues — as there always are — with respect to the ongoing administration of contracts. These are large contracts.

Of course, I receive advice from my department that the minister ought not intervene in any way, shape, or form, so I took that approach. That's exactly what happened, and there was no communication with anybody from Ketza Construction.

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has admitted that there were interactions in meetings between the department, the Government of Yukon, and the former minister.

So, the minister is telling us that, even though he was aware of what the conflict of interest said, he not only chose not to seek advice from the conflicts commissioner, but he actually directed his department to have meetings with the former minister.

Here is exactly what he said yesterday: "... my ministerial colleagues and I did not meet with the designer/builder nor the former minister and instead directed them to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works." We have learned that he did this without ever checking if this was a conflict with the conflicts commissioner. So, why would the minister direct his department to meet with the former minister without checking with the conflicts commissioner when he knew that such a meeting had the potential to be a violation of the conflicts act? It seems like this is a very difficult position for the minister to put his department in, so why did he do that?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** If the member opposite has a complaint to be made to the conflicts commissioner, make that complaint.

### Question re: Conflict of interest re Old Crow wellness centre

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the minister of what his mandate letter says. It says — and I quote: "You are to respect the letter and spirit of the conflict of interest rules for Ministers and to actively seek, and abide by, guidance from the Conflict of Interest Commissioner." This is a clear case where the minister should have known that there was the potential of a conflict of interest under the act, and the minister chose not to seek the advice, as he was directed by the Premier to do in his mandate letter.

So, why did the Minister of Highways and Public Works not seek the advice of the conflicts commissioner?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Firstly, I'll repeat my response from the first answer, which is that the conflict, if any, is with the former minister and the former MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. In that respect, she represented herself as part of Ketza Construction, a respected Yukon contracting company that has the contract for the two Old Crow projects, the contract for the Whitehorse Whistle Bend school, and, of course, many contracts in prior decades. In that respect, I had no intention of speaking to anybody who was affiliated with Ketza Construction. There was no conflict that was engaging with me

personally, and I did not make inquiries as to who may or may not have discharged their duty with respect to our conflicts commissioner, but this was a contract administration issue.

**Mr. Dixon:** I am shocked to hear the minister admit this. He has just admitted that the conflict, if any, is with the former minister. So, he knew that there was the potential of a conflict, and despite that, he still chose not to seek the advice of the conflicts commissioner, and he still directed his officials to interact and have a meeting with the former minister, even though he was aware that there was a potential contravention of the act. So, he directed his officials to meet with the former minister, knowing that there was a potential conflict under the conflict of interest act.

So, why did the minister not discharge his duties as a minister to seek the advice of the conflicts commissioner before directing his officials to meet with the former minister in what very well could have been, under his own admission, a violation of the conflicts act?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Once again, this was a contract administration issue. What I was aware of was that the former hard-working Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and the former minister had gone past the six-month period, where a lot of the conflicts engage, but I had zero intention of contacting or speaking to anybody at Ketz Construction with respect to the ongoing contract administration and all of the ongoing construction dispute resolution or issue dispute resolution mechanisms that existed within that contract.

That was my thought process at the time. I did not have any opinion whatsoever, contrary to what the member opposite is indicating, as to whether there were any conflict issues at the time.

**Mr. Dixon:** I am simply responding to what the minister has just told us today. The minister has told us that the former minister reached out to Cabinet, that the former minister met, had multiple meetings, with the Government of Yukon with regard to this project. We know that the minister was aware that there was the potential of a conflict of interest. He has admitted as much today on the floor right now.

These are serious matters, Mr. Speaker. The conflict of interest act is a crucial piece of legislation for our democracy. It speaks about ensuring the integrity of our democracy and the expectation of ethical conduct for ministers. Now, the minister himself, in his own mandate letter, has been directed to seek out guidance from the conflicts commissioner when these types of issues arise. He has admitted that he was aware that there could have been a conflict, and yet he chose not to seek the advice from the conflicts commissioner.

So, since we know the minister didn't seek that advice from the conflicts commissioner, how can he be confident that he, his government, and the former minister did not and have not contravened the act?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** This is the same question that has been asked of my minister repeatedly. We know the member opposite relishes in character assassination. They're trying to piece together some words here and putting words in the mouth of my minister, and quite frankly, I think that this is quite ridiculous.

If the members opposite think that there's a problem here, they know exactly what they could do outside the Legislative Assembly: Make that complaint.

#### **Question re: Mining project oversight**

**Ms. Tredger:** When this government talks about climate change, we hear a lot about quick technological fixes like charging stations, but we never hear about the elephant in the room: wetlands.

Northern wetlands contain the equivalent of hundreds of years of our greenhouse gas emissions. If we disturb these wetlands, that carbon will be released and undo all the work Yukoners are doing to reduce their emissions. When asked about that, the minister said his department is working on how to measure potential carbon release.

Mr. Speaker, we are in a climate crisis. We can't wait to get the perfect measurements. When will this government act like we're in an emergency and effectively protect wetlands?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, we are working on a wetlands policy right now, and we are engaging with the mineral industry, with the public, with environmental groups. That policy is underway at this very moment. I had a meeting, for example, with Ducks Unlimited, where we had a conversation. They had put out some media around as if all the wetlands suddenly went up into the atmosphere, which is not what is happening. When you disturb a wetland — what I have asked for from the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources and Environment is to look at what types of disturbances cause what types of potential emissions. I think the member opposite is making a leap here that, as soon as you touch a wetland, it all goes into the atmosphere. It does not.

Wetlands are very important; that's why we are developing a policy. We have been engaging with the public and Yukoners on this very topic, and I'm happy to talk about it further.

**Ms. Tredger:** When we're talking about climate change, youth — the very people who will experience the full impact of climate change in their lifetimes — want to be part of the solution. The problem is the government isn't listening. In the report from the Youth Panel on Climate Change, one young Yukoner said — quote: "The mining companies must be held to a very high standard to ensure that they are acting responsible and cleaning up behind themselves."

Knowing that the minister yesterday said to the media that he wasn't ready to consider human rights and environmental violations abroad, it seems fair to say that recommendation didn't land. The Yukon already has too many examples of just how bad things can get. Environmental disasters can't be the Yukon's business model.

What is this government doing to protect the Yukon from future environmental disasters?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am happy to start a response to this new question — effectively, in my mind. We have the Yukon *Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act*. That was agreed upon through the *Umbrella Final Agreement* and was worked on with First Nations, the federal government, and the territorial government to create an assessment regime to protect our environment and our socio-economic — our

communities, effectively. I am very proud of that act. There is much work that needs to happen around that act. I would be happy to take the suggestion from the members opposite about potential work, but that work always should happen at the table with First Nations, with the federal government, and that's what we have been doing.

We also have a regulatory regime which works to protect Yukoners, so we have a robust regulatory and assessment regime here in the territory, and those are the tools that we use to make sure that our mining is done responsibly here.

By the way, alongside of comments that were heard earlier during tributes, I would like to thank the mining sector for their great work over the past couple of years to do mining responsibly in the territory.

**Ms. Tredger:** The Yukon NDP has asked about wetlands and about species at risk. We have asked about cyanide spills and contaminated sites. We have asked about the future of the territory and how we will leave it for future generations. This government's lack of action on these issues will be their legacy, because the Liberals are not ready to make the hard decisions this territory needs to see real climate action. Even an outright ban on fracking was more than they could stomach.

With the blatant lack of meaningful action we have seen in the last six years, why should Yukoners believe that the Liberal government will ever make responsible decisions about mining and the environment?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will begin by talking about successor legislation. We are doing that hard work right now with First Nations, meeting with them, with the industry table, with the environmental table, working on legislation that is more than a century old.

We built upon the mining memorandum of understanding with First Nations. We then went from there to the mineral development strategy. We are now on successor legislation. We are working with the Yukon Forum, Yukon First Nations, and also with the federal government on improving our YESAA legislation. We are, at all times, doing this work around land use planning. We saw with the Yukon Party and the Peel land use plan — that didn't work out very well at all. We got it to the finish line. We are now dealing with claims that were left over. We are working on the Dawson plan. I am in conversation with all of the First Nations on the remaining regional land use plans.

We are doing a lot of work on mining. Again, I would like to thank all Yukoners who have helped to make mining successful and safe here in the territory in recent years. It is much appreciated.

#### **Question re: Opioid crisis**

**Mr. Cathers:** In January, the Minister of Health and Social Services declared a substance use emergency in response to the dramatic increase in overdose-related deaths. Since then, government has focused the majority of its efforts on harm reduction. While we support effective harm reduction, there needs to be attention paid to prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

Here is what the Chief Superintendent of the RCMP said last week: "... enforcement is a key element. It's a key pillar of harm reduction. And if you remove that or if it's not as strong as the other pillars, none of it is going to be successful. You can't just treat people for addictions and permit people to continue to sell drugs at will..."

What steps has the government taken to enhance enforcement measures to combat rising levels of drug trafficking, and will the government provide the resources to the RCMP to establish a drug enforcement unit?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have the opportunity today — and I appreciate it — to speak about key elements of enforcement with respect to the substance use health emergency and the situation here in the territory with respect to community safety — that is, our aspect and focus on community safety opportunities with our First Nation governments across the territory. They are at varying stages of interest with respect to how they will design a community safety program, should they wish to do so.

We have put money in this year's budget for an eight-year program going forward that will support that process, so individual communities can access funds for the purposes of planning community safety. We know that the responses with respect to how we keep our communities safe must be grown at the grassroots of those communities, must be informed by the intelligence, the information, and the culture of those communities. That work will be done in concert with Yukon government with a program that funds the opportunities for communities to design their community safety programs and to build safe and healthy communities.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, another important aspect of the Yukon's response to the drug crisis is treatment. When the government declared the substance use health emergency in January, they committed to increasing on-the-land treatment options.

Can the minister tell us how many new on-the-land treatment spaces the Yukon government has actually created since they declared a substance use health emergency?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** On-the-land treatment options are one element of the substance use health emergency response. Unfortunately, the member opposite — and particularly the Yukon Party — probably would design on-the-land programs. We are not going to do that. We are working with our partners, our First Nation governments, our First Nation communities, and our communities across the territory to determine what they think on-the-land treatment options should look like. That work has begun in earnest. We will continue to work with our partners as we respond to the substance use health emergency here in the territory.

I can indicate that \$5.5 million in this year's budget will support the government's immediate response to the substance use health emergency. We will continue to support it, not only financially, but through leadership, through great partnerships that we have built over the last five to six years, and with the opportunity to have community input on how we must respond.

I hope that the on-the-land treatment options will focus on aftercare. It is a conversation that we have begun, and for

individuals who might need treatment and need to transition back into communities, on-the-land treatment is a great option for that aspect.

**Mr. Cathers:** It appears that since government declared a substance use health emergency in January, actions that they have taken have focused almost entirely on harm reduction. Effective harm reduction is important, but it is only one part of the needed response. There needs to be more attention paid to prevention, treatment, and enforcement.

This government has not adequately supported the RCMP with enforcement, and we have seen no commitment to the establishment of a drug enforcement unit. The government has said very little about prevention. They aren't doing enough to increase treatment options, and the minister was unable to tell us even if any new treatment spaces have been created.

When will this government start taking prevention, treatment, and enforcement seriously in response to the opioid crisis in the Yukon?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The indication that we're taking every aspect of the situation here in the territory was abundantly clear when we declared a substance use health emergency on January 20 of this year. Our government is working with harm reduction partners on a number of initiatives, including a new territory-wide public awareness and education campaign addressing the toxic drug supply present in the Yukon communities. We're expanding drug testing and safer supply in rural communities and increasing availability here in Whitehorse. We're enhancing the Yukon government's supervised consumption site to support those who use inhalants. We're increasing on-the-land treatment options, as I've noted. We're working with Blood Ties Four Directions to extend the hours of operation of the outreach van, which provides mobile fentanyl testing and enhanced supports to marginalized individuals. We're developing a new opioid action plan. We are bringing leaders together across the territory — more than \$5.5 million in this year's budget, as I've noted, for the substance use health emergency. The member opposite and the Yukon Party have asked this question several times. I'm happy to rise to my feet every time to be able to tell Yukoners about the work that's happening and to engage them in that.

We have included funding to enhance the supervised consumption site to support additional mental health and social supports and to support the RCMP.

I hope they support this budget.

#### Question re: RCMP funding

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It has been established that the Liberals are underfunding the RCMP and this is hampering their ability to tackle serious drug and gang crime. There is also a growing issue of property crime and vandalism in the City of Whitehorse. Since 2016, property crime in Whitehorse has skyrocketed by nearly 23 percent. It is clear that the RCMP need more resources to help reduce property crime.

When will the minister agree to give the RCMP the necessary resources to reduce property crime in the city?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** As I've said, I am happy to rise on every occasion that the opposition provides for me to do so — these same questions were asked yesterday. I'm happy to continue to discuss the important work of the Department of Justice and their support for the RCMP, our government's support for the RCMP, and our overall support for the substance use health emergency.

Just because the supposed facts are noted by the members of the opposition do not make them the case. Over the past five years, the Government of Yukon has increased the operational budget of the M Division by \$3.8 million — some 15 percent over that period of time, which included funding for eight new RCMP positions over that period.

I can indicate that there were four regular members as a result of that work — one disclosure clerk and two administration support clerks. There are a number of regular members as a result of that.

As I noted the other day when I had the opportunity to answer this question, our obligation under the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* is that we, as a government, are contractually obliged to pay for every position that the RCMP have, including their O&M. We reconcile every June, and the RCMP is funded in the work we do together.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** The Liberals have neglected the RCMP over the last several years and, as a result, they do not have the resources necessary to tackle growing crime in our community. Tourism will hopefully rebound in a big way this summer, and we need to make sure that our city feels safe and that our small businesses are not facing constant break-ins. Property crime in Whitehorse has surged by nearly 23 percent since the Liberals took office. This costs businesses money and makes citizens feel unsafe.

How many new RCMP positions have the Liberals created specifically to address property crime in the City of Whitehorse?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I would think that the colleague of the member opposite who served a short period of time as the Minister of Justice would be able to describe to the Yukon Party how the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* does, in fact, work and the fact that the RCMP are in charge of operations.

Do we discuss priorities? Absolutely. The Yukon has a unique opportunity to do that with the Yukon Police Council, which travels across the territory for the purposes of speaking to Yukoners about what their priorities are. They provide those to the Minister of Justice, and as the Department of Justice also works on priorities — and then I provide a letter to the chief superintendent of the RCMP with respect to setting priorities every year, and the operationalization of those priorities is the responsibility of the RCMP.

They are doing an amazing job here in the territory responding to the needs of Yukoners. We have provided, over the last number of years, funding for additional positions for both the historic case unit and the crime reduction unit. The crime reduction unit is focused on drug issues, on property crime issues — on the opportunities to make Yukoners safe. Their work continues and we support it ultimately, and we will work with them to have appropriate resources.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** It's clear that the Liberals' neglect for the RCMP is having negative consequences for crime in the Yukon. Drug and property crimes are up. There are up to five gangs operating out of the territory. The RCMP have even flagged concerns with human trafficking. As indicated, property crime is up 23 percent under the Liberals.

Will the Liberals fund new positions for the RCMP detachment in the City of Whitehorse specifically to allow for increased patrols to address the growing issue of crime?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The budget for 2022-23, which is currently before this Legislative Assembly, focuses on priorities from Yukoners and will be delivered by this government. There is an additional \$297,000 to support four years of additional staffing within the crime reduction unit, specifically with respect to the RCMP, but there are many, many pieces of this Yukon budget that will create safer, happier, healthier lives for Yukon.

The increase for budget with respect to the RCMP — the members opposite are clearly not listening to my responses. We work with the RCMP to properly resource their services here in the territory.

I believe that it was the Yukon Party government, in fact, that signed the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* for 20 years. Presumably, they thought that it was responsible funding for the RCMP. It was not. We have increased it over 15 percent over the last five years. We will continue to do so. We work closely with the RCMP to respond to their needs so that they can respond to the needs of Yukoners.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole to provide relief to the Chair this afternoon.

*Member for Porter Creek Centre rises*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Acting Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

### Department of Highways and Public Works

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I would like to introduce my officials, Deputy Minister Paul McConnell to my right and his assistant, Meaghan Griffin. Thank you for the opportunity to present the budget for Highways and Public Works for 2022-23.

I am proud of the wide range of programs and services that are offered by the department. The work we do is far-reaching and impacts all Yukoners. At its core, the department's role is to improve the lives of Yukoners now while making decisions to ensure a sustainable future. We work so that Yukoners can move about their daily lives, whether that is getting to work safely, flying between communities, accessing our buildings, or staying connected digitally.

The department's work helps build our communities, grow our economy, and ensures a clean, green, and sustainable future.

While our work helps to ensure the territory's transportation links, roads, bridges, and airports are safe and efficient, we also do so much more than that. We procure goods and services in a fair, timely, and transparent manner, increasing economic opportunities for communities, as well as local and First Nation businesses, and ensuring value for Yukon taxpayers.

We develop and implement new technologies that make government services more efficient and accessible to Yukoners and give public servants the ability to work remotely when required.

Highways and Public Works makes public buildings more energy efficient so we can lower our greenhouse gas emissions and move closer to a cleaner future. We construct new buildings, such as schools and health centres, to support the needs of Yukoners. We simplify public access to government information while protecting the privacy of individuals through the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and assist the entire government with their leases, contracts, risk management, and insurance. Through it all, we work to advance reconciliation with Yukon First Nations.

This year, our budget will help us to deliver on key mandate items, such as realizing our commitments under *Our*

*Clean Future*, completing the Dempster fibre line, and furthering the Yukon Resource Gateway program.

Let's take some time to talk about these and other budget items in more depth. I'll start with the Information, Communications and Technology division, or ICT. ICT supports delivery of government services to the public and helps the government do its business in a smarter, more efficient way. Thanks to the efforts of the ICT division, if required, we can now support up to 2,500 employees working remotely and securely through tools like Microsoft's online suite of applications, virtual desktop infrastructure — also known as VDI — and other secure connectivity.

Our ability to provide flexible work arrangements will allow us to meet the expectations of the modern workforce and support our climate change goals by reducing the need to drive to work every day or to travel for meetings. Although ICT is housed within Highways and Public Works, the division collaborates with all areas of government to provide the business applications they need to serve citizens and the infrastructure and connectivity that allows them to do so. ICT's work may be behind the scenes, but the division supports a range of projects from family and case management to wildland fire tracking. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to name an area of government that ICT does not support in some way.

ICT also works so that the public can access key government services from the comfort of their homes or from wherever they may need them. These online services make it easier for all Yukoners to access government services, whether you need to renew your vehicle registration or buy a camping permit. This year, ICT is working on the legislative and service delivery requirements to introduce a one-government approach to online service delivery. We will create the ability to have and manage a one-government account that will eventually allow citizens to find and access government services securely and conveniently through one log-in.

Cybersecurity is a key concern, and we are taking leadership in the protection of government information, data, and networks through our cybersecurity unit, its operations, professionals, and privacy experts. Though this work often happens under the radar and with little fanfare, you can see that the ICT division does a lot to support Yukoners.

This year, we have \$14 million set aside for infrastructure and development. This includes projects like central issuance, where we will design and distribute new Yukon drivers' licences to address out-of-date processes and security threats. This also includes \$2.9 million for network infrastructure, which will make sure assets are upgraded, replaced, and repaired, as needed. This includes moving from SharePoint 2013 to SharePoint online and modernizing our telephone system using voice-over-Internet protocol. There is also \$2 million for project management and software support that helps to keep everything else going.

Of course, for these projects to work, we rely on the Internet. Currently, the territory depends on a single fibre optic line. When that line goes down, the Yukon is cut off from the digital world. In our increasingly interconnected world, reliable Internet is a necessity for a strong economy, quality health care,

and dependable air travel. Internet is also a necessity for our daily lives, whether that is staying connected at work or relaxing and streaming television.

This year, we have \$27 million going toward construction on the Dempster fibre line. Work on the line started last summer. This line will connect the Yukon to the existing Mackenzie Valley fibre link, creating a 4,000-kilometre continuous network that will ensure traffic can go in the other direction if there is an issue at any point along the network. The Dempster fibre line will enhance the participation of Yukoners and northerners more broadly in the digital economy and enhance access to government services. I know that we all look forward to the fibre line being completed in the next few years.

From the information highway to the literal highway, let's move on to our transportation team and our transportation system — the network of highways, bridges, airports, and ferries that keep Yukoners moving. Our road system is essential for connecting Yukoners to one another and supporting economic growth. We are making investments to keep these vital links safe and open for business, a responsibility that we take very seriously. After all, safety is the primary consideration when we upgrade our transportation links.

To that end, \$4.75 million will support the start of the next phase of Alaska Highway safety improvements. This summer, we will also upgrade the highway from just north of the Robert Service Way intersection to Lodestar Lane. This project will improve highway access to the Whitehorse weigh scales, enhance the roadway lighting, and upgrade the multi-use trails.

The north Klondike Highway will also benefit from a suite of upgrades. This long-term project will see an investment of \$42.8 million this year alone. Eventually, we will see reconstruction of 209 kilometres of the north Klondike Highway from Carmacks to the Dempster Highway intersection. This project covers replacement of the Crooked Creek bridge at \$15.5 million and an additional \$1.8 million to rehabilitate the McCabe River bridge. Along the north Klondike, we will also build better and more efficient drainage systems, such as culverts, to accommodate increased water flow — the result of climate change.

Other improvements will include a raised roadway and wider ditches in key areas to protect against flooding and slope erosion. These upgrades will allow us to remove seasonal weight restrictions for heavy trucks between Carmacks and Stewart Crossing, making it more efficient to transport goods.

It will also make travel from natural resource development areas in Canada's north more efficient and will support 800 jobs during the construction period. Likewise, progress on the Yukon Resource Gateway project will help to link mineral resources to market. In that vein, this year we have allocated \$10.8 million for the Yukon Resource Gateway project. As members may be aware, the gateway is one of the most significant construction programs ever undertaken in the territory.

The first gateway project that is awarded is the Carmacks bypass. The Carmacks bypass project includes the construction of a new road and bridge which will allow industrial vehicles to bypass the community. This will create an enhanced and

safer flow of traffic for residents. It will also improve access to key mining areas. Major construction on the Carmacks bypass will start this spring and is expected to be complete by 2024.

Moving from our roadways to our skies, I would be remiss to not mention our airports and the great amount of work going into our aviation sector. Yukon's aviation system is essential for connecting our communities, building our economy, and linking the Yukon with the rest of the world. Beginning this year, there is a significant suite of upgrades planned for the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. This includes \$14.6 million to support work on the apron panels and \$27.4 million to upgrade the parallel runway. We are planning for airfield upgrades at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, including the reconstruction of the main runway. This work will ensure that the airport can support current and future increases in jet service levels. It will also build the airport's capacity to support forecasted increases in the tourism and resource development industries.

Moving outside of Whitehorse, we have also allocated \$400,000 each for projects at the Dawson and Old Crow airports, which will include runway and other improvements. Together, these investments will support our work to grow and develop the Yukon's aviation system.

Now I would like to turn to the Property Management division, which plans, constructs, operates, and maintains the government's facilities. This division operates and maintains 581 government-owned buildings worth over \$1 billion. This year, we have \$10 million allocated to complete capital maintenance work on our building stock. This covers a range of projects across the territory, including the replacement of fire alarms at the Mayo health centre and lighting upgrades at Yukon University.

We also have \$56.7 million allocated for building development. This will advance major projects like the Old Crow health and wellness centre and the tenplex housing unit. This project will replace the aging health centre in Old Crow, increase the number of affordable housing units, and create jobs for the community.

Meanwhile, we are continuing a series of important upgrades to the Old Territorial Administration Building, also known as the Dawson City Museum. These renovations will include structural enhancements and improvements to the building's energy performance. The Old Territorial Administration Building is a designated national historic site of Canada, so our building development program not only provides spaces for Yukoners to work and learn, it also preserves history.

On the flip side of things, we will demolish Macaulay Lodge, which will free up the land for potential future development. Macaulay Lodge was originally built in the late 1960s and has reached the end of its useful life. A contract for the demolition has been awarded to a Yukon First Nation business, with work expected to be completed by the end of this summer. We have begun work with the Yukon Housing Corporation to plan for future housing development on this site.

The last but certainly not the least item I would like to touch on, with respect to buildings, is the Whitehorse grader

station. We are in the planning phase for the replacement of this station. The current grader station is situated on prime riverfront property in the Marwell area. This year, we have allocated \$200,000 to continue planning for the project, with a focus on determining a new location. Notably, replacing the grader station gives us an opportunity to build a sustainable building and lower our greenhouse gas emissions.

On the topic of emissions, I would like to take a few moments to talk about how we are taking action against climate change. Climate change is one of the most pressing issues of our time.

Since 1948, temperatures in northern Canada have increased by 2.3 degrees Celsius, which is close to three times the rate at which global temperatures are rising generally. It is well past time that we take significant action to tackle this issue. Within Highways and Public Works, a lot — although not all — of our climate change action happens in our Sustainable Infrastructure branch and through the Yukon green infrastructure program. The Yukon green infrastructure program is a multi-year capital program dedicated to implementing building retrofits, renewable energy systems, and sustainability projects. This year, we are investing about \$20 million toward building energy retrofits and renewable energy. Before we begin the retrofit process, we conduct assessments on our existing infrastructure.

In 2021, we completed certified energy audits on 51 high-emission Government of Yukon buildings in Whitehorse. Based on these assessments, I am happy to report that we now have 38 energy retrofit projects underway in government-owned buildings across 11 communities. While all of these retrofits projects are important, there are two examples that I would like to highlight: the Yukon University roof project and the replacement of the Yukon Justice Centre skylight. These projects may sound straightforward, but they do a lot to improve the energy efficiency of both buildings.

The Yukon University roof project is planned to start this year. By improving the thermal efficiency of the roof, we estimate that the project will reduce the building's greenhouse gas emissions by approximately seven percent. As well, the project will also improve the life of the building and reduce maintenance costs. Similarly, the replacement of the skylight at the Yukon Justice Centre will improve insulation and will reduce the territory's greenhouse gas emissions by more than four percent each year. Both of these projects will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by about 130 tonnes per year. I look forward to the construction period starting on these projects this year.

We are also making our buildings more efficient by investing in heating systems that capture and recover heat. One great example of this is the secondary school in Watson Lake, which is now connected to a waste-heat recovery system. By switching to a waste-heat recovery system, we reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent at the school and saved over \$45,000 in heating costs last year. While waste-heat recovery systems and retrofits are definitely a major part of the solution, considering that more than 75 percent of heat



generation in our territory comes from fossil fuels, we do need to explore alternative heat sources.

This brings me to biomass. Biomass is an alternative way to heat buildings through the use of wood. Using wood will reduce our need for traditional non-renewable heating fuels like oil and propane that contribute to our emissions.

The Government of Yukon currently heats three buildings by using our biomass facility: the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, the Dawson City water treatment plant, and the Dawson City waste-water treatment plant.

We are also working on expanding the Whitehorse Correctional Centre's biomass heating system to include the Young Offenders Facility and Takhini Haven. The expansion is expected to reduce the building's total greenhouse gas emissions by 320 tonnes.

Finally, we began work on the installation of a biomass heating system at the Elijah Smith Elementary School here in Whitehorse. The biomass system will offset the school's propane use and will reduce emissions by an estimated 130 tonnes each year. Biomass is one of the many ways that we are reducing emissions, and I look forward to more biomass projects being announced in the years to come.

These are just a few examples of the accelerated efforts we are taking to meet our goals and commitments under *Our Clean Future*. From exploring ways to stop permafrost damage to our roads and buildings to purchasing more zero-emission vehicles, the Government of Yukon believe that these actions in a very real way will help form the clean Yukon we will come to know.

Our government is well on its way to meeting our commitments to Yukoners, from accelerating our action on climate change to making sure that our vital transportation links are open, accessible, and safe. I am proud of the work that this department does every day to improve our territory and to prepare for the future. We are investing in the roads we drive on, making sure Yukoners get where they need to go safely. We are improving airports across the territory, ensuring that our aviation infrastructure can support the air travel industry and economy for years to come. We are upgrading current facilities to be more energy efficient among other needs and building new facilities to meet the growing needs of Yukoners.

We are keeping Yukoners connected in the digital world, ensuring redundancy so that businesses and life can continue as normal no matter what. These strategic investments are helping us to make the Yukon stronger and making sure that this territory works for all of us.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for his opening remarks. I also take the opportunity to welcome the officials here today to provide support to the minister.

I do have a number of questions for the minister. The first one is in relation to an issue that has come up in Question Period, and that is seasonally dependent contracts. When you look on page 14-4 of the department's budget, it says that the total capital vote — Vote 55-2 — is \$277,370,000. I'm curious if the minister can give us an idea of what the value of seasonally dependent contracts would be out of that total capital envelope.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question from the member opposite on seasonal tendering and the timing and tendering and forecasting. There are some good news stories.

The Yukon government plans and issues tenders as early as possible to help vendors prepare for upcoming work. This includes forecasting and tendering projects earlier so that businesses can take full advantage of Yukon's short and intense building season. It also includes staggering closing dates to make it easier for contractors to bid on a number of tenders and to encourage price stability.

Public procurements are vital to local businesses, and the Yukon government remains committed to the continuous improvement of our procurement processes. When planning and tendering projects, we are giving contractors the best opportunities to perform the work at the right time. The right time to tender is well in advance of the time when physical work needs to start. This timing allows contractors to plan their season, place orders, and hire staff.

We have many examples of tenders that were posted early enough that contractors could prepare for the work. Some of the examples are: We tendered the Justice Centre atrium skylight project last October, knowing that work would begin this spring as it has; we also tendered the Macaulay Lodge demolition in December, and work is now underway; we tendered the work on the McCabe Creek bridge in early February, and a contract is already in place for this summer; we tendered road construction on the north Klondike Highway in December and have a contract in place so it can start as well; we have also tendered early for the landscaping on Casca Boulevard in Whistle Bend; there is the tender for the parallel runway work in December so that we would be ready for work to start this spring. As the member opposite well knows, that is a substantial contract to ensure the ongoing high performance of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. We tendered a request for standing offers in February for aircraft charter services for the summer firefighting season, and we tendered in December of last year for supply and delivery of calcium chloride for the summer. There are other examples, but these are some highlights of the tendering that took place in advance of this spring and summer contracting and construction season.

Our government has taken up the challenge of tendering at times that make sense for contractors. We have made great improvements over the past years. Businesses have indicated to department staff that they are happy with the timing of our tendering.

With respect to numbers and the question from the member opposite, for the 2022 construction season, we have tendered 52 projects worth more than \$64 million by the end of March. Another \$10 million worth has been tendered since the beginning of April, and we expect another \$20 million worth of projects to be tendered by the end of April. We also expect approximately \$47 million worth to be tendered by the end of May. Importantly, some of these are multi-year projects, which take the pressure off the contractor to finish by the end of the construction season. We have also tendered this year for projects that are breaking ground in 2023, which is good planning, in my view.

I will follow up with my department as to my prior comments with respect to some of the contracts that were let in December, February, and earlier this spring — how they figure into the overall totals.

So, it is busy, and I have certainly heard the comments from the members opposite. I have heard the comments from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and others with respect to the importance of staggering contracts, giving time for contractors to be prepared to hit the ground running at the optimal time, which of course is usually now. But I have provided some solid examples of the Department of Highways and Public Works' planning for the spring, summer, and fall of the 2022 construction season on a number of projects that met deadlines far in advance of the March 31 deadline, which is important as well.

**Mr. Kent:** So, the transportation capital budget alone is almost \$155 million. The minister mentioned, I think, 52 projects valued at \$64 million. He gave a number of examples. Of those, I can see the McCabe bridge and parallel runway work and perhaps the road construction on the north Klondike. I will ask the minister to provide some details on what exactly was tendered. I believe that was a brushing or a clearing contract — but if he could clarify for us.

When it comes to transportation, I think that almost all of these projects would, no doubt, be seasonally dependent in order to get that \$155 million spent in this construction season. I am hoping that the minister can provide some clarity on how much is left in this transportation budget to be tendered and when we can expect that to go out the door. We have missed an incredibly important window of being able to get these tendered and awarded before the road bans come on so that anybody who does have to mobilize equipment can do so. I think that we are in the road ban — or the weight restriction — window right now, so, even if these were tendered now, there would be a delay in getting equipment moved to site.

Let's focus in on that transportation piece because, again, I would suggest that most of those are seasonally dependent. What is the value of the transportation projects that have been tendered so far, and when does the minister expect the balance of those transportation projects to hit the Bids and Tenders site and then be awarded and eventually for work to start on those projects?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I would just preface my comments from the question from the member opposite that I am certainly prepared to provide the member opposite with a more fulsome listing for the question. I will give a general answer and I also have some specifics, but I can certainly return to the member opposite with further details on contracting.

What we have so far is — the observations are that a number of projects shown in our capital budget have already been tendered. In addition, not all capital projects are seasonally dependent, as the member opposite well knows. Some can be completed during the fall, winter, or spring. Some of these are also multi-year projects, which may have already been awarded or may not require all work to be completed during one construction season.

So, some of the highlights so far — we have, with the national trade corridors fund, the \$15.5-million project at Crooked Creek bridge, which is, as the member opposite and the House will know, the bridge just south of Stewart Crossing that had a fairly steep entrance to a relatively narrow bridge at the time and then a steep exit — driving on that portion of the highway last September — there has certainly been a lot of reprofiling of the hillside to make that a much more even driving experience. That is \$15.5 million. That contract is in place.

There is also the Moose Creek bridge project, which is for \$1.5 million and that contract is in place.

The project at McCabe Creek is \$2.1 million, and that contract is also in place.

As I indicated in previous comments, the parallel runway project at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport has been awarded at approximately \$20 million.

The work between kilometre 613 and kilometre 646 on the north Klondike Highway has been tendered.

The member opposite will also know that the Nisutlin Bay bridge project has been tendered, and I will perhaps get into that in a future response, but obviously we hope that it will be a very significant infrastructure project for the Yukon, for geopolitical reasons — as, of course, the Alaska Highway has always been important and perhaps even more so now — and for the Village of Teslin and for the Teslin Tlingit Council. That has seen a great deal of work by many dedicated individuals, both the bidders and the dedicated subject matter specialists at Highways and Public Works. Those discussions continue with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge.

As well, there is the Lapie bridge, which has been tendered.

That likely does not add up exactly to the numbers indicated in the budget, but I would just preface for my preliminary comments that there are projects that are ongoing, but not all are seasonally dependent. I certainly take the member's comments that one doesn't get everything out the door necessarily optimally, but this is still shaping up to be an incredibly busy season across the Yukon on many projects, whether it's through Highways and Public Works or through Community Services or other departments.

We are certainly excited, and we know that there is a great deal of resilient infrastructure improvement which is occurring both this year and in multiple years to come.

**Mr. Kent:** I look forward to a more fulsome response in a legislative return or a letter from the minister when he gets that information from his officials.

I am going to take the minister to page 14-11 in the budget, which has a little bit more detail on the transportation capital side. Under Highway Construction, Alaska Highway, there is \$5,450,000 as the budget estimate for this current fiscal year. Can the minister give us a breakdown of the projects in that line item?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I'm excited to stand to speak about the ongoing Alaska Highway safety improvements in the Highways and Public Works Transportation division budget for 2022-23. I believe the member opposite was asking about an item that is showing at \$5.45 million of proposed spending.

It will be as follows or it's proposed — planned — to be as follows: \$4.75 million is the Robert Service Way/Hamilton Boulevard, so between kilometre 1418.7 to kilometre 1419.7 — part of the multi-year program to improve safety and capacity through key segments of the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse. This project is scheduled for 2022-23, which will include the segment between the weigh scales and Lodestar Lane. It will include adding additional lanes northbound and southbound along with improvements to the access to the weigh scales. Roadway improvements will reduce the potential for collisions and increase overall safety, reliability, and efficiency.

Approximately \$300,000 is budgeted for the project between Lodestar Lane and Burns Road. That is kilometre 1422 to kilometre 1424. Improvements will be made to Hillcrest Drive and Burns Road intersections, including signalization, consolidation and closing of adjacent accesses, and construction of a frontage road through the industrial area. Improvements will significantly reduce the potential for collisions and increase overall safety, reliability, and efficiency, and it will provide a safe Alaska Highway crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.

We also have \$250,000 budgeted for a stretch between Centennial Street and Azure Road, kilometre 1430 to kilometre 1432.5. This is part of a multi-year program to improve safety and capacity through key segments of the Alaska Highway corridor through Whitehorse. The scope of this project includes relocation and improvement of Centennial Street, including signalization of 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, closing 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and full signalization of Wann Road. The improvements will significantly reduce the potential for collisions and increase overall — once again — safety, reliability, and efficiency. Funding in this budget year of 2022-23 will be used for final design work, environmental permitting, and internal staff time.

Finally, of this \$5.45 million, we also have \$150,000 budgeted for the design and pre-engineering for thaw slump, which is at kilometre 1456. It is a project to rectify sections of highway impacted by permafrost thaw. The project addresses major repairs outside the scope of typical highway maintenance requiring design, permitting, and contract management. Projects include base and sub-base repairs, culvert repairs and/or replacements, restoration of side slopes, ditches, drainage courses, and resurfacing.

With respect to the area around Lodestar Lane, I would just thank the member opposite and the Member for Copperbelt North, as we are all concerned about safety on the Alaska Highway. It was brought to my attention that there were issues with respect to the lights at the south access and the Alaska Highway. The configuration of the lights was perhaps a bit confusing. I thank the member opposite for providing his input and that of his constituents. I was receiving that information as well sort of on a minute-by-minute or hour-by-hour basis. I directed my department to work with the Highways and Public Works department and with Arcrite over the course of the weekend. Having gone up there on Sunday, I believe that the configuration of both the through lanes, the through markers, and the left-turn lanes is now much more intuitive than it was. I certainly thank the member opposite for his and his

colleagues' concern about the safety of both Yukon drivers, Yukon pedestrians, Yukon cyclists, and, of course, the tourists who we hope to be welcoming to the territory very soon.

**Mr. Kent:** I will take a — just off the top, thank the minister and his officials, as well as the contractor, Arcrite, for going up there on Sunday, I believe it was, and fixing the configuration of those lights. I think it is much improved and hopefully an awful lot safer than what was there before.

So, moving on in that same theme as we did before with the Alaska Highway, I'm looking for a breakdown of the next line item there, the Klondike Highway, at \$42.898 million here. I think the minister mentioned a few projects, like \$12.5 million for the Crooked Creek bridge, which I am assuming is in this budget; \$1.5 million for Moose Creek; and \$2.1 million for McCabe Creek. He said something about kilometre 614 to 636, but I don't think I got a budget number associated with that.

Again, I'm looking for the same sort of breakdown with respect to this almost \$43 million in capital for the Klondike Highway.

Then, just taking one step back to the Alaska Highway, I don't think there was anything that the minister mentioned with respect to the Shakwak portion of the highway, which is from Haines Junction north to Beaver Creek. I'm curious — I know there has been some movement in Washington with respect to funding that, if the minister has an update on that for my colleague, the Member for Kluane. Then, again, I'm just looking for a breakdown of that next line item — the Klondike Highway line item — in the budget.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** On November 15, 2021, the US government passed the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. This act authorized funding for the reconstruction of segments of the Alaska Highway from the Alaska border at Beaver Creek to Haines Junction and the Haines Road from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska — the stretch we know locally as “Shakwak”.

Importantly, the act is limited in process details and does not commit any specific dollar amount to the reconstruction project. However, we are now working closely with the federal government, the Alaska government, and our contacts in the US federal system to understand what steps need to be taken to secure the funding for this section of the highway. We worked with the Alaska Department of Transportation and submitted a joint application for a RAISE grant. The RAISE grant is a US merit-based discretionary funding program for infrastructure. The RAISE application proposes highway reconstruction at priority sections of the Alaska Highway impacted most significantly by permafrost between Beaver Creek and Destruction Bay.

We will continue working with the Alaska Department of Transportation to pursue other funding opportunities, including applications to other US discretionary grants for infrastructure projects.

The member opposite will likely know this, but these were discretionary grants. Applications have been made in previous years, but those applications have not yet been accepted — but the applications continue. The specific mention of the US *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* of the Alaska Highway

and Yukon is expected to strengthen the merit of the RAISE grant application compared to the BUILD applications.

As well, with respect to that portion of the Alaska Highway, we completed in 2021 the installation of thermosiphons at Dry Creek, kilometre 1841 of the Alaska Highway near Beaver Creek. The thermosiphons will help to cool the underlying permafrost foundation and stabilize the highway. The thermosiphons project is partially being funded by Transport Canada under the northern transportation adaptation initiative.

I suppose, for the benefit of the Assembly — when I attended the WESTAC conference in Vancouver in early December, I was able to do a presentation on behalf of the Yukon government and the Department of Highways and Public Works. We were able to talk to the congregated delegates about the thermosiphons. I can advise that there was interest outside of the territory with respect to that innovation.

I certainly have heard the Member for Kluane over the course of the last five and a half years in his strong advocacy on behalf of Yukoners — but certainly his constituents — with respect to that Shakwak portion. What I would say is that we are in a better position than we were, but it does seem that these are merit-based applications that have to be submitted on an annual basis.

We will certainly redouble our efforts and we are still more than cautiously optimistic that funding will be identified, but we are not forgetting the portion of the Alaska Highway between Haines Junction, Burwash Landing, Destruction Bay, and Beaver Creek, but we in this Assembly all know that this is one of the most challenging portions of road infrastructure in the territory, based on the fact that it was pushed through rather quickly in 1942 in what was, even at that time, non-permanent permafrost. It will always be a challenge, and I think that — in previous discussions on this topic — it is a big number that would be required for a full reconstruction. Like I said, I have certainly heard the Member for Kluane. I will certainly direct my department to continue making these applications. We hope to meet with success with the infrastructure program out of the United States sooner rather than later.

The Member for Copperbelt South has also asked about the highway construction budget for the Transportation division of the Department of Highways and Public Works budget for 2022-23. There is a budget line item of approximately \$43 million — \$42,898,000. I will just advise about matters that I had not spoken about previously.

The primary one is the north Klondike Highway reconstruction at various locations between kilometre 418 and kilometre 646. That is currently budgeted for \$23,728,000. This road portion of the national trade corridors fund north Klondike program includes, eventually, three bridges, one replacement with a 2.3-kilometre road realignment, and two rehabilitation projects. The replacement is at Crooked Creek, and the rehabilitation projects are at McCabe River and Moose Creek. There will also be reconstruction of seven highway segments totalling 96.5 kilometres from kilometre 416 to kilometre 646 on the north Klondike Highway to a TAC-RAU 90 standard and upgrade said portion.

The existing north Klondike Highway between kilometre 418 and kilometre 646 was originally constructed in the 1970s to accommodate demand loads at the time. That is not adequate for the current demand. The highway was nominally widened in the 1980s; however, the original base structure was not improved at that time. Road strengthening has been undertaken over the past 15 years in an attempt to alleviate accelerated deterioration. However, achieving an adequate structural capacity is beyond the scope of general maintenance activities. So, that's a significant amount of work budgeted at just under \$24 million.

As I made my observations with respect to Crooked Creek past Stewart Crossing and toward Dawson — once again, there has been significant reconfiguring of the highway by the contractors. These are exciting projects and they are improving the safety and resilience of our Yukon highway infrastructure, and these programs will continue for a number of years yet.

What else had I not mentioned?

We also have \$100,000 budgeted for the Hunker Creek culvert replacement. Hunker Creek is located on the north Klondike Highway near Dawson City. It is located in a low-lying area. The road is subject to flooding, particularly during the spring. The proposed improvements will require a grade raise at the highway, along with the construction of the larger multi-plate culvert. The funds identified for this fiscal year are for design.

I mentioned the Crooked Creek bridge replacement, the McCabe River bridge rehabilitation, and the Moose Creek bridge rehabilitation — so, busy times on the north Klondike Highway, which will continue. We're excited about these projects.

I just had some late-breaking information here. The forecasted expenditures for the Shakwak-Alaska Highway area for this year, for both O&M and capital, are estimated at \$4.2 million.

**Mr. Kent:** I was focused in on that line item for the Klondike Highway. The minister mentioned, I believe, that the number was \$23.7 million. He said that there were some bridges in there. I am just hoping he can explain for us a little bit more. Is that going to be just one large tender for reconstruction, or does it include the bridges?

I guess that the other question is, when you drop down a couple of lines in the capital vote to Bridges — Numbered Highways — so, the Crooked Creek bridge and the McCabe Creek bridge rehabilitation — is that included in the Klondike Highway line item? Or is it located in that Bridges — Numbered Highways/Secondary Roads line item that is down below just a little bit? I am just trying to get a sense for where these projects are budgeted here.

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

Yes, those three bridges — the Crooked Creek bridge replacement, the McCabe River bridge rehabilitation, and the Moose Creek bridge rehabilitation — are all contained within the Klondike Highway budget.

**Mr. Kent:** I guess that the other question that I asked — and I think the minister mentioned \$23.7 million for a fairly

large stretch of highway — is that all going to be tendered this year? Will it be one tender or will there be a number of tenders for that specific amount? Again, I think that is the number that the minister gave us a couple of answers ago for one of the portions of the road that — the Klondike Highway, pardon me — that is contained in this year's budget.

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

So, I confirmed with my department that there are two road construction contracts of approximately \$10 million. One is from kilometre 546 to kilometre 576, and one is also for approximately \$10 million from kilometre 613 to kilometre 646. I can confirm with my officials, but it is going to be — a lot of the work that I set out in my prior response, I am advised, with respect to those — that those tenders are issued, but have not been confirmed — have not been contracted yet. Yes, that is the most up-to-date information that I have with respect to that portion of the Klondike Highway national trade corridors fund reconstruction project.

**Mr. Kent:** So, just to confirm, the minister said that those two tenders are now on the Bids and Tenders website. They are open but haven't closed or been awarded; I was hoping that he can confirm that.

Then, I wanted to move down to the Bridges — Numbered Highways/Secondary Roads line item at \$10.973 million. I have some specific questions about a couple of bridge projects. I'm curious about the Nisutlin Bay bridge. Our understanding — pardon me, my understanding — in conversations with the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin that May 4 is a potential date for whether or not to award that project. I'm curious if the minister can provide us with an update on that one.

Then further along the highway toward Watson Lake, there's the Big Creek bridge. The signage there indicates that it was to have been completed in the fall of 2021; however, in conversations with my colleague, the Member for Watson Lake, who travels that stretch of highway at least twice a week, she said that it obviously hasn't been completed yet. So, we're looking for an update on a revised completion date so that she can share that with her constituents who travel that highway. The new structure is in place, but the old bridge is still being used, and there's still, I believe, a significant amount of work that needs to be finished on the Big Creek bridge, which is between Rancheria and Watson Lake.

So, thank you very much, Deputy Chair. Again, I'm looking for an idea with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge and the timing of an award and the Big Creek bridge completion and if there's any money in this budget for completion of that project.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In relation to the question about the Big Creek bridge replacement, which is at kilometre 1042, approximately 60 kilometres west of Watson Lake, the existing bridge will be replaced over a two-year span and will include — as I am sure the Member for Watson Lake is observing fairly regularly — road realignment on either side of the bridge, improving safety. I am advised that this work is scheduled to be completed by the end of September of this year.

With respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the member opposite will be familiar with some of this material, but I will answer the question.

The tender was posted on October 13, 2021 for two pre-qualified contractors and closed on February 3, 2022. Proposal evaluation and additional steps are in progress. This is taking some extra time, given the complexity of the project. To allow the parties time, we have extended the irrevocability period for an additional number of days — 30 calendar days — until, as the member opposite correctly indicated, May 4 of this year.

As I have also indicated to the House previously during this spring session, bid prices have come in higher than anticipated due to current global circumstances and the high premium on steel and other materials. We are exploring options to nevertheless proceed with this project. Of course, this is a multi-year story, going back to the previous Yukon Liberal Party government and the previous Yukon Party government before that, so I am sure that there is a lot of will to try to get this done. The contract is a high priority. However, we must also do our due diligence to evaluate whether we are making the right decision on behalf of Yukon taxpayers before we proceed with this award. Discussions are ongoing. May 4 is soon, so we will know.

As I indicated in a prior answer, this is an incredibly important part of Yukon transportation infrastructure, and, as I also indicated previously, the Alaska Highway has become, perhaps, more important than in years gone by, based on geopolitical considerations. It will certainly be of interest to our Alaskan friends and neighbours that we maintain our infrastructure to a certain level. This is one of the largest — if not the largest — spans across water on the Alaska Highway in Yukon. I may not be correct on that, but it appears like it is a pretty big piece of infrastructure. So, we certainly hope that this project will proceed and provide a benefit to the Village of Teslin, to the Teslin Tlingit Council, and to Yukoners in general.

**Mr. Kent:** There was some additional information that I was seeking in my previous question and I don't think the minister answered. The first one was with respect to the north Klondike Highway and two tenders that he had mentioned. One of my colleagues did send me a note saying that those two tenders are not currently on the Bids and Tenders system. I am just curious if the minister can tell us when he expects them to potentially go on there. With respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, can the minister tell us how much of this \$10,973,000 for this year's budget estimate is earmarked for the Nisutlin Bay bridge?

Also, back to the Big Creek bridge for a second — I did ask if there was any money in this year's budget for completing that. Can the minister let us know if that project is behind a year, as the signs suggest and, if so, what the reason might be for that project being approximately a year late in completion?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** With respect to the Big Creek bridge replacement, the budgeted amount for fiscal year 2022-23 — out of this portion of the capital budget for the Transportation division of Highways and Public Works — is \$2,333,000. I

inquired as to the likely reason for the delay. The likely reason for the delay is supply chain issues, but, of course, that is a catch-all. I will return to the member opposite in a return as to how this Big Creek bridge replacement project has unfolded. I should hopefully have an answer in the spring or summer of this year. We will get back to the member opposite and, by extension, to the Member for Watson Lake.

With respect to the other two contracts, the information that I have now is that one of the \$10-million projects for kilometre 546 to kilometre 576 of the north Klondike Highway was awarded to Sidhu & Sons Trucking. That contract started on April 30, 2021, so we are actually in year 2 of that project. The second project, also in the range of \$10 million, was the project for the rehabilitation of kilometre 613 through kilometre 646. It was awarded to Cobalt Contracting in year 1, and that is also now a two-year project.

With respect to the searchability of these projects, I am advised that these projects are still listed in Bids and Tenders, but there is a drawdown tab that says “Awarded”. It is under a tab indicating “Awarded”. It is Sidhu for the first contract and Cobalt for the second contract, which is consistent with what I observed when I was travelling on the highway last fall.

**Mr. Kent:** I guess just the one final question that remains is: How much in this year’s budget is designated for the Nisutlin Bay bridge under that Bridges — Numbered Highways/Secondary Roads?

I think it would, perhaps just in the interest of time — it might be helpful if the minister would commit to providing us with a breakdown of those line items with respect to the Klondike Highway and the Alaska Highway — if he could just give us, in a legislative return or in writing, a breakdown of the projects and the estimates associated with them. That would be helpful.

I do have some questions with respect to the Major Projects line item in capital, which is \$10.8 million. Is that entire expenditure going to be done with respect to the Gateway project? Is that where I find the Gateway funding, in that line item?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The first question was with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement/interim repair. The current budget is \$4.34 million. Briefly, for the record, the Nisutlin Bay bridge was constructed in 1953 by the Department of National Defence and is located in the Village of Teslin. The bridge is 584 metres long with a steel grid deck and seven steel through-truss spans. Interim repairs to the stringers were started in 2016. Work will continue until the bridge is replaced.

Work undertaken in 2022-23 will focus on design, permit, and geotechnical for the replacement of the bridge. Stay tuned for May 4 as to what might occur going forward.

The other question was with respect to Gateway — yes, the \$10.8 million is budgeted for the Carmacks bypass project for this year — and then, finally, my department will get back to you with respect to a list of projects, as requested.

**Deputy Chair:** Would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*. Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Kent:** Just before the break, we were talking about the Major Projects line item, which the minister confirmed was for Gateway, and he specifically said it was for the Carmacks bypass, so I’m assuming that is the entire amount; however, I think that, last fall, there was a stretch of highway between Ross River and Faro on the Campbell Highway that went through the environmental assessment process and received, I believe, a favourable decision document. I am kind of curious why that project is not included in the Gateway funding that is in the 2022-23 budget.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** With respect to this project between Faro and Ross River — in April 2020, a project agreement for this component of the Robert Campbell Highway was signed with the Ross River Dena Council. Right-of-way clearing contracts have been awarded for this component of the Robert Campbell Highway. This was a direct-award contract to a Ross River Dena Council citizen-owned company.

The Yukon government will continue to work with the Ross River Dena Council to implement the project agreement, and as the member opposite has indicated, it has been assessed — the section of the project, which is kilometre 363.6 to 367.5, has been assessed by the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board, which will allow upgrades to proceed.

From YG’s perspective, we certainly want this project to proceed, but it is contingent upon reaching a satisfactory project agreement with the Ross River Dena Council. I am more than happy to engage with the Ross River Dena Council this late spring and summer to try to move this matter forward, but certainly recognizing that it is unlikely that substantive work would happen this summer.

**Mr. Kent:** So, in the session briefing notes from last fall, it does say that portion of the highway — start date and estimated timelines — construction on kilometre 363 to 367 would be done in the summer of 2022. The minister has now said that is not going to be the case. Does he have an idea of when he anticipates this work being done?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** From the department’s perspective, we view this as an important part of infrastructure improvement. We are prepared to move on this matter as soon as possible, but certainly being respectful of the government-to-government relationships and that there will have to be an acceptable project agreement in place. As I said in my previous response, I am open to and will engage with new Ross River Dena Council leadership this summer.

I know that, last summer, in anticipation — well, in the ultimate completion of the project agreement with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, obviously out of Carmacks in furtherance of the Carmacks bypass project, it required — one had to roll up one's sleeves, and there were two or three negotiations that took place at that point. Ultimately, there was an agreement entered into that will bring demonstrable benefit to Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation citizens and was acceptable to the leadership there.

All to say that these agreements — I'm just finishing my first year in this position, but anecdotally, as I observe this process, it does require some work. You have to develop relationships and there has to be good will, but there certainly are funds available for valuable infrastructure projects, whether it's the small portion of the Robert Campbell Highway between Faro and Ross River or in Carmacks or some of the road infrastructure in the Liard River Basin — there are two projects there. I will also travel to Watson Lake and see if we can try to move those files forward, because I think there would be demonstrable benefit to the Town of Watson Lake and to the Liard First Nation, as well.

These agreements take some time and energy. I'm prepared to put the time in. I'm prepared to direct my officials to do so, because we were able to get this agreement in place for the Carmacks bypass.

Would I like some of these projects to move more quickly? Absolutely. In the approximately one year that I have been in this position, this does appear to require some work. I'm not afraid of the work, but we do want to move these projects forward if at all possible.

**Mr. Kent:** In April 2020, there was a project agreement for a Robert Campbell Highway component. This portion between Ross River and Faro was signed with the Ross River Dena Council, but further down in last fall's briefing note, it said that the Yukon government would continue to work with the Ross River Dena Council to implement the project agreement. Perhaps the minister could just explain to me and explain to Yukoners what that initial project agreement, signed in April 2020, was. It appears that it does not allow for the projects to proceed without further negotiations and agreements in place. I am just hoping the minister can provide some clarity around that.

While we are on that topic, as I said and as the minister confirmed, the kilometre 363 to kilometre 367 piece went through YESAA; however, that entire project is from kilometre 355 to kilometre 414. I am curious when the balance of that project will be put through the YESAA process, aside from those four kilometres that are currently approved.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** With respect to the original agreements, I will use my words carefully — with respect to both agreements, the Robert Campbell project agreement was signed and includes training, employment, and business opportunities. It includes a requirement to establish a committee and procurement opportunities. So, since then, we have been working collaboratively with the Ross River Dena Council to establish membership of the committee and to implement the agreement before construction can proceed.

The agreements in principle for the — they were agreements — six project agreements — and you have to, I suppose, put meat on the bones, so that is what happened in Carmacks last summer. There had to be a quantifiable number of training hours, whether it was for heavy machinery, mechanics, grader operators, or whatever the agreement ultimately was. So, you have six agreements that will always require further discussions to have an acceptable community development agreement going forward.

The member opposite then had a question as to why the additional portion of the Robert Campbell Highway hasn't proceeded or doesn't have an agreement. I am advised that YG worked with the Ross River Dena Council on the YESAB application with respect to the four-kilometre stretch, but has not done so with respect to the longer stretch, but once again, we are certainly prepared to do so.

The agreements that have been signed over the course of the last four or five years are framework agreements, but ultimately, it is cliché, of course, but the devil is in the details, and we saw that last summer. As I indicated also, we are prepared to roll up our sleeves and to reach acceptable community development agreements, or community-development-type agreements, with the impacted First Nations for their benefit, and that is exactly what happened with the Carmacks agreement.

So, that is my understanding — that to move the other five agreements forward, a similar process will have to occur as occurred in Carmacks last summer.

**Mr. Kent:** Just to finish one question with respect, I guess, to the Gateway projects, are those agreements available publicly, and if so, can the minister direct us to where we can find them?

Subsequent to that, I want to switch gears for a second and ask a question.

I'll take the minister to budget page 14-10, the O&M Vote 55-1, down to Transportation Maintenance. So, when you look across, in 2020-21, the actual amount for Transportation Maintenance was \$49.23 million. Then the forecasted amount for the 2021-22 fiscal year was \$48.8 million, and then the estimate for this current budget year drops off to \$46.578 million.

I'm wondering why that estimate is so much lower than the actual from a couple years ago and what was forecasted to be spent in the last fiscal year and if there has been any analysis done by the department on what the spike in fuel costs will do to the Transportation Maintenance budget for this current fiscal year.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I think that we have three questions. The first question was with respect to the Transportation Maintenance branch. The 2021-22 budget was originally \$45.375 million. There was a supplementary budget request in that fiscal year, based on the washouts — and quite a number of avalanches occurred in the White Pass area, and there were some other unforeseen demands on the budget. As a consequence of that, the actual budget request for fiscal 2021-22 was \$48,814,000. Then, as I think the Member for Copperbelt South indicated, the budget request for 2022-23 is

now \$46.578 million. So, from the original knowable demands on this branch, this represents an increase of \$1.203 million, but, of course, if there are acts of God or other unforeseen circumstances that occur during the course of this spring — we haven't quite had that yet, but it might still be a little bit early for some of the possible washouts, but I will knock on wood and hope, of course, that this doesn't occur.

From core budget to core budget, it's \$45,375,000 to \$46,578,000, but I am conceding that was a supplementary budget request last fiscal year for the washouts, avalanches, and some other unforeseen needs.

What's next? With respect to the original project agreements, we are advised so far that they are bilateral, government-to-government agreements — which, of course, they are — that are presumptively protected and would require review from both parties prior to being released. That's where that is for now.

The final question was with respect to fuel costs. The spike in fuel costs is relatively recent, but nevertheless, we are actively monitoring those fuel costs, and we will adjust throughout the year accordingly.

As was the case with respect to the Transportation Maintenance branch budget, once again, if there were persistent higher fuel costs and there was a request where it was required to meet the demands of all elements of the service delivery of Highways and Public Works, which is a department that uses a lot of fuel — in a given year, I would be kind of interested to know how much fuel we use — I would receive advice from my department. There may potentially have to be an additional request if some of these cost pressures are persistent.

**Mr. Kent:** Although I still have quite a number of questions, I do want to turn the floor over to the critic from the New Democratic Party. This will be my final question, and hopefully we will get a chance to get the minister back before the end of the Sitting here in a couple of days.

It's with respect to the airport projects. Flipping back over to the capital side, there is \$51.333 million estimated for capital projects on various airports. I think that the minister has identified \$20 million for the parallel runway. I'm curious if he can give us a breakdown on what the balance is for.

Then I'm just looking for an update from the minister on the restaurant facilities at Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. There was a press release put out, I think, the year before the pandemic that there were some renovations being done to those and that there would be a new operator in place that fall. Obviously, that would have been the fall of 2019, I think. In 2020 when the pandemic hit, that would have certainly curtailed those operations. I'm just curious if the minister can give us an update on when we can expect a restaurant or licensed facility back in the Whitehorse airport and then a breakdown of that capital line item.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** The first question was with respect to the Whitehorse airport food services, and I certainly agree with the member opposite that we would love to see food services at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport sooner than later, but just briefly, Yukon's aviation — negotiations to procure food services at the Whitehorse airport were put on

hold during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the removal of the state of emergency on March 18, 2022, the department has reached out to the highest ranked proponent for the negotiated request for proposals for food services to inquire if they are interested in resuming negotiations.

As the member opposite will likely know, some of the restaurant space was repurposed during the COVID global pandemic to satisfy requirements as a testing facility to satisfy Transport Canada regulatory requirements, so it certainly had an alternate use at the time, but a lot of great work has been done at the Whitehorse airport, and this certainly would be an important addition to an airport that has been modernized and revitalized on a lot of fronts. Of course, food services is a fairly important element of a mid-sized Canadian airport.

The other question was with respect to the various airport projects. So, the total budget, as indicated, is \$51.33 million. The lion's share of this funding is earmarked for the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. That includes approximately \$46 million in this year for the Whitehorse airport runway improvements, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport apron panels, the Whitehorse airport site improvements, and the Whitehorse airport taxiway improvements — so great news there — in order to ensure the redundancy of the airport for 737 service, which we hope to have established very soon.

I certainly thank the federal government for understanding the infrastructure needs and requirements of the Yukon and being very supportive of our proposals.

There is \$400,000 for various Dawson airport projects, there is \$400,000 for community airport and aerodrome improvement projects, and a total budget of \$4.441 million for Yukon-wide aerodromes. Work in 2022-23 could include: electrical upgrades; lighting and navigational aid purchases and installation; signage; grounds upkeep and upgrade; vegetation control; installation of wildlife control fencing; dust control product and application; runway, taxiway, and apron upgrades; and field service upgrades.

As we know, the certified airports in the Yukon are Whitehorse, Dawson City, Mayo, Watson Lake, and Old Crow.

Great news on the aviation front and the projects at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. It will be a busy place for the next few years in order to continue to improve our aviation infrastructure as the integral hub of air transportation for the Yukon.

**Ms. Tredger:** I'll start by thanking the officials for being here with us today and helping with the answers. I appreciated the briefing very much, so thank you.

I'm looking forward to a back-and-forth with the minister. I am hoping, since we have limited time, that we could have quite efficient back-and-forth, and if I need further background information, I can ask.

While we're talking about aviation in the Yukon, I'm wondering which communities currently have airstrips that accommodate the medevac plane — I think that requires a fixed-wing aircraft accommodation — and if any of the work the minister has just mentioned is going to change or, I guess,



add new communities to that list of communities that can be accessed by the medevac plane.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** In order to expedite the back-and-forth, as the Member for Whitehorse Centre has requested, which is fair — I would say with respect to this specific question — and the member opposite will know that the provision of medevac services is generally under the ambit of Community Services. We can get that information back to the member with respect to the current airstrips that are a service for medevacs. By way of quick background, Community Services is the program delivery department. If there is a request for an update to infrastructure or to consider a different airstrip or even an airport — I would believe that the certified airports are medevac-capable — that request would then come to Highways and Public Works. We would receive the request.

With respect to an update regarding either adding infrastructure or an update to infrastructure, there would be a budgeting exercise and some policy work that would be done. Community Services delivers the medevac services. We maintain and update the infrastructure.

**Ms. Tredger:** I guess that answer means that there hasn't been a request from Community Services for any upgrades to airports. Perhaps the minister can confirm that.

I would also like to follow up on what my colleague was asking about — signal lights on the Alaska Highway in the Whitehorse area. It was really great to hear that the minister was able to respond very quickly to the issues around the signal at the south access.

Earlier this year, the issue of accessibility of crosswalks and signals at the new Hillcrest Drive and Burns Road intersections on the Alaska Highway came up. I understand that there have been some changes, but in particular, it is still difficult or impossible for people in electric wheelchairs to use. I am wondering what measures have been taken to fix this, and were people with mobility issues consulted in those upgrades?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** With respect to the lights at Hillcrest near the airport, I certainly have heard this matter for a while and I am advised that, in the interim, the buttons have been moved. There is additional asphalt that was laid, but, certainly, I'm hearing the member opposite — that it might still represent a barrier to someone in an electric wheelchair. I'm certainly open to receiving the specific request from the member opposite. Let's get it right; let's make it accessible.

There was consultation with respect to that intersection. Was it expansive enough? Did it include specifically canvassing mobility-challenged persons? I don't know the answer to that question today, but I would urge the Member for Whitehorse Centre — and in fact, all MLAs are quite good about asking the Department of Highways and Public Works to improve our infrastructure and to improve safety.

I gave credit to the members for Copperbelt South and for Copperbelt North for alerting the department — as the Member for Whitehorse Centre also indicated — very quickly as to some intuitiveness issues with respect to the lights at the south access and Alaska Highway. I look forward to receiving the request from the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Although it seems like some attempts have been made with respect to the filling in of asphalt and the repositioning of a button, if it's still not working, please advise me, and I will advise the department, and we will try to make that right.

Certainly, mobility-challenged persons should be consulted. I'm sure it was a public consultation, but whether you were actually effectively identifying or reaching out, I'm sure we can always do better.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. I support and encourage consulting the people who are most affected by our decisions and doing that very proactively. I hope that, going forward, as decisions are made that are going to affect people with mobility issues on accessing our infrastructure, that they are consulted.

I wanted to ask about water delivery in Old Crow. Has the minister been able to ensure adequate staffing?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I know that this has been an ongoing matter. Highways and Public Works and Community Services have attempted to be as absolutely responsive as possible, but perhaps, just for the record, I will indicate my most recent communications with the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin. In this correspondence, I have offered to meet with the MLA for Vuntut Gwitchin after the session to determine whether the service provided has been adequate or whether the MLA can provide input as to her experiences.

Anyway, this was the information that was provided on March 16 to the MLA for Old Crow. Highways and Public Works is working to ensure water delivery and sewer services in Old Crow are carried out as required by the community. Currently, the two full-time staff are supported by a third HPW staff person who assists the water-truck driver in completing deliveries. In addition, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government has made available a fourth person to assist when necessary.

This level of staffing support is in addition to the full-time remote monitoring operational adjustments and technical assistance available to the local operators and periodic repairs and maintenance visits to the Old Crow water treatment plant by Community Services staff.

The Yukon government has advertised twice for a water services position in Old Crow; however, no applications were received. HPW and Community Services continue to work with Vuntut Gwitchin on potential long-term solutions with regard to hiring and to ensuring water and septic services are provided in Old Crow. In the meantime, Highways and Public Works is providing support from other camps to assist staff in Old Crow and to prevent any service disruptions.

And then I also — it just twiggged that there was even more up-to-date information that I had received with respect to this. So, there was a Dawson employee in Old Crow from February 27 to March 7 helping out. The VGFN, the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, is providing citizens — one of whom has worked for us previously and we have been told is working out well at the present time. The superintendent asked if anyone additionally needed to be sent up and was told by the local employee that it was not necessary.

We have been working with VGFN to find someone to work in this job. Attempts have been made, but I'm not sure if the member opposite's information now, in the middle-to-late April, is different. It certainly — I think a combination of HPW and Community Services is certainly attempting — as recently as April 11, there was an open house in Old Crow for staffing. I assume that is for this position and potentially other positions. Efforts have certainly been made to provide consistent service, and we are liaising and communicating with staff on the ground in the community of Old Crow.

**Ms. Tredger:** I thank the minister for that answer.

I want to talk about the new Whistle Bend school. One of the commitments in *Our Clean Future* — I believe it is C5 — is that there will be detailed climate change risk assessments for all major community infrastructure projects over \$10 million that are built or funded by the Government of Yukon. So, I certainly think that this qualifies.

I am wondering if the minister can table for the House the climate risk assessment that was done for Whistle Bend school. I am also curious if any assessment was done on the greenhouse gas emissions that will be produced by the building and operation of the school and if any assessment was done of that.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Sorry, I missed your second question.

**Ms. Tredger:** I'm happy to repeat. So, the two questions were: I assume that a climate change risk assessment was done, and I am wondering if that can be tabled for us, and I am wondering if there was any assessment done of the greenhouse gas emissions produced by the building and operation of this facility and if that could be shared with us.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I believe that there are two questions. The first one is with respect to the climate risk assessment. I have just been sort of given a chronology as to the planning and the tender. The planning and the tender of this project predated this commitment. So, that's where that is. However, we are conducting climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure and major building projects above \$10 million now. Climate change risk assessments are a key part of adaptation and planning to determine the infrastructure's vulnerability to climate change and use that information to incorporate adaptation measures into the design to mitigate climate change impacts.

The climate risk assessment is required when applying for funding from federal funding programs, such as the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund. A climate change vulnerability study of Yukon's road transportation network will inform the development of standards and specifications.

Going forward, some examples of climate risk assessments that are underway or planned are as follows: some of the Alaska Highway rehabilitation projects; the Carmacks bypass; Klondike Highway upgrades; the Whitehorse airport maintenance facility project; and the morgue and the coroner's office project.

The second question is regarding the GHG calculations with respect to the Whistle Bend school. I can advise as follows: The greenhouse gas emission calculations are not available yet, but we will receive them. The contractor will

submit energy models as the design progresses, and we can provide information as it becomes available.

We look forward to working with the contractor to receive that information. As the Member for Whitehorse Centre has accurately pointed out, there is a commitment in *Our Clean Future* for our government to conduct those climate risk assessments for the major transportation infrastructure projects and major building projects — about \$10 million going forward.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, I am trying to wrap my head around how this major building project — which is tens of millions of dollars — went forward without any assessment of how it will be impacted by climate change or what its effect on our emissions will be.

I would point the minister back to a petition that I tabled earlier this Sitting that requested that government do these assessments — both the climate change risk assessment, as well as the effect on our emissions assessments — and make those public. I cannot think of a more compelling example of why this is needed than right now.

How can we ask the public to hold the government to account when we don't know what's happening? As it turns out, it is not happening. In the last 18 months, give or take, since *Our Clean Future* was released, this still hasn't happened.

That said, I know that there is work going on in the department that I do want to ask about. I understand that there is a new position in the Department of Highways and Public Works to track Yukon government greenhouse gas emissions. When will that work start and when will it be reported on?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Just to be clear with respect to a lot of our projects but specifically to the Whistle Bend school project, the statement of requirement in the contract is that the *National Energy Code of Canada for Buildings*, also known as the "NECB", developed by the National Research Council Canada and Natural Resources Canada as part of a commitment to improving the energy efficiency of Canadian buildings and reducing greenhouse gas emissions — the statement of requirement, with respect to Whistle Bend school, is that the construction of that school exceeds those requirements by 35 percent. So, in that respect, we are alive to — we were alive to climate change and building efficiency and considerations of reducing greenhouse gases prior to the policy being enacted.

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

**Acting Chair (Ms. Clarke):** It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Acting Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

**Chair's report**

**Ms. Clarke:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

*The House adjourned at 5:28 p.m.*

**The following sessional papers were tabled April 26, 2022:**

35-1-45

*Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report — November 1, 2019 to October 31, 2020* (McPhee)

35-1-46

*Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report — November 1, 2020 to October 31, 2021* (McPhee)

35-1-47

*Second Report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts* (April 2022) (Dixon)

**The following legislative returns were tabled April 26, 2022:**

35-1-46

Response to Written Question No. 15 re: Investing in Canada infrastructure program (Mostyn)

35-1-47

Response to Written Question No. 16 re: Mayo reservoir project (Mostyn)

35-1-48

Response to Written Question No. 17 re: Carmacks arena (Mostyn)

35-1-49

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 3, Education, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Education Appeal Tribunal (McLean)

**The following document was filed April 26, 2022:**

35-1-66

*Workers' Advocate Office 2021 Annual Report* (McPhee)

**Written notice was given of the following motion April 26, 2022:**

Motion No. 413

Re: appointment to the Yukon Human Rights Commission (McPhee)





# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 73

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Wednesday, April 27, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Wednesday, April 27, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

## DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

## INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We have a tribute today for local food, and we have quite a few folks for that tribute. Could we please welcome, from Sunnyside Farm, the Roske family — Krista, Jason, and Kate. We also have, from Tum Tums, Simone and Tom Rudge. We have, from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Anne Savoie. We have, from the Yukon Agricultural Association, Jackie McBride-Dixon and Carl Burgess, the new executive director. From our own Agriculture branch, we have Jonathan Lucas, Randy Lamb, Bradley Barton, Shannon Gladwin, Matt Ball, and Kirk Price, our new director. Matt used to be the director and is now with the Land Management branch. I will also acknowledge that Randy Lamb is president of DUGS — so, if we could just please welcome everybody.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming some guests to the gallery. We have our press secretary, Tim Kucharuk, and his daughter, Olive, and Olive is a keen urban gardener and is here for the tribute.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Tributes.

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of Air North inaugural flight to Toronto

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to Air North's inaugural direct flight to Toronto. This May 10, Air North, Yukon's airline, will depart Whitehorse for the first time ever for a scheduled flight to Toronto. This new seasonal route, operating between May and September 2022, will originate in Whitehorse, pick up passengers in Yellowknife, and continue on to Toronto, creating new potential for the Yukon as a destination.

We are thrilled for Air North, which, since inception, has continued to be visionary as they pursue new opportunities. From the early beginnings with the flight school and supporting the mining sector to charter flights and, later, scheduled flights, adapting, growing, and providing incredible service and great

employment opportunities for Yukoners has certainly set Air North apart from others in the sector.

Air access is critical for any destination to develop a market, particularly in the north. Because of this, we are tremendously excited that travellers from southern Ontario will now be able to travel to the Yukon on a direct flight and experience a very different part of Canada than they usually see. This opens up many new opportunities for tourism, creates new economic opportunities, and will help our territory to attract new Yukoners as well. It couldn't have come at a better time here in the Yukon as we recover from COVID-19 and we continue to show growth in both the economy and in our population.

The flight will not only make it easier for Canadians to travel to the Yukon, but also increases our territory's reach to other important global target markets.

Toronto is a major Canadian gateway to the eastern seaboard, the Americas, Europe, and even Asia. This unlocks many other opportunities in business and global relations. I am very excited for the many benefits and connections that this new route will create.

Air North remains an incredibly well-regarded business in the Yukon, and I applaud them for their endurance throughout the pandemic and for their efforts to continue expanding, despite difficult circumstances. This has been a significant year for Air North as they celebrate 45 years of high-quality service as the Yukon's airline.

I want to thank Air North for continuing to provide excellent service to Yukoners, and I congratulate them on this next step forward.

*Applause*

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to congratulate Air North as they embark on a new journey — this time from Whitehorse to Toronto. On May 10 until October 7, 2022, the flight is open for booking. This newly scheduled route will provide Yukoners with a greater ability to connect with eastern Canada. It is going to open many possibilities to travellers from across Canada and beyond, especially for those in the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

Air North has expanded their service a number of times in the past and notably began offering flights to Ottawa in 2014. While many took advantage of this route, we understand that it is anticipated that the Toronto route will appeal to many more travellers. They will have the opportunity to connect to even more cities from this international travel hub. I am sure that local businesses will echo this excitement as this will open the door to increased tourism levels to the Yukon and will help boost our Yukon economy.

In 2019, Air North was awarded Best Specialty and Leisure Airline in North America. For this 100-percent Yukon-owned company, it is the best. They work with Yukoners and their need for special arrangements without question. Many share various stories about the excellent service, care, and cost, and I am of the same mind.

Congratulations to Air North on this wonderful news and for offering Yukoners more choices. We look forward to seeing the positive effects that this new route will have for all involved.

Best wishes to Joe, Deb, and all the Air North staff across the country on this new journey.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** The Yukon NDP are delighted to add our congratulations to Air North's inaugural Whitehorse-to-Toronto route. This is another example of the ingenuity and determination coming from Yukon's own Air North. Yukoners everywhere, I think, are delighted and proud. I know I feel pride every time I see an orange-tailed plane in the sky. So, thank you to Air North for their ongoing support to Yukoners and their commitment to keeping us connected. We can't wait to be on the ground cheering for that first flight.

*Applause*

### In recognition of local farmers and food producers

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I rise today to pay tribute to some of our local farmers and food producers who are contributing to homegrown Yukon goodness.

The Downtown Urban Gardeners Society, also lovingly known as "DUGS", will celebrate 25 growing seasons of green thumbs this year. DUGS is a passionate collection of people invested in community food production, security, and accessibility.

DUGS is nestled under the clay cliffs on the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Ray Street for people to garden in a plot all their own. If you haven't, I would encourage you to take a stroll by this summer. It's stunning to see giant red poppies growing alongside vibrant purple cabbages and creeping nasturtiums.

There is also an apiary where DUGS president Randy Lamb dotingly tends to the buzzing insects and harvests honey every year. Raw honey is donated to the Whitehorse Food Bank annually. DUGS volunteers also gather and deliver a weekly harvest to the Golden Age Society. This past summer, DUGS donated nearly 450 kilos of produce, squashing their previous record of 375 kilos.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a few moments to talk about fresh whole milk and the Sunnyside Farm in the Ibex Valley, owned and operated by the Roske family for the past 10 years. About three years ago, Krista, Jason, and their daughter Kate decided to change their focus and become a year-round commercial dairy farm. Sunnyside Farm's journey involved dairy plant training, designing their own milking parlour and processing building, joining traceability and herd health programs, and ensuring their operation provides the best care possible for their herd of 22 dairy cows, and they love their cows.

Mr. Speaker, setting up as a dairy farm was an epic endeavour with Krista and Jason sourcing their Jersey cows from Manitoba, Alberta, and British Columbia and their farm equipment from Ontario, Romania, the Netherlands, and Ukraine. They faced many challenges along the way, from supply chain issues to COVID-19, certification, and all the

logistics of setting up a small dairy. But Krista and Jason persevered.

Sunnyside Farm received its licence to sell commercially earlier this month and recently began delivering milk to local retailers. By the way, Mr. Speaker, I understand that their milk is fortified with vitamin D, which of course, we all need. Their two-litre bottles of pasteurized whole milk can be found at local retailers Super A in Porter Creek and Tum Tum's Black Gilt Meats. Krista and Jason are currently milking five cows and hope to be milking 10 by late summer.

So, congratulations to Sunnyside Farm and to DUGS and to budding gardeners like Kate and Olive for building local food sustainability. We are thrilled to be able to enjoy refreshing local milk, fresh produce, and Yukon honey, and I personally can't wait to try it all.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Sunnyside Farm and to the Downtown Urban Gardeners.

Sunnyside Farm is a small family farm located in Ibex Valley, 15 minutes west of Whitehorse. They recently reached a major milestone in bringing their dairy farm into production. Sunnyside Farm is now producing and selling milk for Yukoners to enjoy. This pasteurized whole milk can be found at Tum Tum's Black Gilt Meats and Porter Creek Super A, and plans are for Sunnyside to add other stores to their list of distributors.

The farm's goal is to provide food that is grown and raised sustainably and is affordable to their customers. They believe in a business model that supports other local farmers and agribusiness as much as possible. The farm currently milks several cows, with more being brought in this year to add to the operation. Mr. Speaker, this is good news for residents of the Whitehorse area, and we're happy to see a dairy farm producing milk here locally. It is a welcome addition to the Yukon growing sector of the economy. I know there's a lot of work involved in this stage and we would like to congratulate Krista, Jason, and Kate Roske for all their work on this endeavour and their success so far.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to remind the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources how close the proposed Stevens Quarry is to this dairy farm. If the minister is wondering who would be negatively impacted if he decides to proceed with developing Stevens Quarry, despite the written election promise his predecessor made in April 2021, he can start by looking at the gallery here today.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society, which is celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The Whitehorse community garden is located at 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Ray Street at the base of the clay cliffs. Members are required to volunteer over the season, contributing a minimum of eight hours apiece to upkeep and maintenance. Weekly worker bee nights bring together volunteers, and daily tasks include filling water barrels, weeding, and mowing common areas.



Over the last few years, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society has been slowly replacing older garden beds, and the result of those efforts and some big work this spring will include around 80 beds for members to use this growing season.

The garden is also home to donation beds, which grow produce to be donated to the Golden Age Society, communal berry bushes and rhubarb, an apiary with beehives that benefit members and neighbours alike, and a self-contained composting system that is put back into garden beds.

The community garden is certainly a welcome part of the neighbourhood, and members have proven to be excellent stewards of the area, with the season usually kicking off with a neighbourhood cleanup.

So, congratulations to the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society as they celebrate this milestone anniversary. Congratulations again to the Roske family and Sunnyside Farm, and thank you as well to all of the farmers, producers, and members of the agriculture sector who are in the gallery here today, as well as listening on the radio.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to local agriculture. I would like to echo my colleague's words of appreciation and support for Sunnyside Farm. It's a very exciting day. I would also like to talk a little bit about a very special piece of my riding, and that is the Whitehorse community garden run by the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society.

2022 is a very special year for them. They have been a success story that has been greening the heart of downtown Whitehorse, and this will be their 25<sup>th</sup> growing season. The idea for a Whitehorse community garden was first conceived in 1997 when the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition saw a need, and they organized a meeting for all people interested in community gardening. About 15 people were at that first meeting to talk about the concept of the community garden, and from there, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society was formed as a registered not-for-profit society to run the new Whitehorse community garden.

The City of Whitehorse land planning department helped to identify public land available for locating a community garden. The ground was broken, the first gardens were planted in 1998, and the rest is history.

The Whitehorse community garden provides fresh vegetables for many families and individuals and has given back significant amounts of produce to the community year after year. As mentioned, last year they donated almost 1,000 pounds of their locally grown vegetables to the Golden Age Society. DUGS is also a role model for many other community gardens. We have seen an increase in community gardens in neighbourhoods, at the Whitehorse Food Bank, and across the Yukon.

Perhaps even more important than providing space for growing nutritious and affordable food, the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society builds community and provides opportunity for exercise, education, and friendships.

We want to thank the Downtown Urban Gardeners Society, which took this idea and created such an amazing community space and the provision of food security for so many. Thank you, and here's to another 25 years.

*Applause*

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under tabling returns and documents, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 22(8) of the Yukon *Human Rights Act*, the 2020-21 annual report of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have for tabling five legislative returns from the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources for various questions during Question Period and debate on appropriation acts to table today.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I have for tabling two legislative returns.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I have for tabling one legislative return.

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

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have for tabling the *Second Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*.

I also have for tabling the *Third Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges*.

**Speaker:** Are there any further reports of committees to be presented?

Are there any petitions to be introduced?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to respond to the growing number of families with school-age children in Grizzly Valley north by adding a school bus stop at Ursa Way before the start of the 2022-23 school year.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse to consult with local residents and the public before proceeding with any significant changes to the Alaska Highway and streets in the Porter Creek area.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support Yukon businesses by extending the application deadline for the Yukon emergency relief program from April 15 to May 31, 2022.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Lot development

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise before the Assembly today to detail all the lot development projects underway in the Yukon this year, including those under our rural land development program. The Yukon government's Land Development branch is working hard to plan and develop an adequate supply of lots in Yukon communities for housing as well as business and economic development opportunities.

We are investing more than \$30 million for land development in Whitehorse and other Yukon communities. This includes \$13.3 million for continued development of the Whistle Bend subdivision. Work is underway on phase B of the subdivision — 101 lots — and is on track to be completed this summer. Phase 7 of Whistle Bend has just been awarded, and the smaller phase 8 will be awarded shortly. In total, we are targeting completion of more than 200 lots in Whistle Bend this year. Early this fall, we will be tendering phase 9, a third lift station, storm-water outfalls, and designing the next phase for release in early 2023.

We are also beautifying Whistle Bend. We have invested in landscaping Kadzo park, Casca Boulevard, and will be starting work on green streets and additional boulevard work.

We will be completing the Range Point Road masterplan with Kwanlin Dün First Nation, advancing detailed design, and looking forward to working on other joint First Nation-Yukon government land development projects.

There are many other land development projects underway across the Yukon, and our government is targeting the completion of lots and advancing planning work in all municipalities. In Dawson City, we are wrapping up the masterplans for Dawson's Dome Road and Dredge Pond II and advancing design so we can tender the first phases later this year.

We are also working with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Village of Mayo to advance planning for country residential development on the upper bench above Mayo and advancing design and completion of additional lots in the village.

In Carmacks, three country residential lots are being prepared, and a small urban development will be tendered this summer to provide an additional six lots. In Haines Junction, we are completing seven infill lots and planning for urban, country residential, and industrial developments. In Teslin, we are finishing the Yukon government's side of the Lone Tree country residential development that will deliver up to 23 lots and advancing joint planning with the Village of Teslin and the Teslin Tlingit Council. We have numerous residential and

industrial development projects in Watson Lake ready to advance. Just last week, I met with officials from Faro, who are preparing to advance their official community planning process and have great ideas for further lot development in that community.

We continue to engage with municipalities and First Nations to develop a range of lots to meet short- and medium-term demand and support their plans for land development needs for the long term.

**Ms. McLeod:** As we have seen many times with this Liberal government, they talk a big game and under-deliver when it actually comes time to perform. The Liberals have had six years to figure out land development, and yet we are in a lot development and housing crisis. We have repeatedly brought this issue to the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

The Member for Kluane talked about land prices just last week. Since the Member for Kluane didn't get an answer last week, I will try again. Will the government sell the lots that the minister just alluded to at the development cost, the appraised cost, or somewhere in between?

In Watson Lake, area residents have been waiting for a number of years to see lots developed. Land on the Frances Avenue extension has been identified for development and lots were expected to hit the market in the spring of last year. The town has done its job and submitted an updated OCP; however, the Liberal government has failed yet again this year to tender the development of the subdivision. The minister said that he is working on residential lots in Watson Lake, so is the Frances Avenue extension part of this development?

The minister references lots being developed in Carmacks, Mayo, Teslin, Faro, and Haines Junction, but he hasn't noted the anticipated cost. Is the government considering taking action to mitigate rising costs and ensure that the costs are affordable for residents in those communities?

In Whitehorse, residents and developers have been clamoring to access more lots in the growing subdivision of Whistle Bend. I point to the delays in getting phase 7 on the market. Originally, lots were slated to be released last year; however, there was a cancellation and retendering of the construction contract. I am pleased to hear the minister say that the contract has finally been awarded. Will the minister tell us, in his response: Can we expect phase 7 lots ready for land lottery this year?

Mr. Speaker, last election, the Liberals made the commitment to relocate the Marwell grader station and convert the site into housing lots. This was notable because the site is a former oil refinery and is a contaminated site. Can the minister provide an update on the Liberal plan to convert the former oil refinery location and Marwell grader station into a residential neighbourhood?

Last election, the Liberals also committed to meet the request of the Northern Community Land Trust for a land grant. Could the minister update us on how his department is working to facilitate this project? Is he aware of any other requests from organizations for free lots or land to be provided?

I certainly appreciate the scope of the update from the minister on lot development in Whitehorse and rural Yukon and will be paying close attention this summer to see if the minister's assertions actually come to fruition.

**Ms. Tredger:** There seem to be plenty of plans and promises but mostly plans, and who knows when the homes will actually materialize? The minister spoke about residential lots in Carmacks, but there were no timelines or details — just promises. In the meantime, they do not have any residential lots to offer people wanting to move there or for Carmacks citizens wanting to build a home.

Despite the one-government approach that we are told about, the Minister of Highways and Public Works has told the Village of Carmacks that their priority — the demolition and remediation of the abandoned grader station lot — won't start until 2025 — three years from now. This is a problem for that municipality, as I highlighted in the letter that I tabled earlier this week.

So, what is the Minister of Community Services doing to expedite this issue so that Carmacks can move ahead with their official community plan to offer lots for commercial and residential buildings that are so desperately needed, to say nothing of the eyesore left behind that was once the grader station?

What about all of the other communities that can't currently offer a single residential lot for building on? Over-the-counter residential lots for purchase do not exist for any Yukon community. Spring is here and the building season is well underway.

It is interesting that the Yukon Party questioned the high cost of lots that are coming online, because the system changed under their leadership, but here is the thing: The Liberal government has been in power since 2016, and lot prices have only continued to rise. They know that there is a problem, but they haven't fixed it. Market value and development costs are different, but again, no action.

And what about the decision to change the Yukon Housing Corporation home building loan program? We have shared examples of people being pre-approved for mortgages, buying lots, and then not being able to build an actual home because they can't finance their build. How is this helping Yukoners?

What we need is housing that is actually affordable, and as long as this government leaves that up to the market, prices will just keep going up, and Yukoners will keep moving away because they can no longer afford to live here.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have just given a four-minute update on the amount of work that's going on in the territory, and apparently the opposition did not hear that, so let me just recap a little bit here. This year's budget includes more than \$30 million for land development across the territory, as well as \$11 million to incentivize residential construction projects, like the proposed Kwanlin Dün First Nation subdivision extension in Copper Ridge, which will create more than 180 new residential lots.

This is a project that is going ahead. We know that the MLA for the area is not that interested in this development, doesn't act supportive, but it is providing needed housing for Yukon residents.

Mr. Speaker, under the 14 years of the Yukon Party government, we saw continuous growth of the population in the Yukon with very few housing projects being developed. Frankly, we're still paying the price for the Yukon Party's inaction on this file.

Under the leadership of the MLA for Lake Laberge, the Yukon Party cancelled a \$13-million affordable rental housing program to appease private sector developers. Shortly after that, the Member for Lake Laberge was removed from his position as Community Services and housing minister.

Our government's approach differs from the previous administration. Our Liberal government has built strong relationships with municipal and First Nation partners. We continue to make unprecedented investments in building homes across the territory to increase housing options for Yukoners.

Over the next five years, our goal is to develop 1,000 new residential lots across the Yukon. Meeting the increased housing demands in the Yukon is not something that one government or organization can accomplish alone. We will continue to strengthen our partnerships and develop creative approaches to addressing the housing demand in the Yukon.

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

## QUESTION PERIOD

### Question re: Public sector growth

**Mr. Dixon:** The Liberals like to tout their record for growing the economy, but as we have seen, the main thing that they have grown is the public service and government spending. Since they have been in power, we have seen an unsustainable surge in the public sector, and we've seen the private sector shrink. The government's own stats bureau confirms this.

When the Liberals were sworn into office in December 2016, there were 8,600 public sector employees, 9,400 private sector employees, and 3,500 self-employed. Just last month, in March 2022, there were a staggering 10,400 public sector employees, 9,000 private sector employees, and 3,200 self-employed. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker. Since the Liberals have been in power, the public sector employment has exploded and the private sector employment has shrunk.

When will the Liberal government get this rampant growth of government in check and stop the unsustainable growth of the public service?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Of course, the overall Yukon economy has rebounded from the COVID-19 economic shock faster than any other Canadian jurisdiction. I think some key points that I'll share with Yukoners today — Statistics Canada, of course — our GDP numbers show that Yukon's economy grew at a blistering 5.2 percent in 2020 while Canada's GDP shrank overall across the country. Then Yukon's economic growth rate is by far the fastest in the country.

So, I think that part of the dialogue we've had — two weeks ago and then again today — is: Why is the Yukon's economy growing? I think there's a difference of opinion. The biggest driver is exports, specifically mineral exports. Exports grew strongly in 2020 despite difficult COVID situations, and there are still pressures on tourism.

A close second — the next driver is investment in infrastructure, roads, bridges, and schools. Residential construction also contributed roughly the same growth rate as anything within government. Statistics Canada says that Yukon's expenditure-based GDP growth in 2020 was attributed to year-over-year growth from 2019 to 2020. I think it's important — the numbers: 18.5 percent exports and goods and 18.6 percent on investment in infrastructure. That's why we're growing, not based on what —

**Mr. Dixon:** We have no doubt that the economy has grown, but it has grown because of government spending and government employment. We've seen that in the numbers. The fact is that there are 1,800 more public sector employees than there were when the Liberals got started, and there are 700 fewer private sector employees than there were when the Liberals started.

As well as inflating the public service, the Liberals have set new records for government spending. This record spending has thrown fuel on the flames of inflation and helped to drive the cost of living through the roof for Yukoners. Here is what one local economist wrote in the *Yukon News* — quote: "Budgetpalooza 2022 will stimulate an already stimulated economy. There is a cliché among economists that the job of a prudent central banker is to take away the punchbowl just as the economic party is getting started. This budget is more like the Redbull truck pulling up at a frat house on Friday night."

The fact is that the Liberals' spending and unsustainable growth of the government is choking out the private sector. When will the Liberals get out of the way of Yukon businesses and let the private sector lead the economic recovery that this territory needs?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** What I think that we do know is that, first of all, when we talk about expenditures in infrastructure in the territory, who we look to is the private sector. The private sector is who builds our infrastructure and they do it very well.

So, if we want to look at just general hiring, staffing, and O&M for government, that's 6.6 percent of growth. So, no, it's not driving growth. What's driving growth is the 18.5 percent in exports coming from things such as the mineral industry, 18.3 percent in general — I mean, the members opposite might not want to agree with this, but this is Statistics Canada. If they have been looking at the statistics, those are the numbers that were given and that's what has been put out. They can reach out to our stats branch too. Again, 18.3 percent general government growth — again, infrastructure. That's the roads being built and the schools being built; that's the work that we're doing.

Again, when we talk about building new homes, we have 6.2 percent in residential structures. So, again, I think — you know, these are the numbers. I guess you can interpret them in a different way.

Have we hired more staff? Yes. We talked about this before. Do we need more staff from time to time? Yes.

We had long-term care with no HR plan. Yes, we hired 150 people to look after folks. If we saw the stats out today, we know that we have to make sure that we're investing in our seniors. We're doing that.

Are we improving our infrastructure? Yes. Is the private sector doing it? Yes. Those are the numbers.

**Mr. Dixon:** The minister has just shown how out of touch with reality he is. Everyone except the Liberals acknowledges that they have grown the government at the expense of the private sector. The stats from the Yukon bureau make this clear. The public sector employment has grown; private sector employment has shrunk under their watch. Earlier this year, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce told the Premier that the Liberals' policies, actions, and proposals felt like they were being kicked while they were down.

Here's another quote from local economist Keith Halliday: "The risk is a spiral where ever-bigger government crowds a shrinking private sector, especially at a time when inflation is already at a 30-year high. This increases our reliance on federal cash, and sets us up for serious pain if there is ever a financial crisis or change of priorities in Ottawa."

When will the Liberals stop crowding out the private sector and start letting Yukon businesses lead the way toward economic recovery?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I did touch — I mean, these are the current numbers from StatsCan. I don't know what else to say than that.

We, again, have had five years of very strong growth. Again, when we look at what has happened, we're seeing our exports driving our growth. Again, I think the argument that was posed, as I had heard it, was that the growth in the economy is coming from the private sector. That theory that is being posed by the Leader of the Official Opposition is fundamentally incorrect, based on Statistics Canada. Let's get that out of the way.

If we go through — what we also can see is that — we look at our GDP — growth leading the country. If we talk about our labour market, what we're hearing right now, again, is strong growth. We need more workers. Yes, we do.

We have listened to the private sector. That's why we moved the labour market unit over to Economic Development and we are focused on that. We have seen record budgets come for lot development and investment in housing. We are seeing that. We are listening, and we are doing that good work.

Then, when you get into things like retail sales — again, we have just seen growth in retail sales in the private sector. We've seen growth in wholesale sales. Again, these are the numbers that we have been provided. I think it shows a good picture. Almost any province or territory in this country would say we are in a very enviable position and we will continue to do the good work and continue to support the private sector.

#### Question re: Fuel prices

**Mr. Istchenko:** There is no better example of the high cost of living that Yukoners are facing than our fuel prices. Last

week, Yukon statistics put out their fuel price survey and it paints a very scary picture for Yukoners. The year-over-year increase in the price of gasoline is almost 29 percent. For diesel fuel, it is over 40 percent. This affects all Yukoners, but especially those in rural Yukon. The best tool the government could use to address this to cut the fuel tax. Unfortunately, the Premier has dismissed this as a parlour trick.

When will the Liberals actually take action to help Yukoners with the rising cost of fuel?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will make sure to send *Our Clean Future* over to the member opposite. This is a whole strategy we have about moving off fossil fuels, reducing our dependency on fossil fuels, and moving to a renewable, green future. There is a conference happening right now at the Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre called “Renewables in Remote Communities” where people have gathered from across the country to talk about how to move forward with renewables. They chose the Yukon because they felt it was a really good example of a strong path forward — so, thank you for that.

We put out a rebate for our electricity rates for three months. We are working with ATCO to take the next step. I hope to hear from them shortly. There are ways in which we are working, but overall, our main message is to help Yukoners reduce their dependency on fossil fuels. That way, when the markets shift and fluctuate like they have been, we just see less impact. That’s the way in which we are going to work to support Yukoners.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I’m not sure if the minister realizes it or not, but there is no option for rural Yukoners when they need to travel to Whitehorse. They need to buy fuel for some of the services that they need to get. The simple fact is that Yukoners are facing a cost-of-living crisis. Fuel is through the roof; food prices are increasing. We have continually asked the Liberal government to take action, but they have continued to stick their heads in the sand. All they have been able to come up with is \$50 a month for three months.

We proposed doubling the homeowners grant for seniors and doubling the pioneer utility grant. In response, the Premier shrugged his shoulders and said that is just “parlour tricks”.

So, when will the Liberals finally take action to help seniors with the rising cost of living?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** As the Yukon Party cherry-picks stats from our government’s statistics branches, we have been very conscientious of the effects of the rising inflation — and families have taken to protect their finances. We have done it for four budgets in a row, and we are going to continue to do it on the fifth one today.

So, again, making sure that Yukoners mitigate the financial impacts of everything from fighting climate change to international conflicts that are happening — that is absolutely what we are doing. We have mentioned many different things, but the members opposite won’t listen to the things that we have talked about — significant investments in housing and in lot development. We just talked about that today. Historic investments in early learning and childcare — the members opposite don’t want to hear it. We have talked about what is included in the 2022-23 budget, but we also talked about what

is not included in that budget — no increased taxes. We have actually reduced the business taxes from when the Yukon Party was in — reduced it from when the Yukon Party was in. We have also not increased the fees, either.

Again, as far as our budget goes —

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

### Speaker’s statement

**Speaker:** Order, please.

I am having a hard time hearing the member speaking.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, they don’t want to hear the answers. They clearly don’t want to hear the answers because they think, again —

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

### Point of order

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

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Under Standing Order 19(g), it says that we should not, in this House, suggest that people are not being honest. The Leader of the Official Opposition, the Leader of the Yukon Party, just stood up and said “That is not true” and said it loud enough that we can all hear it.

So, Mr. Speaker, I ask that this remark — off-mic as it is — be withdrawn.

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

**Mr. Cathers:** The Standing Orders are typically understood as covering remarks that a member actually makes when they are speaking and recognized to speak, not what the member thinks he heard off-mic.

### Speaker’s ruling

**Speaker:** Order, please.

Members should temper their remarks on or off the mic during debate.

Hon. Premier, please continue.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we won’t want folks to do is to go back to the time when the Yukon Party was in power. We were in a recession. Mining companies were leaving, and the relationships with First Nations were abysmal. Again, this government is making sure that we are moving forward on all of our commitments, including making lives more affordable for Yukoners. Members opposite are feeling dismayed because we didn’t take them up on their offer to do one thing: to reduce the lowest taxed fuel in Canada. We will do all of the other things that we mentioned instead.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are facing record levels of inflation and the cost of living. All the Premier has been able to come up with is giving Yukoners \$150 of their own money. He’s dismissed our proposal to cut the fuel tax or the insurance tax and to double the homeowners grant for seniors. The Liberals even said no to doubling the pioneer

utility grant. This shows how out of touch the Liberals are with the challenges facing Yukoners, especially our rural Yukoners.

When will this government finally take action to address the cost-of-living crisis facing Yukoners?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** We're going to have to go back and take a look, Mr. Speaker, at the pioneer utility grant and how the members opposite reduced that amount.

But for the record, we just started —

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** That is true; that is absolutely true. So, again, we have to take a look at what we were just saying. The member opposite sticks to his notes, but he didn't hear every single thing that I just mentioned about making lives more affordable. I'll continue.

He did mention that we did add a new inflation rebate — a relief rebate to reduce impacts of rising prices that are on Yukoners, for sure. That rebate offers a \$50 credit each month for three months to all of the government, residential, and commercial electricity bills. Although the electric rates in the Yukon remain the lowest in the north, this rebate is in addition to the existing interim electric rebate for residential customers, which already saves Yukoners up to \$270 per year.

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

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Members opposite are wooing as we try to be respectful in the Legislative Assembly. Clearly, across the way, they don't like when they hear the comparison to the record.

What we also won't do is go back to a time where the Yukon Party would promise to build a certain amount of capital assets and then we would have to wait for the Public Accounts later on to see how abysmal their track record was of actually getting the job done.

#### **Question re: Homebuyer and tenancy advocacy**

**Ms. Tredger:** When it comes to housing, this government likes to think it's all up to the market and supply and demand, but in fact, there are laws and regulations that can either help or make things worse. One of the issues at play with the housing crisis is the way we sell homes. The practice here is that all real estate agents in the Yukon must represent the seller, never the buyer. This means every agent is obligated to get the highest possible price for the home. It's driving up prices, and the legislation does nothing to prevent this. Buyers are just out of luck.

If the minister wants to help people afford a home, he can start by bringing the real estate profession in line with modern standards. Will the minister improve transparency for homebuyers and introduce buyer-agency regulations in the Yukon?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the member opposite for the question this afternoon. What we are talking about is housing affordability, and this government is firing on all cylinders to get homes and lots into Yukoners' hands as quickly and as affordably as possible. That is what we talked about just moments ago in my ministerial statement. I know that my colleagues in Energy, Mines and Resources and the Yukon Housing Corporation also have a number of projects that they

are forwarding to try to make sure that Yukoners have the housing.

We have talked about the growth in the economy. It is growing very, very fast and so is our lot development. Our lot development and housing are growing at a six-percent rate, as my colleague from the Department of Economic Development just recounted a few moments ago. The reality, though, is that we inherited a lot deficit because of the inaction and the inability of the previous government, the Yukon Party government, to get the job done. We have been working to dig ourselves out of that deficit since we took office, and we are going to continue to do that hard work.

The member opposite brought up legislative changes. I am more than happy to look at legislative changes to make sure that we get lot prices and housing prices down. That takes a long time, but we will take a look at that option.

**Ms. Tredger:** Well, lots are great for the people who can buy them, but let's remember that we have had entire new neighbourhoods in the last 10 years and the housing crisis is still very much a problem. It's not just real estate that is under-regulated; Yukon tenants have some of the weakest protections in the country.

The Yukon Party's *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* has proven to be toothless when it comes to protecting tenants. In their six years of government, the Liberals have refused to even review it. Tenants are still vulnerable and protections are few and far between. By doing nothing, the minister is making it clear that he isn't interested in protecting tenants.

Why won't the minister review the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* to ensure better protections for tenants?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I have not said at any time that I am not interested in taking a look at that piece of legislation. We have a very heavy legislative agenda, as the member opposite knows. We have just come through a pandemic. We are looking at our legislative agenda.

I have endeavoured to work with the Department of Community Services to streamline and refine the processes at the residential tenancies office that we run out of CS. We are more than happy to look at ways to make sure that Yukoners are better protected, but a legislative review of the type that the member opposite is talking about — as she well knows, because we have spoken about it — takes years. We'll have to reconcile that process; it's not going to be a quick fix.

In the meantime, we have a lot of short-term efforts that we're doing to make sure that we get more lots into Yukoners' hands, that we get more rental suites available to Yukoners, and that we get more condos and more houses available for Yukoners. We're going to continue to do that work, and we're also going to look at — as I said just moments ago, I have no problem having a look at legislation. We have to fit it into our agenda and it's not going to be a quick fix.

**Ms. Tredger:** Well, the minister says that it takes years to review legislation. They have had six and they haven't even gotten started.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* is outdated in so many ways. In 11 of 13 Canadian jurisdictions, tenants are protected from being evicted without a reason. From BC to PEI,

landlords have to provide a cause before they evict a tenant, but not in the Yukon.

Things are so bad that the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition put forward a petition last fall demanding that this Liberal government end evictions without cause. Again, the minister did nothing. Over and over again, this minister has chosen to do nothing. This government seems happy to turn a blind eye when it comes to protecting Yukon renters.

Will the minister finally protect Yukon tenants and end no-cause evictions?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** We hear the concerns from tenants, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, and others regarding no-cause evictions. As a matter of fact, I was just talking to a constituent this morning on this very issue. This issue has been brought to the forefront in the current rental housing market in the context of the rental index, and we appreciate the range of perspectives on this matter.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was drafted at a time to balance the needs and the rights of landlords and tenants alike, outlining a process to end a tenancy either with cause or without cause. Making a change to how a landlord or a tenant can end a tenancy would require a change in the law. This takes time, as I said earlier. It could take up to three years or longer depending on how much work is involved in doing the legislation. It also takes consultation with landlords.

We know the members opposite give short shrift to consultation. We need to consult with landlords and tenants. We need to consider how to rebalance the rights of both parties while also clarifying how either party could end a tenancy arrangement. Our team is reviewing the landlord and tenant regimes in place across the country and is exploring options to inform future consideration and decisions in the context of Yukon laws.

#### **Question re: Affordable housing and land development**

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

The average cost of a single detached home has skyrocketed from \$420,000 at the end of 2016 to at least \$647,000 at the end of last year.

That is a \$227,000 increase to the average cost of a home in Whitehorse in just five years. That is outrageous. As a result, many Yukoners have come to realize that home ownership is completely unattainable.

What is the government doing to address this affordability crisis?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Just before we get into specific programs within this jurisdiction, I think that it is important to note that we are talking about something that is happening at a national level, if not internationally, right now. I appreciate the fact that there have been some numbers that have projected or sort of defined what the growth has been in the last five years, but, again, we have seen growth across this country. It is something that many are tackling. It's part of the national housing strategy that we are working on. It is part of the bilateral agreements that we have in place and some of the funding that we see coming to the Yukon. That funding, of

course, is being put toward helping approximately 1,000 households at this particular time through programs such as our community housing programs. That is rent geared to income where we provide, in some cases, up to \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800. At this time, within our support programs, we do not have any wait-list.

The Canada-Yukon housing benefit and programs such as that — what are we doing? First, we heard earlier today the ministerial statement talk about very extensive investment into lots — \$30 million this year. We are seeing unprecedented investment into affordable housing — \$46 million.

What I did was that I went back and I looked over the last 10 years, and what I saw is that we are spending money on capital. Previously, it was spent on O&M and staffing. I think it needs to go into housing, and that's what we are doing to make things more affordable.

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

It is clear that what the government is doing is simply not working. In five years, the average cost of a home in Whitehorse increased by more than 54 percent. This has put many Yukoners on the brink as they are forced to take on massive debt just to own a home. A major contributor to the crisis is the fact that the government has been unable to keep up with the demand for land.

Will the government agree to identify new blocks of land for release to private developers to expedite housing development and keep up with demand?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that there may be a difference of opinion at least on one fact. The member opposite stated that, under this government, we did not keep up on lot development, but what I can say is that, when you look at the increase in residential units and we take a look at that 12.1-percent increase in population over the last five years, the residential unit growth was actually at 12.9 percent. So, we have been having a lot of conversations today about pure statistics, so, yes, we did keep up. I think that is important to know.

I will leave the rest to Yukoners to figure out why we are still playing catch-up, but I will leave it at that.

Are we committed to supporting the private sector? Absolutely. Over the last number of years, we have had debates in this House. I certainly urge the member opposite to go back and take a look at Hansard to see some of the comments from her colleagues around their feelings around private land development. I think that we have been the first government to really move this and push that concept. We have a number of big blocks that are going out.

We are reconfiguring and going out to tender on 5<sup>th</sup> and Rogers. We believe that this is something that we should be doing.

We are working with the City of Whitehorse. We have led that discussion, and now the city is working hand in hand with us on a discussion around what is known in Whitehorse as the "tank farm".

So, I think there have been a lot of opportunities that have been in front of multiple governments, and we are going to seize that and we are going to continue to move it, and, yes, we are fully supportive of private sector development in this space.

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

The government can list off all the stats they want. The two statistics that matter are that, in 2016, the average cost of a house was \$420,000. By the end of 2021, that had increased to \$647,000. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals have been unable to address the housing crisis. We need more land developed and we need it developed faster. We know that a stumbling block is permitting and zoning and that municipalities are strapped for resources.

So, will the government agree to inject municipalities with emergency funding to help expedite the release of land and the development of housing?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** We are getting now to the root of it where, I guess, we are talking about lot development, and the members opposite wanted to know if we believed in residential, private sector development. We do.

I was shocked to hear the member opposite blame municipalities for the juggernaut — that is new — but I do believe that if you look at the federal budget for this year, what you will see is something called the “accelerator program”. That essentially is providing funding to municipalities across this country to enhance their human resources capacity within their planning departments. It is something that at least we have talked to the municipality about. We certainly will be urging to see that.

Again, I am shocked — at one point, it was us being blamed for what has happened, and then there were some numbers provided — nobody wants to hear the statistics, okay — and then from that we hear that it is the municipalities that are causing the problem.

So, look, we’ll talk to our municipal leaders. I don’t think that they are the problem. We’re all working together because we have immense growth. This growth has led the G7. Our economy is leading the country, and I think many jurisdictions are envious of this. I still understand and am empathetic to what people are going through, and we are going to focus on continuing to make sure that there are affordable options. We’re going to look at innovation, and that’s how we’re going to solve our problems.

#### **Question re: Faro community support services**

**Ms. McLeod:** On November 15 last year, the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin brought forward questions from the community of Faro about the mental health and counselling supports in that community in the wake of the tragic shooting. He asked for the government to agree to immediately put in place permanent mental health and counselling service supports in that community.

In response, the minister told the Legislature that there were already extensive supports available in Faro. Does the minister think that the current mental health and counselling supports in Faro are adequate?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am pleased to be able to speak to this situation today. The tragedy and the loss that occurred in the Town of Faro in October 2021 were truly felt across the territory. It has shaken both the community and the Yukon, and

it will have a lifetime of impact on those who were witnesses to that horrible tragedy and crime.

We have come together to support the Town of Faro and to provide the needed supports — first, initially, by responding to the community and then ultimately by continuing to serve the community of Faro and the individuals who need support there. As I have noted, I expect that it will be a lifetime of learning.

The community of Faro is served by the hub that’s located in Carmacks, and I can indicate that the counsellor is now assigned to the towns of Faro and Ross River. There was a separate counsellor available at the Carmacks mental wellness and substance use hub, and I look forward to continuing to outline the services available.

**Ms. McLeod:** Residents of Faro have yet again raised serious concerns about the lack of support for that community in response to the tragedy that occurred last year.

This is despite the fact that the minister and Premier both promised to expand and improve those services. So, what supports have been put in place in Faro to help the community recover from last fall’s tragedy?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Perhaps the member opposite didn’t hear. The hub that is located in the town of Carmacks services a number of communities in that area. Services delivered to communities include rapid access counselling, ongoing one-on-one counselling, group counselling and workshops, as well as support work, outreach, and harm reduction services. I should also note that the Office of the Auditor General last year reviewed the mental health services in rural Yukon. A positive review was noted by the Auditor General for the concept of the hub services — the increase from only two mental health workers in all of the territory to now having five hubs provide service across the territory.

The Auditor General also included a recommendation to complete and implement a recruitment and retention strategy. I am happy to say that is also underway. I look forward to the opportunity to note that another counsellor has been recently hired for the Carmacks mental wellness substance use hub, which will allow one of the counsellors to support specifically Faro and Ross River and the second counsellor to support the Carmacks and Pelly Crossing communities.

**Ms. McLeod:** I’m going to remind the minister that Carmacks is not a suburb of Faro.

An e-mail sent to the Premier and minister last year from a resident in Faro about lack of services in that community said — quote: “There are no supports ... for victims of domestic abuse.”

Now, today, we hear similar comments from residents of Faro in the media. What steps, if any, has the minister taken to improve supports for victims of domestic abuse in Faro?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The tragedy and the crime that was committed in Faro back in October 2021 was truly felt across the territory. I can indicate that it was particularly difficult for those of us who have worked in the area of domestic violence for some 30-plus years. We have added an additional counsellor to the mental wellness hub in Carmacks, which serves the towns of Faro, Ross River, Pelly Crossing, and Carmacks.



I think the flippant comment about geography in the territory is completely unwarranted. We're talking about serious matters here. We're talking about mental wellness and victim services for individuals who have been through a tragedy like no other.

The Canadian Mental Health Association, Victim Services, and the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services unit continue to provide supports in the Town of Faro. We recognize that this will be a lifetime impact with respect to how the individuals in the Town of Faro, and other places in the Yukon who experience domestic violence and the horrible crime that it is, will need support long term. We will continue to do that.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

### Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private members wish to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole this afternoon to provide relief to the Chair.

*Member for Copperbelt South and Member for Porter Creek Centre rise*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Acting Chair (Mr. Kent):** Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Acting Chair:** The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity

Directorate, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

### Women and Gender Equity Directorate

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would like to first, of course, welcome our officials to the Legislative Assembly — our deputy minister responsible, Nicole Morgan, and our director, Hillary Aitken. Thank you for coming to assist us in the debate today.

Today, I am happy to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate budget for the 2022-23 year. This budget is reflective of the work of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and the work that we undertake with our partners in order to advance equality of all genders and sexual orientations throughout the Yukon.

This represents the first budget since we updated the name and formal mandate of the directorate in the fall of 2021. The work of the directorate has kept women's equality at the heart of what we do and continues to strengthen the breadth and depth of our work to reflect equality of all genders and sexual orientations and the unique intersectionality of these identities.

The Women and Gender Equity Directorate seeks to advance equality through three main mechanisms: first, by conducting policy development and research internal to government and by integrating gender-inclusive diversity analysis — or GBA+ — within Government of Yukon; second, through strategic leadership of interdepartmental initiatives, like SART, the sexualized assault response team, the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, and Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ strategy; and third, through financial and programming support to partners or projects that seek to advance equality.

Our government is committed to furthering the equality of all Yukoners and ensuring that we all have the opportunity to lead healthy, safe, and fulfilling lives. The work of the small team at the Women and Gender Equity Directorate represents key projects to advance equality in the territory. I would like to begin by highlighting some of those key objectives and recent successes.

An important mandate commitment that I have talked about several times in the House already is our commitment to LGBTQ2S+ inclusion. This coming summer, we will be marking one year since the release of the Government of Yukon's LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan. This will provide an opportunity to review the plan and progress internally. In year 2, we plan to return to the community to make sure we are still on track and to adjust as needed. The action plan paves a path forward to end discrimination and improve inclusivity, both within Government of Yukon services and within the territory as a whole.

It includes over 100 action items representing programs and services in several key departments across governments. This year, we are adding one FTE to the directorate in order to provide additional support, research, engagement, and collaboration for this action plan.

We are also pleased to be providing funding to Queer Yukon Society for Yukon's very first Pride Centre, which has long been a priority for the LGBTQ2S+ community and is one of the major goals outlined in the *Inclusion Action Plan*. This year, we are providing \$425,000 to Queer Yukon Society to support this work. The Pride Centre will serve the LGBTQ2S+ community, which has experienced discrimination and systemic barriers for far too long.

Queer Yukon Society is currently in the process of seeking community input and further navigating COVID protocols before they can open safely to the public. We are committed to the vision of a Yukon that is a place where everyone feels safe, welcomed, valued, and celebrated. This is meaningful work, and I believe that it will help create more equitable programs, services, and workplaces for citizens who have faced barriers for far too long.

Moving on, I want to highlight the work that has gone into the next steps of the Yukon's missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people strategy. The Government of Yukon is committed, of course, to taking action to address the crisis in missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people. We will continue to do this work in partnership with First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, RCMP, communities, and, most importantly, the families and survivors.

The Yukon's strategy is a long-term, whole-of-Yukon approach. It outlines 31 actions and four main paths: strengthening connections and support, education and economic empowerment, community safety and justice, and community dialogue and action. The Yukon advisory committee on MMIWG2S+ has worked with a technical working group to write the implementation framework for Yukon's strategy, which will provide more details to the 31 action items in the strategy.

This fiscal year, we are providing \$285,000 in funding for the Yukon missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit+ people strategy, which is as follows: \$100,000 for research in support on updating the record of those lost; \$150,000 for the Yukon MMIWG2S+ strategy forum, including a transfer payment agreement with an NGO to coordinate involvement of family members of MMIWG2S+ folks; and \$35,000 to support the ongoing work of the Yukon advisory committee on MMIWG2S+.

The Government of Yukon had planned to host an accountability forum in February for partners and signatories and family members, but this event had to be postponed and is now scheduled for May 18 and 19. At the time, the postponement was really due to the impacts of the then-Omicron variant that was causing further restrictions in our community. We remain committed to doing this work differently in the spirit of decolonization and reconciliation. This means that it will take time. I'm very committed to, of course, continuing that work in a good way.

Another initiative that supports the increased needs due to COVID-19 is the sexualized assault response team. As many of us know, the Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. The vast majority of assaults are not

reported to the police. Since SART was launched in Whitehorse in March of 2020, we have worked hard to increase coordination of existing services, while also building public awareness of new services for victims of sexualized assault. New SART services in Whitehorse include weekend support workers, on-call specially trained medical care providers, and priority access to mental wellness care. Across the territory, any victim of sexualized violence can now access a 24/7 toll-free support line and a website with information and local resources. We have always known there is an even greater need for victim-centred collaborative services to be available outside of Whitehorse. This year, we are partnering with the Government of Canada to provide \$125,000 to support the planning for expansion of SART services.

As we plan how to expand SART services to communities beyond Whitehorse, we will work with community partners, including First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, and service providers in communities. I believe that working together to address the unique needs of communities is essential in moving forward. This is a principle in much of the work of the directorate and throughout Government of Yukon.

I wanted to speak a little bit about Sally & Sisters. They provide a critical service for so many women and children in our community. It has been in operation in Whitehorse for nearly 10 years, providing a safe and sober environment to meet emergency needs for food security. Just as important, it provides a place for women and children to access peer support, referrals to services, and navigation of services. Again, these are not luxuries; they are fundamental needs for many of our community members.

As the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, I'm so grateful for the grassroots work of local organizations that create and run programs like Sally & Sisters. We will continue to work with local equality-seeking organizations to increase accessibility to other sources of funding and to build opportunities for further collaboration. That is why I'm pleased that, this year, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate will be providing an increase of funding of \$143,000 to the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to continue the Sally & Sisters program. This will allow the program to operate four days a week.

I'm happy to be here today to speak about the important work that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate does on behalf of government and on behalf of Yukon. It has been a pleasure to be the minister in the last mandate and now this mandate. I'm happy to be here today to answer questions and have discussions with members in the opposition.

**Ms. Clarke:** I would like to thank the officials for being here today and for providing a thorough briefing for the opposition earlier in the Sitting. I do have a few questions for the minister regarding funding.

There has been much instability around funding for NGOs throughout the Yukon, and women's organizations are not immune from these pressures. We have heard a number of concerns from organizations that core funding needs, first of all, to be increased to enable them to adjust salaries and wages,

as many do not receive a salary or wage that reflects the work that they do. Some could also benefit from being able to fund additional positions.

Will the minister ensure that women's organizations are being properly resourced and advocate for multi-year predictable core funding from Health and Social Services?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I have just spoken about this, but I will say it again in terms of how grateful we are for the work that all equality-seeking organizations do in the Yukon to reduce gender-based violence and build safer communities. This past year has shown us both the critical importance of these services and the ability to be flexible in the face of changing community needs.

I think I will just start by stating that our budget for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — the majority of our budget goes to equality-seeking organizations. Our 2022-23 O&M budget estimate for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate is \$3,680,000. Out of that, this fiscal year, equality-seeking organizations are receiving a total of \$2,075,000 from the directorate.

As we continue to respond to the recovery from the pandemic, we recognize the increased demands for services and clear requests from NGOs for sustainable and appropriate long-term funding. We are committed to continuing this work with community partners and the Government of Canada.

There were additional funds that became available in 2021 to be disbursed over a five-year funding period that will also include capacity for indigenous women's groups and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations. In terms of a bit of a breakdown of the funding that we are providing and some small increases that we were able to provide this year, the women's equality fund is \$197,000 per year in ongoing operational funding for four non-indigenous women's organizations. That includes: the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, which right now is at \$55,000; the Yukon Status of Women Council at \$49,000; Women in Trades and Technology at \$49,000; and Les EssentiElles at \$44,000. We also have an indigenous equality fund that is \$600,000 in operational and capacity funding over three indigenous women's organizations. This is a new fund. It's a partnership between Yukon and Canada.

Plus, we do have the prevention of violence against aboriginal women — that's \$200,000. We have a women's community project funding that's \$10,000. These are small grants that folks can apply for, and we provide small amounts to those organizations for specific projects.

Of course, I take note — I know that there is a desire for women's equality-seeking groups to increase their operational funding. We've had several discussions with them — very hopeful and forward-looking with the release of the federal budget. We're still working out details in that regard. We are committed — and have worked at the national level — to endorse the gender-based violence national action plan and are still working on some of the aspects within that plan that pertain to the connection to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and populating that particular pillar within that strategy. I believe that it is going to be a huge focus for us in

the territory overall to work toward increased funding for the Yukon.

**Ms. Clarke:** Will the minister commit to reviewing the funding for the women's equality fund with the Status of Women Council to ensure that funding is adequate to the needs of women's equality fund recipients?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. Again, I am very committed to working with the equality-seeking groups. I have met with the groups that fall under the women's equality fund, and I certainly have heard the pressures that they have. I do not believe that I have all of the other numbers with me in terms of all of the other supports that come from other departments within Government of Yukon, but there are a number of partners who contribute to each of these organizations.

I know that it is a new, emerging area, but you will be hearing me speak about this a lot over this mandate because this is a new initiative. The gender-based violence national action plan is a very, very important national initiative at the federal level and throughout the provinces and territories. We have all supported this national action plan. There is also a national action plan on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and they are parallel to each other.

The funding that has been announced recently through the recent federal budget will flow through that action plan.

Specifically, on the indigenous side, that pillar that is within the national action plan will be informed by the needs on the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls side. Yukon is currently working to define what our needs are in the Yukon around that specific area within the national action plan. This is certainly a new approach for Canada and one that we welcome.

In much of the national action plan on both the gender-based violence and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, you will see similarities in Yukon's approach — to the approach that we took on our strategy on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. You will recognize some of the key areas within these strategies, including a declaration and commitment to ending violence against women and marginalized folks throughout Canada.

You will hear me speak about this a lot, and I look forward to bringing back more detailed information as it becomes available and as that work unfolds at the national level.

**Ms. Clarke:** The Yukon government uses the national consumer price index, or CPI, as a benchmark or key indicator for adjusting the cost of living. We have seen sharp increases in the cost of living, especially in recent months. What is the benchmark for NGOs such as women's organizations? How does the Yukon government adjust their funding to reflect increases to cost of living?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** We continue, of course, to respond as we move into recovery from the pandemic and certainly see our NGOs as an important service provider in areas where it makes sense for grassroots organizations to be providing direct services to folks and continue to be supportive of that. I have gone over the numbers in terms of what we have within women and gender equity.

I hear the member opposite speaking — and I've heard it a couple of times around core funding. We provide grants to organizations — ongoing toward operational funding. The specific question that I'll bring back in a legislative return to the member opposite — but I also want to note that we do have work going on within government that's being led by Economic Development around the needs and ongoing needs of the NGO community.

That work is underway and ongoing, and certainly the equality-seeking groups fit within that. We will be able to provide some more information from that work that is happening there as well, so I will commit to bringing back a return on the specific question that the member opposite has raised today.

**Ms. Clarke:** Just for the record, that question that will be answered later is: What is the benchmark for NGOs such as women's organizations, and how does the Yukon government adjust their funding to reflect increases to the cost of living? Thank you in advance.

My next question is on the sexualized assault response team. During the opposition briefing, we asked what the \$125,000 increase for SART was being used for. According to the written response that we received on this question, SART partners are working to determine the details of expanding the program to rural Yukon communities. This funding will continue the planning and begin implementation of expanded SART services.

I am hoping that the minister could confirm for me which staff positions SART is comprised of. I understand that the departments of Health and Social Services and of Justice and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate are old partners in SART, but I am wondering how many positions make up SART and which positions come from each department.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I am pleased to speak about the sexualized assault response team. It certainly has been a high priority for our government since the last mandate and this mandate as well. Since SART was launched in Whitehorse in March 2020, we have worked hard to increase coordination of existing services while also building public awareness of new services for victims of sexualized assault. Key components of SART include a 24-hour, confidential, toll-free, Yukon-wide support line for all victims of sexualized assault. Victim support workers are available during business hours during the week and all hours during the weekend in Whitehorse. A roster of on-call physicians at the Whitehorse General Hospital are specifically trained to support victims of sexualized assault, and rapid-access counselling at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services is available.

Maybe I will stop there for a second, and just before I move into that part about the expansion — we do have a full-time clinical coordinator with Health and Social Services. We have also a full-time victim support coordinator and a number of folks within Victim Services who provide the support that is needed during business hours, and then, as I have stated, we have after-hours and weekends that are covered in Whitehorse. Again, when you hear and listen and understand the makeup of this program — we have folks throughout the whole system

who are trained in their positions to provide specific services to victims of sexualized assault.

In terms of those on-call staff within Health and Social Services and Victim Services, I will return that exact number, but within the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, we do not have a person dedicated to the sexualized assault response team. Within our small unit, we have policy analysts, our director, and we have other folks who work to support the initiatives and the areas of priority for Government of Yukon, and that is how we spread that work out.

In terms of a higher level of oversight, a high priority for our government is the expansion of the sexualized assault response team, which is being led by the Department of Justice and supported by the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. This will be an expansion of services to communities beyond Whitehorse, and we will reach out and work with our community partners, including First Nation governments, indigenous women's organizations, and service providers in communities. Work to address the unique needs of communities is absolutely essential, moving forward.

I think that covers it, but I will return with that specific number the member opposite is looking for.

**Ms. Clarke:** I appreciate that answer. Thank you. Just for the record, the minister will return my question on how many positions make up SART and which positions come from each department. I thank the minister in advance.

I have a question regarding the website. I understand that the Indicators of Yukon Gender Equality website — that is [yukongenderequality.com](http://yukongenderequality.com) — has not been updated since 2018. This is quite concerning, as this is an important website that shares statistics, data, and other information with the public. Will the minister commit to updating this website so the public and women's organizations will be able to find up-to-date information and statistics?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thank you for the question. It's an important one. There is some history behind it, for sure, and I wanted to just make sure that I get this right.

The website that we're talking about here and the work that was done by the Women's Directorate at the time was done on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Women's Directorate, and it's hosted in an external website outside of yukon.ca, and I'll explain why. Right now, it's under [yukongenderequality.com](http://yukongenderequality.com). When Yukon government went through a rebranding, the website was not compatible with current Yukon government branding. All of that content is currently being migrated over to yukon.ca. So, that work is underway now. There have been some updates over the last few years, but once we get it into this new — under yukon.ca, it will be easier to update and also will become a more sustainable tool for Yukoners and will be fully updated at that time with the new statistics, because I do agree — I think that we need to have the data available to us to understand where our benchmarks have been, where they're going, and be able to compare year over year.

**Ms. Tredger:** I'm glad to be discussing this today. I want to thank the department officials for being here. I appreciated the briefing very much, and I appreciate having you here today.

I actually want to start by following up on my colleague's questions about the sexualized assault response team. I understand that the minister will be returning with information about who makes up that team. I'm wondering, when she does that, if she could include some information about those positions. So, I'm curious how many of them are permanent positions, how many of them are term positions, and how many are AOC. Particularly for the casual and AOC employees, I'm wondering if there are benefits available to them, which isn't typical for AOCs, but that's hard work they're doing, and I can't imagine trying to do that work without having access to counselling, for example. I'm wondering if there are benefits that are available to those people doing that work. So, that's for the return.

I also wanted to ask about the expansion. I don't think I quite understood what's happening. I believe it's \$125,000 to plan the expansion to the communities. Who is doing that work? Is that \$125,000 for a position in the department? Or is it going to external agencies that are going to do that planning work? I am hoping that the minister can let me know more about that.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. I will commit to adding those details to the legislative return regarding the positions and some of those finer details that we are being asked to provide. Again, if you go back and look at the mandate letters — this has been a high priority for three areas within government since taking office in 2016: Health and Social Services, Justice, and, at the time, the Women's Directorate and now the Women and Gender Equity Directorate continue to have the sexualized assault response team within our mandate letters, and now, to move into the expansion — Justice is the lead on this mandate item and takes support from Health and Social Services and Women and Gender Equity. We accessed the \$125,000 that you are asking about — we accessed that funding through Canada at the same time that we accessed funding for the increased resources for Sally & Sisters. It was a nationally based program.

The sexualized assault response team fits within the mandate that we have to expand to communities. It will not be a fund that will fund employees. It really is about engaging with our communities and engaging with our partners to determine the details of expanding the program to rural Yukon communities. We know that Yukon communities are all very different and that is what I heard loud and clear. I had a lot of discussions with folks in rural Yukon communities, particularly when we were doing the consultation and work around MMIWG. I spoke with all First Nations, all partners, and the sexualized assault response team and expansion into communities came up frequently. It is actually an action item within the MMIWG strategy for this expansion and continued support, because it is so vital that we provide this specific support.

We know that all Yukon communities are very unique and need to be treated as such. I think about one community in particular — Dawson — which said to not come and just do what you did. Whitehorse is a great model for Whitehorse, but it may not fit in Dawson, and this is why — and they described

the activities that they already have underway — SART-type services — and so we need a really specific response there.

That's what the \$125,000 will go toward, is that really community engagement. We know that we will take what we learned from the establishment of SART in Whitehorse, and of course, the 24/7 line does extend to all of Yukon, and so does the rapid access to mental health wellness and crisis counselling right now. So, there are services available to rural Yukon, and this will see more of that.

We know that there are three areas that we focus on, which is our justice system and legal response — including RCMP response, victim services, community response — and our clinical response, which is really how folks are provided service when they need medical attention. We have had a lot of focus on training and protocols and ensuring that we have folks specially trained to work with victims of sexualized violence.

We will take what we learned in Whitehorse and we will talk about that in the communities, but not have that agenda to just recreate that exact service and the way that it is done in Whitehorse in the communities, because they're all so unique. So, that's our intent — to do that work in a good way with our three departments — the two supporting Justice — to ensure that the work gets done in a timely manner but also in a thorough and right way.

**Ms. Tredger:** I completely agree about the need for consultation and making sure that there are models that work for the communities. I'm just trying to understand — and I'm not trying to make a point about how funding should or shouldn't be used; I'm just trying to understand where that \$125,000 is going to go, because it's not just staff. Is it going to a contractor to do the engagement? Is this department leading that engagement or will it be done by an external body?

I'm just trying to understand what that money is going to go toward.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the follow-up specific to the question you are asking. Those are really good questions. Our intent is to ensure that we are meeting the needs and uniqueness of each community. This will certainly include some travel to communities. It may very well include some contract work specific to a community. There will be work that will happen internally. The three departments — two of which are supporting and one is leading — are really determining some of those finer details right now, but I think that the main point is that our intent is really to ensure that we are expanding the sexualized assault response team approach into all of our communities in the best way possible.

We will remain committed to that and working with our partners and organizations within communities. As I said, using Dawson as an example, they certainly have a lot of work that is already underway there. We would want to ensure that we are working with them in the way that the community works and utilizing these additional resources from Canada in an effective way to ensure that we have, again, the right approach for each community.

So, this is a little bit of what you asked about in terms of what that will look like.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister. I am looking forward to seeing that work happen. It is an exciting project.

I would like to talk about the taxi survey and some of the concerns around taxi safety, particularly in Whitehorse. The final report made a number of recommendations to the territorial government. I would like to quote one of them — and I quote: “Several Yukon government departments negotiate and secure standing contracts with Whitehorse based taxi companies whose drivers transport vulnerable individuals. Given the prevalence of...” — gender-based violence — “... as reported presently, the Yukon Government has an obligation to review the criteria it uses when selecting taxi companies.”

Has any work been done to review the criteria this government is using to secure contracts with taxi companies? I am wondering what those criteria are and whether they consider metrics of social safety and gender-based violence.

One more follow-up would be, if that work is happening, I wonder about how that can be communicated to the people who are actually going to access those taxis, because they need to make a decision about whether it is going to be safe for them to access that service or not. Knowing what work is being done would be really helpful.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. I think that this is a really vitally important issue within our territory — something that has been talked about in a lot of different angles. I know that, prior to coming into the position that I'm in now — we flagged this at Kwanlin Dün years ago as an issue and really worked at that time with the city to make the changes that were required. I'm very happy that the work has been done to look deeper into this, because safe transportation has been a critical issue in our communities for decades. As I said, it certainly was an issue when I was a director of justice for Kwanlin Dün and it remains — fast-forward to today, I can certainly guarantee that I've had a lot of discussions with Chief Bill about this at Kwanlin Dün. The report recently released by the Yukon women's coalition reinforces that more work needs to be done to ensure that women and all Yukoners can get where they need to safely. I can tell you that previously, in my role as Minister of Tourism and Culture, this was a huge issue as well. We were welcoming the world and we need to make sure that folks can get to and from where they need to go safely when they visit our city. I am pleased to see, of course, that now the City of Whitehorse has taken action to improve taxi safety. We are currently continuing to review the report and recommendations related to Government of Yukon.

Again, there are a number of places where this is being discussed, but one in particular is the sexualized assault response team implementation committee. This includes the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, Justice, Health and Social Services, RCMP, the Crown, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, specifically through the First Nations Health Programs, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the transition home. It's a well-attended, very committed group of folks who are working around the response to sexual assault, safety, and violence in our territory overall. This is an area that they are looking at. We will continue to work with our partners around

what is needed in terms of the relationship to Government of Yukon.

I know that you're specifically talking about the contracts that we have with cab companies.

I'll probably just speak from an Education perspective for a second. We do provide transportation through the Department of Education from time to time and hold contracts with a cab company. We have recently changed cab companies. Again, our criteria, of course, is safety and well-being and following our policies around safety as we would with busing services or any others. We contract our bus services to Standard Bus. There are a number of policies and laws that it falls under and regulations and policies that come after that.

I may be able to give some specifics around that in a moment, but I'll also just speak about Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls strategy, which includes an action on providing safe transportation options. I continue to look forward to working with the City of Whitehorse and with the Yukon women's coalition and other partners on this. I know that this came up repeatedly during our consultation and work that we did on the strategy for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. It also was hand in hand with proper communication tools as well in our rural communities and access to cellular service throughout the territory. Those are all things that we will address in that particular action plan, but certainly it's something that we're well aware of. I'm happy that the work has been done to reinforce the assumptions that we had, and now they are reinforced through a report that we are absolutely working with.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, did I understand that there is a policy in place for — the minister compared it to the bus company. I assume that there is a policy in place that the bus company has to follow. Is there a policy in place that taxi companies have to follow if they are being contracted by the Yukon government? I would be really interested to know — and perhaps to see that policy.

I wonder if there are any plans particularly outside of Whitehorse when we are talking about safe transportation. This is an issue that we have highlighted lots of times about — you know, there is no public transportation for most of the rural communities to Whitehorse or to each other. That is a huge safety risk, and it leaves people in dangerous situations that they have no way out of.

So, I am wondering if there are any plans to look at other models of transportation, whether it is community bus programs to Whitehorse or safe ride programs. What kind of creative work is being done to try to make this a safer situation for people?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Again, transportation within rural communities and between communities is very important. I am speaking, of course, from the lens of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. As I have stated, we certainly have identified this as a gap in our services within our communities. “Transportation and Communication” is 2.8 in the MMIWGS2+ strategy: “Create safe and affordable transportation and communication options to and between Yukon communities.” Again, this is a Yukon-wide strategy, so

we are working with a lot of partners here — all levels of government.

There are a number of partners and contributors to this strategy that include all those levels of government, but when we're talking specifically about issues arising out of safety in regard to domestic violence or other safety issues within our communities, victims can access support through Victim Services by being in touch through phone, e-mail, or in person in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson or by setting up in-person meetings where Victim Services can travel to an individual's community. I know that's not specific to what you're asking, but I just wanted to frame this up a little bit in terms of access to Victim Services workers. They can certainly help with safety planning, protective orders, and accessing safe places to be, including transportation.

Victims of domestic violence and other forms of violence can access independent legal advice to assist in making informed choices, exploring options through Victim Services, and inclusive of safe transportation. All three Yukon transition homes provide transportation on a case-by-case basis, when operations allow. They do not receive funding from Government of Yukon to specifically cover this. These are areas that we want to cover in our action plan — well, implementation framework and plan on MMIWG and also the then more detailed action plans that will scope out what the possibilities are, but it is a high priority and one that I heard many times.

I certainly know from the work that I've done previously at the front line and working to support people in all sorts of situations that transportation is always an issue, especially since we do not have bus service in the Yukon any longer. When you look at that in relation to where the *Our Clean Future* plan is and those implications — and I'm sure the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and the Minister of Environment can speak more in-depth around that, but again, my voice and my lens right now is on women and gender equity and those who are marginalized and in need of services in the communities, so I will always be at that table with that voice and that lens.

In terms of — maybe I will just leave it at that for now and we can move into more clarity around where you want to go with this.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that answer. The one piece I was hoping for is that, if there is a policy currently — like a written policy that taxi companies have to follow — so perhaps the next time the minister is on her feet, she could answer that.

But I do want to ask a different question. So, in the minister's mandate letter, it talks about the department leading on gender-inclusive diversity analyses, and it says that this department will provide training, research, support, and analysis. I believe that is this department providing that. So, I am just trying to understand — when an analysis needs to be done, does this department go and do it for other departments? Do they provide support?

The other piece of that is that I don't think there have been any new positions in this department, if I am correct, to do that, so I am wondering how that is being managed in terms of

workload for the department staff. Are there other things that have had to be dropped, or where does the capacity for that come from?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. Yes, this is definitely one of our priority areas in terms of conducting policy development and research internal to government by integrating gender inclusivity and diversity analysis. Another way to describe it is GBA+ within Government of Yukon. It is one of our key priority areas. We do this support upon request. We certainly apply this lens over legislative considerations and policies.

Thanks for pointing out that it is within my mandate letter, but it is also in the Premier's mandate letter to the Executive Council Office and also the Public Service Commission — those other two key areas within government that have that widespread through government and definitely have that responsibility as well. So, it's looking broadly to all work of government so that we have that lens placed on all aspects of government and as we make decisions, and this is how we make good, informed decisions that really are inclusive of that intersectionality lens and have that view — definitely focusing, from the directorate's point of view, on building capacity.

We recently launched an online training earlier in February. This has been well-received — really good uptake. I think the best way to describe it is — as we look throughout government and as we start to really lay this blanket over and have this lens from many different angles — that there are already some huge champions of this within government, and we're looking eagerly to build more.

I think that when we take this approach and have that type of lens that looks at — and we're not only talking. When we talk about gender inclusivity and diversity, diversity is from all aspects — so really looking at it from other views, like from a First Nation lens, from a francophone lens, from a Filipino lens, or from a Chinese or multi-cultural lens. When we work to find what would work for the Yukon, expanding it into that diversity was really important. It's not only from a gender lens; it's from all those other ways that we intersect.

It's really important and vital work, and it takes time to change culture within a mainstream government, but it's certainly an area that we are very committed to. I look forward to this having that really broad-reaching blanket over the work that we do.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. I am really glad to hear that work is happening in an intersectional way. I do think it's very important. I guess the point that I would like to make is that work like that is work. If it means resources, I would be more than happy to support a budget that provided more resources to that if it's needed.

The last thing that I want to comment on is — I want to go back to the minister's conversation with my colleague for Porter Creek Centre about core funding for Yukon women's organizations. I know that the minister and my colleague went back and forth, so I don't really have any additional questions, but I do want to comment. The minister talked about grants that are provided to those organizations and that she is hoping that there will be money in the federal budget for those

organizations, but hoping for grants is a really rough way to run an organization. Every grant is hours of work on applications. It is hours of work on reporting. It is hours of work to try to figure out which grant will pay for computers, which grant will pay for wages, and which grant will pay for winter tires for our vehicles. It is a lot of work to try to piece those things together. As my colleague pointed out, cost-of-living increases are real, and if organizations want to attract and retain qualified people, those people need to be supported. They need to have access to benefits and competitive wages, and that is very difficult to do out of grants. Suggesting that they wait for the federal budget is hoping that someone else will take care of it.

This is just my pitch for core funding — for core funding increases — and not making organizations jump through hoop after hoop to piece together grants and budgets, but just give them the money that they need to do the work.

With that, I will end my questions for today and give my thanks again to the officials. I look forward to debating this again soon.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for that final question. Our women's organizations are critical in creating a more equitable society. These organizations provide, as I said earlier today and many times, direct services to women, girls, and two-spirit and gender-diverse people.

They also contribute to research, advocacy, public education, and programming. It's important to have those diverse views — not always from a government view, but from other organizations. They hold us to account as well. I know that, because I have been in those positions myself, so I know. I actually really understand and have had these in-depth discussions with our equality-seeking groups right from the beginning of coming into office to look at ways of how we can work together and ensure that our funding goes further.

I know the world of having to apply for grants and contributions and creating projects to make things work for our communities. I did that for a lot of years — actually a couple of decades doing that very work, so I really truly understand the pressure that our organizations are under. That is why we have been meeting with our equality-seeking groups to look at ways forward.

Whatever resources we have direct access to, we have done whatever we can to really support — and this may sound very small, but in the 2022-23 budget — I know it's small, but it is significant because it shows us working to find ways to provide a little bit of extra where we can, and we have provided \$4,000 to \$5,000 each for the organizations. This was due to a lapse with one organization no longer accessing the women's equality fund. That's in the 2022-23 budget.

I note the member opposite talking about that we do not actually expect our organizations that are under the Women and Gender Equity to apply for the money. It is operational money, so the dollars that I had talked about earlier under each of these organizations — those are resources that go directly to them through a TPA, or a transfer payment agreement. As I have stated, we are increasing — not a lot, but up to \$5,000 for each of the organizations this year.

We will continue to work with our partners in Canada. They are an important partner. We are not just hopeful that we will get what we need in the Yukon. I think that I worked on that national plan at the national level. Our department has spent a lot of time working on identifying our needs in the Yukon and what would make a difference, so that is a new investment in eliminating gender-based violence in Canada. That is new. We have not had an action plan like that.

I am happy to have been a part of shaping that. We will continue to work with our federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues to make sure that this gets implemented the way in which it is intended, which does include investments into our communities. When we were working toward the early days of that national action plan, we finalized it during the pandemic because we did not want to sit idly while we were in this world pandemic. We continued the work, and I was really happy to be a signatory to it.

We will continue to work with our partners. I think that is one of the key things as well — to really have a strong partnership with the federal government so that they do not forget about the Yukon. I know that we have had a huge influence over some of the policy decisions that they have made, and we will continue to have that.

I note, as well, that all of our equality-seeking groups within the territory — whether they are indigenous women, non-indigenous women, or LGBTQ2S+ — have leveraged. We have provided funding, and that funding from the Government of Yukon has been leveraged with national funding for capacity development over the last several years since I have been in the position. A lot of those decisions were directly influenced by Yukon's model, which we proposed to the Government of Canada. We will continue to do that and find all avenues to ensure that our organizations have the funding that they need to do the important work and seeking the type of territory that we want to live in.

There has never been a more important time than now, as we are in the substance use emergency. We will work with the Minister of Health and Social Services in the lead of that action around that particular strategy going forward, along with a lot of other leaders in the Yukon. I look forward to connecting all of the dots here, connecting all of the plans and work that we have done and the work that still needs to be done and breathing life into these strategies that we have before us.

Thank you very much for the debate today. I think that the smaller departments or directorates often get sort of sidelined a little bit in the debate, and I think that it is vitally important that we are talking and having open discussions about these important topics because they mean a tremendous amount to Yukoners and particularly the most vulnerable — or among the most vulnerable — in our territory.

Thank you to our officials for being here today and assisting with the debate. I thank Nicole and Hillary for their hard work and for all of the staff who are behind the scenes doing this important work and to all of our partners who help us to do this work each and every day on behalf of those we represent.



**Acting Chair (Ms. Clarke):** Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate?

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

**Mr. Dixon:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

**Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried**

**Acting Chair:** The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

***On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures***

***Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,680,000 agreed to***

***On Capital Expenditures***

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

***Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,680,000 agreed to***

***Women and Gender Equity Directorate agreed to***

**Acting Chair:** The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Department of Education — *continued***

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I'm happy to be back again to have another opportunity to debate the Department of Education budget. I have not had a chance to debate yet with the critic for the Official Opposition, so I'm looking forward to that opportunity.

I would like to welcome back our Deputy Minister of Education, Nicole Morgan, and our director of Finance, Andrea McIntyre. Welcome. I will not make any further comments so that we can get into debate.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for her opening remarks. I would also like to welcome the officials here to support her today. I know that my colleague, the Leader of the Official Opposition, had some questions in previous debate for the minister in asking questions in my absence. I appreciate his work as well. I'm just going to jump right into a few topics. I know that we have limited time this afternoon.

The first issue that I'm looking to ask the minister some questions about is the Jack Hulland Elementary School. I'm looking for an update on what's happening there. We know that, last fall, there was a meeting with the minister — and, I believe, the deputy minister and staff — in October. Then, following up on November 12, the staff were offered an opportunity to have a confidential conversation with a third-party contractor to share concerns and were also able to use their professional development day on November 12 to complete the Working Mind training to support creating and maintaining a psychologically healthy and safe work place.

I'm looking for, I guess, an update on what has happened since. I understand that Grove Street school no longer has students in it. I'm just looking for some follow-up from the minister going back to those November meetings.

As well, I'm wondering if the minister can give us an update on if there has been any training for educators at Jack Hulland to help them better address classroom violence.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. I will work to give an update as to where we are with Jack Hulland and some of the issues that have arisen at the school. I definitely know how very serious this matter is and that children have the right to learn in a safe environment. We certainly have communicated the serious nature of this.

There are a number of investigations that are going on into the use of holds and restraints at the school from the onset of the investigation through direct communication with parents and guardians of Jack Hulland Elementary School, so I am confident in bringing forward information here today in Committee of the Whole, as we have been communicating with folks directly impacted throughout. We are continuing to fully cooperate with the RCMP investigation, which is still ongoing.

I will get a little bit more into where we are at, as we move through this part of the debate and today's discussion that we are having, but specifically, the member asked about training on November 12. This is training that was conducted with staff. It was entitled "The Working Mind — training on psychologically safe workplaces", so that did occur.

Also, on February 23 and 24, we were able to provide training and worked with a number of family members and parents. We have been working with a parents group, along with the school council. This was one of their high-priority areas — to provide the training on non-violent crisis intervention.

This, of course, is a huge step forward to ensuring school-wide, developmentally responsive — that there is an understanding and approach to responding to — tracking and preventing escalated behaviours in the workplace. That training happened on February 23 and 24. We were able to do it in two sessions so that we could accommodate families, so that we

could accommodate teachers and educators within the school and to cause the least amount of disruption. Again, we worked with the school council, and we worked with the families and parents group that has been formed to work with us on a number of priority areas. So, that has happened.

I am certain that the member opposite has more specific questions, so I may just wait for those questions to come before moving into some of the areas we are currently at.

**Mr. Kent:** Just a follow-up then with the minister. That February 23 and 24 — and I believe that she said it was training for non-violent crisis intervention — was that specific to Jack Hulland school, or was it broader among the education professionals in the territory?

Then, the final question that I have on Jack Hulland, at this point, is the issue with the administration. I know that, before Christmas when we talked about this, there was an acting principal or a principal in place at Jack Hulland who was splitting time between Jack Hulland and Elijah Smith Elementary School. So, I am wondering if that is still the case and what the plans are — if that is the plan going forward, or is there recruitment underway for a full-time principal at Jack Hulland for the upcoming school year?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** In terms of the non-violent crisis intervention training, this is a service of the Student Support Services for the Department of Education. It is a requirement for all schools, but the session on February 23 and 24 was specific to Jack Hulland. We had to make special arrangements with the school community to be able to fully accommodate the need and work to make sure that — because of the various challenges that we have had with COVID-19 and other challenges — we were accommodating the school and ensuring that everyone had access to that training in a timely manner and that full access was provided.

This particular session was actually facilitated by the Crisis Prevention Institute, which is an institution out of the United States, so it took some real coordinating — especially during the pandemic and some challenges around February and earlier — to make sure that we were able to bring them over within the current restrictions and all of the other challenges that we have had this year. We were able to provide that, and that was one of the highest priority areas that was identified by the parents group. We were very happy to be able to have that happen.

In terms of where we are at with the administration, families were informed on March 4 that the acting principal, Jeff Cressman, would be continuing to work with the school until the end of the school year. There is an open posting for the principal and active recruitment for a full-time permanent principal for the 2022-23 year.

In terms of other — there is a full-time vice-principal who was appointed for the remainder of the school year to provide additional administrative support. We now have Mr. Cressman working full time at Jack Hulland Elementary School until the end of the school year. He is no longer — until the end of this school year — splitting his time between Elijah Smith Elementary and Jack Hulland. He is there full time.

I know that the member wanted to move on in the questions, but I think it's important to note that the department

has received an initial report from the lawyer who was contracted to conduct a fact-finding review of all workplace risk assessments at the school — to further investigate the issues from a human resource management lens. That report is being reviewed now. Next steps will be determined from a human resource management lens.

I think it's also important to note that the child advocate's involvement in the matter is vital, and we certainly are working closely with her to ensure that we are always upholding the rights of children and youth. As I have stated already today, we are working to support the RCMP investigation, which is still ongoing.

There is more information to come. When that information is available, I will certainly bring it forward in a timely manner.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that update on what's happening at Jack Hulland. I'm just going to jump around here a little bit just given, as I mentioned, the time that we have left today.

I do have a couple of questions about the Whistle Bend school. When I look at the Yukon Liberal Party platform from last spring, during the 2021 election, it says that they would establish a Whistle Bend school council in the spring of 2021. We know that didn't happen. Then recently, everyone will know that school council elections concluded for the spring of 2022, and I don't believe that there was a Whistle Bend school council established after these most recent elections. I am hoping that the minister can give us an update on why this initial deadline of spring 2021, as promised in the platform last year, was missed and when we can expect that school council to be established.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. I had hoped that this question would come forward today, because I know that I brought information forward in Question Period indicating that we would have a May school council established for Whistle Bend. The school council attendance area will be under more assessment due to changes that have happened. We certainly intended to have a school council in place for this spring, but there are a number of developments that have happened — I will get into a little bit more about that — and particularly it involves the First Nation School Board and the dissolving of the attendance area for Takhini, but in terms of the Whistle Bend elementary school, we now are proposing to have this held alongside.

When we work to establish the First Nation School Board, we will hold this particular school council election at that time, and once established, they will have a role guiding the aspects of the school build and assume regular school council duties, such as hiring a principal and other key decision points.

Again, the Whitehorse Elementary School attendance area requires further refinement to reflect the First Nation School Board coming online, and establishing a new attendance area for the Whistle Bend school coincides with this work. The school councils for Takhini and Grey Mountain will remain in place until the day before — the current school councils will remain in place until the last day of the school year, at which point the Interim Governance Committee of the First Nation School Board will then take on the responsibility. There are

impacts on the attendance areas for a few schools, and so we need to sort that out, and then we will be in a position to establish this new school council alongside the election for the First Nation School Board.

**Mr. Kent:** Again, just going back to the platform commitment from last year made by the Liberals, it was to establish the Whistle Bend school council in the spring of 2021. We didn't get it done during the normal election cycle for school councils in the spring of 2022, which just concluded, and that is because there is additional work being done to the attendance area. So, I guess that I am looking for a little bit of clarity from the minister. When will that attendance area be set for the Whistle Bend school, and is there any sense — the minister mentioned Takhini school's attendance area being dissolved because they have chosen to join the First Nation School Board. Will the Whistle Bend school take in Takhini school for those families who don't wish to send their children to the Takhini school? I am just looking for some clarity.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I think maybe I will start with the timelines that have been pointed out. In the spring of 2021, we did not have school council elections, so it would have been impossible for us to meet that. This was due to COVID-19. That's why we moved it.

Yes, we had anticipated that we would have the school council established, and much has changed. Education is quite dynamic at this time.

Another item within my mandate letter was to establish a First Nation school board, which we did. At that time, there was no way — up until the referendum was done, we had no way of knowing which schools would establish under the First Nation School Board. In that process, Takhini Elementary School and Grey Mountain Primary School achieved a yes vote to come under the First Nation School Board. You can see that this then causes some changes there. We're now targeting the fall of 2022 to establish the Whistle Bend school council. I feel very confident that we will be able to achieve that and that we will have the first year of the First Nation School Board underway and have a better understanding of what the final enrolment will be there.

In terms of the establishment and how things will shift around in terms of the catchment area, I will first say that a ministerial order is required to establish the Whistle Bend elementary school attendance area. When signed, the attendance area, which previously included only the Whistle Bend neighbourhood — we had gone through that process to establish a Whistle Bend — which included that Whistle Bend neighbourhood. Now with the establishment and the changes that have happened with the First Nation School Board, we will now add parts of the former Takhini attendance area for students who will choose to go to a different school and potentially not the First Nation School Board school. A by-election process will be required to accept nominations and conduct an election if that's required.

The department is preparing the necessary documents for Cabinet for approval of the ministerial order to approve the attendance areas and the changes that will happen, including

making adjustments that reflect the schools governed by the First Nation School Board.

A by-election will happen in November to align with the First Nation School Board trustee elections conducted by Elections Yukon.

So that, I hope, covers the questions that the member opposite has. I am going back through the timeline to where some of these changes happened and why they happened.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister. We will monitor that situation, and hopefully, by the time we return for the Fall Sitting, there will be a school council in place for Whistle Bend.

I just have one quick question on the capital side of things. I know that Highways and Public Works is managing this project now on behalf of Education, but I just wanted to confirm that there is a design/build contract in place with a local firm. Can the minister confirm the total capital requirement for the project? I believe the number is \$25.18 million in this fiscal year and \$17.771 million in the 2023-24 fiscal year. I am just looking for some confirmation of those numbers that we have from briefing notes and the documents provided at the Education briefing.

I just wanted to step back again to the platform that the Liberals put out last spring saying that they would complete the construction of a new elementary school in Whistle Bend by 2023. However, as I said, the 2023-24 budget request is for just over \$17.7 million. Is that 2023 timeline still the goal, or are we looking at not opening the school until the fall of 2024?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** In terms of the capital, Ketz Construction has been awarded the design/build contract for \$42.8 million. We have \$25,180,000 in our budget for 2022-23. For the next fiscal year, we have forecasted \$17,771,000. That is what we have forecasted in our capital budget. I think that those were the two questions the member opposite had. If there is something else that is required, please let me know.

**Mr. Kent:** Just to confirm then, when looking at the Liberal platform from last year, they said: "Complete the construction of a new elementary school in Whistle Bend by 2023 and establish a Whistle Bend School Council in spring 2021." So, it seems that both of those commitments made last spring are late, if I'm understanding the minister correctly. Obviously, we have established that the school council wasn't put in place last year, but it sounds as though — I'm looking at the budget documents — the new elementary school will not be ready by 2023, so that will be a little bit later as well.

I do want to turn to some questions regarding Hidden Valley Elementary School. I am just curious if the minister can give us a sense — with respect to the additional supports for students, families, and staff and a lot of that, of course, is around counselling and mental wellness support. Can the minister give us an update of what is taking place at Hidden Valley?

I have just one other question. My understanding from my colleague, the Member for Lake Laberge, is that there was a virtual meeting — I believe that it was done via Zoom on November 9 — and there was a commitment to release the video from that meeting, but I understand that this hasn't been

done. I am curious if the minister can give us an update on that as well.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** I would like to just go back to the Whistle Bend school because I did miss that aspect of the question in terms of the completion of the project. Whistle Bend school is a key investment for our government, with construction scheduled to be completed during the 2023-24 school year. That's a commitment. We are looking forward to having that done, with the school council being in place in the fall of 2022 so that they can definitely be part of all of the key decisions in terms of normal school council functions.

Moving on to Hidden Valley — and I will go into the question about the November 9 meeting after I talk about where we're at with Hidden Valley.

I certainly want to start by saying that I continue to hold up the dedicated and sincere administration and staff who have been going beyond their usual responsibilities really to ensure that children feel connected, well-supported, and safe. There has been a considerable amount of work done. As the reports of the four reviews are delivered and more conversations about next steps continue, we need to always be mindful of the supports that students, staff, parents, and guardians may need. We are responsive to those needs on an ongoing basis. The staff at Hidden Valley school are working really hard to provide students with engaging learning opportunities, while still being very vigilant to monitor for students who may require support and connecting them with appropriate supports. The most effective way to always ensure students' safety is to educate children about consent rights and wrong touching and boundaries, who to tell when they are feeling unsafe and have been harmed. These topics are included in our physical and health education curriculum and are taught in the school.

In terms of follow-up meetings and working alongside families, I certainly heard families say that they wished to have a voice in the actions that will be undertaken in response to the reviews and the investigations; therefore, one of the responses, which is in our action plan, is to establish a parents committee to inform the work of the Government of Yukon. We are now actively in that process of establishing that. We have had a first meeting with the parents committee on April 19, and a number of parents expressed their interest in joining this committee to set the groundwork for how we will work together, including undertaking school-level actions to support healing and restorative activities, of course, always in concert with the administration and school council. We had a great first meeting on April 19. We are really committed to walking side by side on this path with parents and the school community, no matter how long this takes. That's always the commitment I've made and will continue to be there.

We're just in the process of finalizing terms of reference and then will be meeting with the school administration, school council, and the parents committee together so that we can ensure that we're all on the same page and that folks are in clear understanding of what the role will be of this parents committee and how it will work to support the work that is ongoing and the work still to come.

In terms of school staffing, the Department of Education school staffing committee considers all the formal requests to increase staffing supports from schools and to deploy staff appropriately and equitably across all schools. The Hidden Valley Elementary School staffing allotment was increased this year to support requests for additional school administration support and educational assistant support to provide additional direct supports to students and staff, which the school has not had in the past.

The Schools and Student Services branch officials continue to work with the school administration and council to assess the needs and assignments of teaching staff at the school. That work is ongoing.

In terms of additional support — and I did talk about this in our last debate that we had around education and additional supports to students, families, and staff. One of the things that I have stated many times is that my intent is always that no family or child will be left behind. Supports have been, and continue to be, available to families and staff, including on-demand support coordinated via the school community consultant, who can assist families who are seeking or who may have funding or who have been funding their own supports.

So, we really need to always ensure that we have all of the information so that we can support families appropriately. We work with each family individually and will work to find options that work for them. That is the commitment of the Department of Education and a very, very clear commitment from me as the minister.

The Department of Education works with partner departments that provide, free of charge, a variety of appropriate services to those in need. Supports have included, but are not limited to — and these are a few examples: referrals to other supports and services are being facilitated as needed, such as through Family and Children's Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, and Victim Services. An example of this is child and family rapid-access counselling, which is available, as well as long-term individual and group counselling support for children and their families. Of course, there is assistance with how to talk with children about abuse and how to support children's personal safety.

Mental Wellness and Substance Use facilitated six parent support evening sessions with the clinical counsellor and an outreach worker. This was held off-site to best accommodate the request and privacy of families. That has happened. We are always prepared to do more in that regard. The child and youth and family treatment team has been attending the school to monitor the needs of staff, students, and families, providing services to parents and families, and they have delivered sessions on resilience and socio-emotional skills for grade 5, 6, and 7 students. Supports have been and will continue to be provided to staff, including presentations on services and supports available to them, crisis counselling, services through LifeWorks, and information on broader employee and family assistance programs. I will wait to see if there are other questions in that regard in a moment.

I did table this, so I may just read it into the record. On March 31, I tabled a response because it came as Motion

No. 320, where, on March 15, the Member for Lake Laberge gave notice of the following motion:

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

There was a preamble, of course, to the motion that suggested that, as a minister, I was not following the law, including following the requirements of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. I definitely appreciate the opportunity today to provide further information and context.

The meeting recording being referenced contains third-party personal information. Therefore, we have provided opportunities upon request for individuals who attended the meeting to review the recording.

In response to an access to information request to receive a copy of the video, the Department of Education worked with the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner to ensure that we were meeting our legal obligations to individuals to access their personal information while protecting the personal information of third parties.

In a letter dated January 22, 2022, the Information and Privacy Commissioner’s office provided the following advice — and I quote: “Our analysis of the matter found that the Public Body had authority to withhold the record from the applicant under subsection 70(1) of the ATIPPA Act. However, to strike an appropriate balance between the applicant’s right of access to their own personal information and the protection of the third party’s personal privacy, we recommend that the Public Body allow the applicant to view the record at issue, without providing a copy.”

The Department of Education accepted this recommendation and notified the applicant of this. We extend this offer to anyone who attended the November 9, 2021 meeting who would like to view the video. Individuals can e-mail [publicschools@yukon.ca](mailto:publicschools@yukon.ca) to express their interest to coordinate a time to view the video.

I hope that covers it, but perhaps the member can advise if there is further information he would like me to cover in terms of Hidden Valley supports.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that. I will take a look at the Hansard tomorrow to see if there are any additional questions based on what the minister provided here today.

I want to move on and just ask a couple of questions with respect to the Education Appeal Tribunal. We have heard from a Yukoner who is looking to have a matter considered by the Education Appeal Tribunal, or EAT. However, they were informed that currently there is no chair appointed to that tribunal. That’s an appointment made by the Minister of Education.

Can the minister confirm if there is or is not a chair currently in place for the Education Appeal Tribunal? If not, when does she anticipate making that appointment?

Also, our understanding is that the secretary/registrar of that is a contracted position through Education, so I am curious

if the minister can let us know if that contract is current or if it needs to be renewed and then if she does have information on the number of outstanding cases that still need to go before the Education Appeal Tribunal.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. The Education Appeal Tribunal plays a really critical role in giving parents the ability to appeal education decisions such as a suspension or an individualized education plan that they may disagree with — so a very important body.

The Department of Education has received applications from members of the public who are interested in joining the tribunal. I am really pleased to announce, of course — and I did do this in a legislative return yesterday — that Janet Van Bibber, a current board member, has been appointed chair of the tribunal. She has had a number of terms with the tribunal. In addition, I have appointed four new members, bringing the total number of members to seven, including the chair and one Council of Yukon First Nations representative.

In terms of the contract for the position of secretary, which expired at the end of March — a replacement is being sought right now. The department has made a temporary arrangement for the secretary position until the role is filled. I really want to thank Deana Lemke for her years of service and support and for assisting us with this transition.

In terms of the number of cases that we have before the tribunal, we currently have two cases.

**Mr. Kent:** I thank the minister for that. I missed the legislative return that she tabled yesterday with respect to this, so I do thank her for providing that information yesterday and again here today.

In the number of minutes that we have left here, I have some questions regarding the First Nation School Board. In looking at the *Education Act*, section 174 is entitled “Annual operations and maintenance budget for School Board”. Then if you go down to 174(3)(c), it says that the minister shall “approve an annual operations and maintenance budget for each School Board on or before March 15 of each year subject to the regulations for grants and contributions to School Boards.”

I believe we have missed that deadline, obviously, so I am hoping that the minister can give us an update on when she would anticipate an annual O&M budget being in place for the newly established First Nation school board, which, I understand, will be starting operations with the new school year this fall.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Thanks for the question. Again, a huge milestone for the Yukon in terms of establishing a First Nation school board. It is quite a historic step to get to this place — really working within the laws that we have in the territory to realize, I think, the intended vision that the elders had almost 50 years ago when they worked toward *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*. It was quite a milestone to establish and sign some very key formal documents on the 49<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic document — *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

I worked hard with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the newly established First Nation School Board Interim

Governance Committee in the exercise of really working collaboratively to oversee the authorities. I want to just note that we knew that we had an incredible amount of work to do to meet the goal of having the First Nation School Board in place by the beginning and to be ready to operate the schools under their jurisdiction for the 2022-23 year, which is why we agreed to establish an interim governance committee to move forward with governance and funding arrangements.

The committee includes a number of very capable and highly regarded individuals who have a very solid track record in education within our territory. The Department of Education is working with this Interim Governance Committee to establish a preliminary funding formula and to address operational matters, such as registration and busing — particularly in Whitehorse, where parents will have the choice of where to send their children. This interim committee will negotiate the financial arrangement with the Department of Education and will take over the operation of the schools that fall under their authority at the start of the new school year.

The department has been meeting with technical representatives from the interim committee and have delivered a number of presentations on the budget process. They last met on April 19. All of this is to say, I think — just to establish that context around the work that is going on and the collaborative work that we are doing with the Interim Governance Committee, the Chiefs Committee on Education, and the technicians. Everyone is working collaboratively to get us through to be able to have all the pieces in place so that we have a seamless start to the school year.

We will have a one-year funding agreement in place that will support the schools under the First Nation School Board.

Going forward, we will have and will meet that March 15 timeline in terms of having a budget in place. I had my first experience as a minister to actually be part of that process with the CSFY and their funding arrangement this year. I had the opportunity to work through all of the details and be within that process. I think that we have had a lot of learning from CSFY and the establishment of the Francophone School Board, and that teaching is being applied as we go forward. There is some uniqueness, but it was a great experience to go through that with the Francophone School Board and to be in the process, and we look forward to having our First Nation School Board be as seamless as that going forward.

**Mr. Kent:** I have a follow-up question for the minister on that. She did mention that there would be O&M funding for the school board and then, going forward, we will meet the March 15 deadline that is spelled out in the legislation. She also, I believe, said that there may be additional funding for the schools themselves. I am assuming that there could be cost implications that may come forward this fall. Could I just get the minister to confirm that there may be additional resources dedicated to the schools themselves?

Also, I want to make sure that those schools that didn't choose to join the First Nation School Board will also receive additional resources that are in line with additional resources that are given to the schools that have chosen to join the First Nation School Board governance model.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** In terms of — I will just reiterate that we are working toward a one-year funding agreement — premature — the negotiations and work are ongoing right now, in terms of what will be in that funding agreement. Again, I think that we have learned a lot from the work that we have done with the CSFY and the Francophone School Board. What we do know is that we have staff allocations and certain aspects that are the same, and then there are things that are different. When you look at the — and I will give this as an example: There are a number of areas within the funding that we provide to the Francophone School Board that are based on certain and specific types and parameters around staffing allocation, and then the Francophone School Board has arrangements with Canada. They receive funds directly from Canada for the operation of their schools. So, that is an example of an area that is different.

Again, I cannot comment specifically on what will be in that first-year funding agreement, but I will absolutely be happy to bring the information back, as it becomes available. There is an incredibly aggressive agenda that the Interim Governance Committee and the Department of Education are working from to ensure that we are ready to transition these schools that are part of the First Nation School Board over to the First Nation School Board in our timeline.

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

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

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I move that the House do now adjourn.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier 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 5:28 p.m.*

**The following sessional papers were tabled April 27, 2022:**

35-1-48

*Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2020-21 Annual Report* (Speaker Harper)

35-1-49

*Second Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges* (April 2022) (Mostyn)

35-1-50

*Third Report of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges* (April 2022) (Mostyn)

**The following legislative returns were tabled April 27, 2022:**

35-1-50

Response to oral question from Ms. McLeod re: forestry industry (Streicker)

35-1-51

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: mining industry greenhouse gas reduction targets (Streicker)

35-1-52

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: mining legislation (Streicker)

35-1-53

Response to oral question from Mr. Dixon re: mining within municipal boundaries (Streicker)

35-1-54

Response to oral question from Mr. Istchenko re: land costs (Streicker)

35-1-55

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Yukon nominee program (Pillai)

35-1-56

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 7, Economic Development, in Bill No. 204, *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Yukon nominee program (Pillai)

35-1-57

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Dixon related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 203, *Third Appropriation Act 2021-22* — contractor engagement on Old Crow project (Clarke, N.)

**Written notice was given of the following motion respecting committee reports April 27, 2022:**

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 2

Re: concurrence in the *Third Report of Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges* (Mostyn)

**The following written question was tabled April 27, 2022**

Written Question No. 20

Re: full-time equivalents in 2016-17 budget year (Istchenko)







# Yukon Legislative Assembly

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Number 74

1st Session

35<sup>th</sup> Legislature

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## HANSARD

Thursday, April 28, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

# YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

## 2022 Spring Sitting

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

### CABINET MINISTERS

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

### OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

#### Yukon Party

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

### THIRD PARTY

#### New Democratic Party

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

### LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

**Yukon Legislative Assembly  
Whitehorse, Yukon  
Thursday, April 28, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

*Prayers*

**Speaker's statement in recognition of Brenda McCain-Armour's retirement**

**Speaker:** Today we mark the retirement of one of our own — Brenda McCain-Armour. In the gallery today, we have Brenda McCain-Armour's wife, Gail Armour; their daughter, Mikayla McCain; Brenda's mother, Marcia Seely; and from the Legislative Assembly, Lyndsey Amundson and Helen Fitzsimmons. Please join me in welcoming them.

Brenda McCain-Armour has announced her retirement, which will begin July 20, 2022. She will be on pre-retirement leave until January 3, 2023.

Brenda has had an interesting working life. She worked as a supervisor at the Gadzoosdaa student residence for the Department of Education from 1994 to 2006. During her term, she supervised 39 teenagers, developing strong relationships with the students and their families.

From 2003 to 2006, Brenda worked as a co-owner of Cozy Comforts Boarding Kennels. She was also a supervisor at the Canada Post Corporation from 2001 to 2008. Brenda and her partner, Gail, had a family business called the Armour Lawncare and Snow Removal company from 2010 and only recently began winding up their interest in this business this year in preparation for retirement.

Brenda was hired as the Assistant Chief Electoral Officer responsible for planning, organizing, and managing the conduct of elections of Members of the Legislative Assembly and of trustees of school boards and members of school councils. The person holding this position is denied the right to vote in elections conducted under either the *Elections Act* or the *Education Act*.

When Jo-Ann Waugh retired on March 28, 2013 as the Chief Electoral Officer, Brenda acted as the Chief Electoral Officer until August 11, 2014 when the new Chief Electoral Officer was appointed.

On March 23, 2015, Brenda started working with Helen as the operations manager. As March 23 is Helen's birthday, Helen said it was one of the best birthday presents she has received. During her term as operations manager, Brenda provided senior-level support to Helen for administrative, financial, human resources, and information management for the Legislative Assembly, the Elections Yukon office, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, Office of the Ombudsman, and Child and Youth Advocate Office.

The Legislative Assembly Office has a wide range of responsibilities with a small number of staff, and Brenda has always been willing to pitch in wherever needed. Brenda has always provided reliable customer service to all our stakeholders.

The Legislative Assembly, especially Helen, acknowledges the huge loss of a dedicated employee like Brenda. Our best wishes to Brenda and her family. Have fun in your new home in Invermere.

Brenda, we hope to see you from time to time on your many expected visits to the north.

*Applause*

**DAILY ROUTINE**

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

Introduction of visitors.

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS**

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I will just add regarding Brenda — she was the first person to tell me that there is no "Mr. Hansard". She was very kind in my first year.

In the gallery today is a young man who has a budding curiosity for government and policy. He is here with his mother, so I would ask the Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to help me welcome Jeffrey Sjodin and his mother, Kristin Young.

*Applause*

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Today we have a number of people in the House. There are some from the Special Olympics and some for the tribute for the National Day of Mourning today.

I would like to take a moment to welcome you all to the House, and I will ask my colleagues to do the same. There are so many of you today, if I miss anyone, my apologies up front. We do have friends and family here, and I do thank you so much for coming.

From Special Olympics, we have Anna Thompson, Frank Marnoch, Ernest Chua, Helen Slama, Leah Greenway, Scott Lillies, Mike Pare, Serge Michaud, Andrew Elines, Heather Menzies, Mikayla Duncan and, as I said, some friends and family from the Special Olympics.

I am going to continue just to go — we'll save it to the end. I have a few folks here from the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Compensation Board: Bruce Milligan and Kurt Dieckmann. I have had the honour to work with both these gentlemen. They have dedicated most of their lives to workplace safety and making sure our workplaces are safer. I would like everyone to give this entire group a rousing bout of applause.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues to join me in welcoming some guests to the gallery. We have from our office our chief of staff, Danny Macdonald. Accompanying Danny is McKenna Lyslo. McKenna is a very bright young Yukoner, who is a student at Dalhousie University. She has accepted a position in the Yukon Party caucus for the summer. Please welcome them to the gallery.

*Applause*

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming to the gallery a constituent who is here for the tribute to Brenda McCain-Armour — Amy Isles.

*Applause*

**Speaker:** Are there any tributes?

## TRIBUTES

### In recognition of the Day of Mourning

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize the Day of Mourning. The workplace is where many of us spend most of our time. It defines who we are as people and as citizens. It is a place that, for many, is always the same. It provides security, support, and a sense of belonging, but for some, a workplace injury or death may shatter that sense of identity and security.

Last year, 793 workers were injured on the job. Of those, 377 were serious enough that they lost time from work. These people are our co-workers, our friends, and our family — the people we love.

Last year, four workers died as a result of their job. I am pained by the fact that people still die in the Yukon simply because they went to work, and workers still suffer injuries on a daily basis. Every worker has the right to return home safe and sound at the end of each and every work day. By working together with employers, workers, and our health and safety partners, we can prevent worker injuries and deaths before they occur.

Our workplaces should empower us. They should be a place where we feel safe, respected, and supported, all the while being safe in the knowledge that there are systems in place to protect us so that we can be the best that we can be. Work and safety are, of course, complementary initiatives. Together they are stronger. I know this because I have seen how workplace health and safety practices are getting better year after year here in the Yukon.

In fact, this government recently passed legislation that provides a modern, cohesive framework with the primary goal of preventing workplace injuries and caring for injured workers. The *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* contributes to a safer, supportive workplace for all Yukoners, something that is critically important as we reflect on this Day of Mourning. Mr. Speaker, no one should lose their life at work.

So, I stand before you today to remember and honour those lives lost or injured due to a workplace tragedy, to collectively renew our commitment to improve health and safety in the workplace and prevent further injuries, illnesses, and death.

On this, the Day of Mourning, we remind ourselves that we can, we must, and we will work together to ensure that all workers come home to their families each and every day. I'm encouraged by the many Yukoners who were able to join me earlier today for the virtual Day of Mourning ceremony organized by the Yukon Federation of Labour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*Applause*

**Ms. McLeod:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to commemorate the national Day of Mourning in Canada.

The national Day of Mourning was established April 28, 1984 to remember those who have been injured, suffered illness, or lost their lives in the workplace. This date was chosen at the time because it coincided with the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the day that the first Ontario workers' compensation act was approved by government in 1914. It was enshrined in national legislation by an act of Parliament in February 1991.

Mr. Speaker, friends and family members are continuing to be hurt and killed as a result of accidents in the workplace. These are fellow Yukoners and these accidents affect all of us — families, coworkers, and entire communities. Going to work should mean being able to safely provide for yourselves, your families, without facing danger, without being injured, falling ill, or not making it home at all. The statistics are still much too high. That number on the sign counter outside of the Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety building is a reminder to all just how much work we have yet to do. Today it reads that 454 people were injured or killed on the job this year alone.

We stand here on this day in the House each year to talk about this issue, and somehow the number still rises. It doesn't take much for a workplace accident to occur — for any accident to occur. A momentary lapse in judgment, a poor decision, a distraction. Each year, we gather to remember and also to pledge to drive this number down. Health and safety regulations are in place for a reason.

They are an important part of every job, and following them is the responsibility of us all. Workplace accidents are entirely preventable, and we must never stop working to lower the statistics around workplace injury and death.

Thank you to all of those who continue to work safely and diligently and to work hard to keep their workplaces safe for their co-workers and the public. One of the best ways to honour and remember those who have been injured or killed in the workplace is to prevent more injuries and fatalities from happening.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon New Democratic Party to commemorate Canada's national Day of Mourning. Today is a day of remembrance. It is a day of mourning for workers who have been killed, injured, or suffered illness due to workplace-related hazards and incidents, and it is a day of recognition that, for each worker killed on the job, there are families, friends, and communities left to mourn. As much as April 28 is a day to honour the dead, it is also a date that reminds us of the need to protect the living. As we mourn the four Yukon workers killed on the job in 2021, we realize that the challenges to make workplace safety a reality are far from over.

Workers' safety is often thought of as an individual responsibility, and it is true that each of us makes decisions each day that affect our safety, and many workers have been

saved from injury, or worse, based on the actions of their co-workers. To every worker who has intervened for the safety of your co-workers, we thank you. But decisions don't happen in a vacuum.

After the 1992 Westray mine disaster where 26 miners were killed in underground explosions, the commissioner for the Westray Public Inquiry stated: "The fundamental and basic responsibility for the safe operation of an ... undertaking rests clearly with management ... management failed in this primary responsibility, and the significance of that failure cannot be mitigated or diluted simply because others were derelict in their responsibility."

Twelve years after the Westray disaster, the House of Commons and the Senate gave unanimous support to amend the *Criminal Code*, ensuring that organizations, including corporations and their representatives and those who direct the work of others, are held accountable for workplace safety. The role of the workplace and individual and public safety has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. We saw workers across Canada being pressured to come to work against public health orders and we saw the deaths that resulted.

It is our responsibility to make change happen so that we never see another year like 2021. One death is too many, and it is up to all of us to make sure that we value lives over profit.

*Applause*

### **In recognition of Special Olympics Yukon 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I rise today to pay tribute to Special Olympics Yukon, celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It's great to see you all here today, and I wish I had a bumping soundtrack to accompany this tribute as sharp as the one I heard at Mount McIntyre last Saturday night. Special Olympics Yukon began with a small cross-country skiing program and has grown into an organization that has more than 120 registered athletes in community- and school-based programming.

They now offer 11 sports, both summer and winter, and have impacted more than 500 children in daycares, both with and without intellectual disabilities. Some of the initiatives include the Northwestel Development Games, invitational soccer tournament, Yukon Energy athlete ambassadors, and the Rotary Club of Whitehorse Healthy Athletes program.

Special Olympics Yukon has participated in every Special Olympics Canada summer and winter games since 1986. Sixteen Yukoners have gone on to compete with Team Canada at the Special Olympics World Games, both summer and winter, and have come home with multiple medals and personal-best performances. The athletes are the beating heart of this wonderful organization. The programs-committed board of directors, along with energetic and dedicated sport and operational volunteers, are its soul and are central to its continuing growth and success.

I also have to acknowledge the tremendous staff at Special Olympics Yukon: Serge Michaud, the CEO; Andrew Elines, program director; Heather Menzies, office and events coordinator; and Mikayla Duncan, the program coordinator.

These individuals are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the program and are integral to the organization's initiatives, special events, and fundraisers. They give it life.

Last Saturday, April 23, Special Olympics Yukon held their annual Festival Dinner Auction, presented by Canadian Tire at the Whitehorse Curling Club. It was a great event, and the music was, as I said, fantastic. More than 300 people attended the first auction held since 2019 due to COVID. The event featured live entertainment and special guests, such as Wayne Thomas and Thomas Scoffin, a three-time Yukon skip at the Brier and a Champions Network speaker. More than 100 items were up for auction, raising over \$80,000 to help ensure the success of local programming.

We are proud to support Special Olympics Yukon and the work that they do. In 2022-23, the Yukon government will contribute \$101,955 to Special Olympics Yukon for operational funding, program support, and multi-sport games participation.

Sport and active living are such an important part of our lives and, thanks to this program, Yukoners will be taught the necessary skills to grow, both as athletes and individuals.

On behalf of the Government of Yukon, congratulations to Special Olympics Yukon on 40 years of success in inspiring others and sharing the power of sport. We look forward to many more years of celebrating Yukon Special Olympics athletes and their achievements at the local, national, and even international level.

*Applause*

**Mr. Dixon:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Special Olympics Yukon, an incredible organization that has been committed to providing sport programming to Yukoners with intellectual disabilities for over 40 years. Due to the pandemic and the inability to gather and celebrate properly last year, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary for Special O is being celebrated this year, 41 years after the organization was founded in 1981.

Special Olympics Yukon is more than just an organization; it is a family to so many Yukoners. It has helped youth and adults to build friendships, improve life skills, and work to specialize in one or more sports, ultimately enabling so many to compete on national and international stages. Starting out as a small cross-country skiing program in 1981, Special O has grown into a truly impressive organization, boasting 11 sports, both summer and winter, and over 120 registered athletes in both community- and school-based programming.

This year, the Special Olympics Festival Dinner Auction was held this past weekend, and I and several other MLAs were in attendance, along with well over 300 Yukoners. Like many, I look forward to the Special O banquet every year. This one was particularly special because of how long it had been since we had been able to attend in person. It was MC'd by the one and only Serge Michaud and his old pal, Bobby Ferris. One of the most notable parts of the dinner was the speech by Wayne Thomas, who is a well-known and decorated bowler for Team Yukon. Wayne has been competing since the early 2000s. He has competed at the games in 2006 in Brandon and, of course,

went on to serve as team captain in 2018 and won a silver medal in team play. As evidenced by their rousing applause, Wayne delivered an excellent speech.

Thomas Scoffin, three-time Yukon skip at the Brier, was the Champions Network speaker as well. Attendees were also treated to a display of powerlifting by Zachary Louie, who took the stage to perform an impressive dead lift. We would like to wish Zachary all the best as he is off to his first-ever competition this coming weekend in powerlifting. We also had the chance to celebrate Mike Sumner and Darby McIntyre, who were both chosen for Team Canada. They were supposed to go to the 2023 World Games, but unfortunately, they have been cancelled.

There are too many impressive athletes and too many great stories of accomplishments to list today, but I can assure all Yukoners that following the events and competitions at Special Olympics is well worth their while.

I also want to mention that, starting next week, Special Olympics will be launching a series of stirring videos on social media with the theme “We are all the same”. They were previewed on Saturday night and I encourage all Yukoners to watch them; they are quite something.

The event featured over 100 auction items and local entertainment and raised over \$80,000 for the organization. A special thank you, of course, to Yukoners once again for their continued support of this successful event and for their continued support of Special O through the years.

Before I conclude, I want to give a special shout-out to the one and only Serge Michaud. Serge has been leading this organization with passion for many years now, and quite frankly, the simple fact is that — even if he won’t acknowledge it himself — none of this would be possible without him. I know that this year’s banquet was special for Serge because he had some family from down south who were able to join this year finally. So, thank you very much, Serge.

To the past and present Special Olympics Yukon board, staff, volunteers, and, most importantly, its incredible athletes, congratulations on your milestone of 40 years plus one.

*Applause*

**Ms. Tredger:** I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to pay tribute to the Yukon Special Olympics.

The Yukon joined this international organization in the very early 1980s, and it didn’t take them long before a group of volunteers, parents, teachers, group home staff, and athletes climbed aboard the green and yellow Air North DC-3 to head to Anchorage. My friend, the former MLA for Riverdale South, was on that inaugural flight, and she told me that for many of the athletes, not only was this their first time competing internationally but their first time on a plane.

How far this organization has come over the last 40 years — the number of athletes and volunteers continues to grow. These athletes have travelled around the world to represent not just the Yukon but Canada. We thank all the staff, the volunteers, the board, but most of all, the athletes for their time, for their dedication, and for their amazing athletic prowess.

I would like to close by sharing the motto of Special Olympics around the world: “Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt.”

Thank you everyone for your hard work and dedication.

*Applause*

## TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

**Speaker:** Under returns and documents for tabling, the Chair has for tabling: the report from Elections Yukon and the elections finance returns for the 2021 territorial election; a report from Elections Yukon entitled *Recommended Changes to the Elections Act*; and finally, from Elections Yukon, a report on the administration of the 2021 territorial general election.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Pursuant to subsection 5(h) of the *Education Act*, I have for tabling the Department of Education’s 2021 annual report.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I have for tabling a letter regarding the Yukon policing priorities for 2022-23.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I have for tabling a legislative return for questions from the Member for Copperbelt South regarding teacher remuneration.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I have for tabling one legislative return in response to questions from the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

**Ms. Tredger:** I have for tabling a number of electricity bills from this winter, submitted to me by constituents, ranging from \$675 to over \$1,200.

**Speaker:** Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

## PETITIONS

### Petition No. 12 — response

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I rise today to respond to Petition No. 12, presented by the MLA for Whitehorse Centre on April 25.

I would like to thank the member for bringing the petition forward to the Legislature. It is requesting safety improvements to the Rabbit’s Foot Canyon area.

The Alaska Highway is not just another road; it is Yukon’s primary supply route and a lifeline for so many of our communities. It is also the busiest stretch of highway in the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, as a government, we are committed to a people-centred approach that builds healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities throughout the territory. Our government is also prioritizing the safety and well-being of Yukoners, and that includes the safety on our roads.

As you know, we have been making a number of safety improvements along the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse. Determining how to best improve highway safety for vehicles

and pedestrians is part of that process, including at key intersections.

We have already closed a number of unsafe accesses and added turning lanes, which makes it safer for vehicles going on and off the highway.

In our most recent project, we also reduced the speed limit to 60 kilometres per hour in the Whitehorse airport area.

I want to assure the members opposite that improvements to the section of highway around Fish Lake Road and Raven's Ridge is just one more of the many important projects being considered by the department. In fact, following our work on the highway around Robert Service Way and Porter Creek, we will begin the important engagement and planning for the section between Two Mile Hill and Centennial Street. But before designing any changes here, we first want to hear from residents, from cyclists, from those who commute on the highway, from the business community, and from the broader community as well.

I appreciate how important this stretch of road is for so many Yukoners. It is because this section of highway is so important that we need to get it right. We will do this through public outreach, comprehensive functional planning, and working with the City of Whitehorse to ensure the safety and greatest common benefit for all users of the highway, including pedestrians and trail users.

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

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that the Russian Federation, directed by President Vladimir Putin and others within the Russian Parliament, have committed acts of genocide and crimes against humanity against the Ukrainian people, including:

- (1) mass atrocities in the invaded and occupied Ukrainian territories;
- (2) systematic instances of willful killing of Ukrainian civilians and the desecration of corpses;
- (3) forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to the Russian territory;
- (4) torture and the imposition of life conditions causing grave suffering; and
- (5) widespread instances of physical harm, mental harm, and rape.

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

THAT this House joins Jewish communities in Canada and around the world to recognize Yom HaShoah, Israel's day of commemoration for the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges all Yukoners to take advantage, this weekend, of the early opening of 13 Government of Yukon campgrounds.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Health and Social Services to respond to the family doctor shortage crisis by taking immediate action, including the following:

- (1) working with the Yukon Medical Association to develop an action plan to encourage family doctors to move to the Yukon;
- (2) working with the Yukon Medical Association and family practices to ensure that there is adequate locum coverage for doctors going on maternity leave; and
- (3) reviewing and increasing funding for the medical education bursary and the family physician incentive program.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Justice to immediately increase resources for the RCMP, including supporting an increase in members and operational funding to establish a drug enforcement unit.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to return to the long-standing practice of tabling the annual report of the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board during the Spring Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

**Mr. Istchenko:** I rise in the House to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to cancel the Liberals' planned campground fee increases for Yukoners, which will see nightly camping fees go up from the current \$12 to \$20, regular season passes go from \$50 to \$200, and seniors' season passes go from free to \$100.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House congratulates 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group on their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 23, 2022.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House acknowledges the proud history of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, which includes:

- (1) their predecessor unit, the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers, was established during World War II after the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Empire;
- (2) the Canadian Rangers provide a military presence in Canada's north in communities in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, with a primary role of conducting surveillance and sovereignty patrols as required;
- (3) the Canadian Rangers conduct inspections of the North Warning System sites and act as guides, scouts, and subject-matter experts in such disciplines as wilderness survival when other military forces are in their area of operations;

(4) in communities, Canadian Rangers play an important role through volunteerism, search and rescue, emergency measures, and community functions;

(5) the Canadian Rangers are the key to the successful Junior Canadian Ranger program that helps our youth participate in a variety of activities, many of which involve three important circles of training: ranger skills, traditional skills, and life skills; and

(6) 1<sup>st</sup> CRPG's motto "Vigilans" — which, when translated, means "The Watchers" — reflects how the Rangers continue to guard their local areas and provide support to the Canadian Armed Forces during domestic operations across the north.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to support parents of children with complex care needs by including parents as eligible paid caregivers under children's disability services programs.

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

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### Great Yukon Summer Freeze

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** The pandemic had impacts on business across the territory and around the world, but specifically, tourism operators were hit the hardest. Put simply, as COVID-19 spread around the globe, people stayed home and they stopped travelling. Our government took quick action to support tourism businesses across the territory and throughout the pandemic.

Last year, we created the innovative Great Yukon Summer and the Great Yukon Summer Freeze programs that incentivized Yukoners to travel, explore, and enjoy new experiences in our territory, while supporting local businesses along the way. The programs provided Yukoners a 25-percent rebate for packaged tourism experiences offered by our local tourism businesses. At the start of this month, the Great Yukon Summer Freeze program came to a close and Yukoners had until April 15 to claim their rebate.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to provide this Assembly with an update on the success of both programs. A total of 2,375 Yukoners spent over \$1.5 million on the Great Yukon Summer and Great Yukon Summer Freeze tourism packages, with \$383,000 issued in rebate payments.

The Great Yukon Summer program had 62 businesses participate with over 170 travel packages available to Yukoners. The Freeze edition of the program included a total of 39 tourism packages, including everything from glacier viewing to heli-skiing to skidoo and dog-sled tours. Over 464 Yukoners took advantage of the program, accounting for \$238,000 spent on local tourism packages this winter. Although the numbers are not the same as they were in the summer programming, that is due to many winter tourism operators already being fully booked, as international travel began to resume.

Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad that Yukoners were able to take advantage of these experiences in our beautiful territory. Not only did they get to experience more of what the Yukon has to offer, they supported local businesses at a time when they needed it the most.

We have responded well over the economic challenges of COVID-19 in our territory, and our territory is in a good position because of this, but we still have a long way to go to fully recover.

I am pleased to see that this summer, we have clear indications that tourism in the Yukon is back. I want to end by thanking Yukoners and Yukon businesses for supporting one another through these challenging times. It is through innovative programs like these that we were able to work together as a territory to ensure that Yukoners could experience the territory in a whole new way and that Yukon tourism operators could weather the pandemic and continue to offer their services to Canadians and international visitors for years to come.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** I would like to thank the minister for his update on the Great Yukon Summer Freeze. With May around the corner, we know the tourism season is fast approaching and we know many Yukoners are looking forward to taking a vacation, be it either here at home or outside the territory. We know many Yukoners did take advantage of the Great Yukon Summer campaign and spent their money with the tourism operators who were part of this summer program.

We hope that Yukon tourism businesses can expect a successful season this year; however, according to the press release from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business from last month, nearly two-thirds — or 62 percent — of businesses said rising prices, such as fuel, food, or insurance, were having a significant impact on their business, and another 27 percent said the impact was moderate.

Last summer, gasoline was in the \$1.40 to \$1.60 per litre range, depending where you travelled in the territory. Now fuel is pushing \$2 per litre. It is not yet clear how this will affect Yukoners' travel plans, but it certainly can't help the rubber-tire traffic and the fly/drive tourists and visitors we have seen in recent years.

We would like the minister to share if Yukon tourism operators have provided any updates on the impacts of cost increases. We are also concerned about the long-term consequences of fuel costs for Holland America bus excursions and what that might mean for their Yukon operator partners.

If the minister can share any information on those concerns, I would appreciate it. Cutting the fuel tax, as we suggested, could have provided more money to help encourage travel to and within the territory. As well, I was hoping the minister could provide an update on the Poker Creek-Little Gold Creek border crossing on Top of the World Highway. Is there any progress in confirming that it will operate as usual?

Regardless, we know that many tourism operators are looking forward to an increase in visitors this summer. Hopefully, we will see a return to higher visitation numbers and



our resilient tourism operators return to pre-COVID operations this season.

**Ms. Tredger:** It is somewhat unfortunate that, on the last day of the Sitting, we are using our time to respond to one of our daily ministerial statements — in this case, one about a program that has already ended. On the Order Paper today, we have 13 budget votes that are not finished or, in some cases, we haven't even started to debate them, but it is up to the government to decide what we talk about, so let's talk about it.

I know that Yukoners, especially those who work in the tourism industry and tourism business owners, are working very hard to ensure that Yukoners and visitors alike have a great Yukon experience. We know that yesterday the first cruise ship of the season arrived in Skagway. Hopefully, we will be seeing some of those and future passengers travel here to experience the Yukon. Unfortunately, the White Pass train will not be travelling to Carcross this year.

We are also pleased to see the flights from Germany resuming again. Again, their contribution to the tourism industry will be greatly appreciated. We encourage all Yukoners to invite friends and families from outside of the Yukon to visit and experience our beautiful territory and, of course, to continue to support Yukon businesses as they recover from the last two years.

We had hoped that the minister would consider responding to our motion from yesterday and extend the application deadline for the Yukon relief program. We know that many Yukon businesses are struggling with the application process and would like some additional time and support to get their applications in. There is a lot of paperwork involved, and requiring that to be done right around year-end is a burden that many business owners aren't able to carry right now. I am hoping that, when the minister stands again, he can let us know if they will be extending that application deadline.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I will do my best to just touch on some of the questions that were posed today.

I will go back and take a look at the comments from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business concerning some of the national issues and pressures that we are seeing for all businesses. I certainly have been in dialogue with them over the last number of months and appreciate their advice and guidance. I will just say that I think it is even more important to get out a local level and support our tourism operators and our hospitality industry players who have weathered the last two years.

At this time, the only thing that I have heard are some public statements made by the chair of the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon board — and that was Mr. Hartling — and that was early on. He talked about what they thought the impact would be concerning fuel prices and what that would look like for tire traffic. At that time, there wasn't as much concern, but I think that across this country — this is a national issue, and we have to watch this and we have to be aware of what is going to happen. I think that we were in a good position because, of course, we have the lowest fuel tax in the country,

even going into this, but still, I think that it is important to watch what is going to happen as we see tire traffic throughout — and how people move through.

Of course, you are looking at a record season of cruise ship traffic along the west coast. When you take into consideration fuel consumption when you are looking at ships of that size and magnitude — I mean, we were talking about quite significant consumption, and that is why there is a move now for more renewable sources, but certainly that hasn't changed to date what we have seen in the number of cruise ships yet that are coming.

Concerning Little Gold, we are aware that it will open as normal and that it will be serviced, and I think that we have — through our border working group — continued to ensure that. I appreciate the member opposite's concerns — and some of the business folks from Dawson who have reached out on that one.

Again, with our relief program, we are closely monitoring and adapting as we have always done — taking a look at some of the soft and vulnerable spots within our tourism sector right now — and so that is why I haven't responded directly to that because we are watching to see where we could step in. Certainly, I know that the member opposite — I have had one organization reach out directly, but if there are more — if they are comfortable with you sharing that information — or send them directly to us. But, to date, I have had one organization, and we have tried to work through that.

With that being said, I think that what I would just share with folks is that, as part of this Great Yukon Summer program — some of the other things — we also provided funding for festivals and events in the Yukon through On Yukon Time, and that was over 53 different festivals. Why is that important? Because now they are all poised to come back. They didn't miss that year. I just say to all Yukoners: Please get out to the communities. Make sure that you get an opportunity to support these festivals. Make sure that you get out to our local restaurants — whatever community they may be in — and please look for those tourism operators that you can support through this.

We will continue to watch what is happening. When it comes to our work over the next year, one of the things that we just announced as well is another investment — which was in addition — we continued, as a destination hot spot investment — we are looking at \$300,000 to support a marketing campaign to promote Yukon as a visitor destination. In Québec, we had a great conversation yesterday about the flight starting to Toronto. We are hearing great things about the number of tickets that have been sold already.

Again, on behalf of our government, kudos to all those who have weathered the last two years and look forward to the summer of 2022.

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

**QUESTION PERIOD****Question re: Rent control**

**Mr. Cathers:** Since the Liberal government imposed the disastrous rent control policy, Yukoners have seen serious negative impacts on the rental market. Last year, the Residential Landlord Association released a document that showed the impact. Rent is going up across the board. Landlords are selling units. Tenants are being evicted. An investment in new construction of rentals will suffer. The facts are clear that this policy simply doesn't work.

Will the Liberals agree to end this flawed policy and work with landlords to actually increase the number of rentals in the market?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As we have said a few times this week, we are working very hard to increase the lot inventory and our housing stock across the territory. We are taking a very wide and broad approach to the way we deal with the current housing issues within the territory to make sure that Yukoners have the housing they need to go forward.

Now, we do know that we do have a rent index program that we have as a result of the confidence and supply agreement with the New Democrat caucus. We are honouring that agreement and we will continue to honour that agreement until the sun sets in January 2023.

**Mr. Cathers:** Mr. Speaker, it's almost universally understood that rent caps don't work and negatively affect housing and rental markets wherever they're imposed. We have seen that playing out, in real time, here in the Yukon. It's negatively affecting Yukoners.

Rents have gone up, people have been evicted, landlords are selling off units, and the number of rental units is plummeting. This is at a time when Yukon needs more rentals, not less.

Even the minister admitted that the policy was rushed out and not well-thought-out.

Will the government agree to get rid of this deeply flawed policy and try to bring stability back to the rental market?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think that there are a few comments made in the first two questions that I would love to just see a little more background on.

First, there was a comment concerning the fact that there has been a lack of investment into rental housing and into our housing continuum. That's simply not true.

We have seen record numbers of investment over the last number of years into residential housing. In almost every quarter, we have seen continued record-breaking numbers. I think that the last numbers I have seen — and I can go back and check, but we have almost 1,300 building permits in place right now.

There is a tremendous amount of investment being put into it.

I am open to going back to work with our team, but the member opposite said that there were plummeting numbers, but I think it makes for good Question Period drama, but I also would like to see some background on that. Maybe it does exist, and certainly the member can show me that — can table that in the future and we can take a look at it.

Again, we have record investment in affordable housing, and we are doing a lot of that in partnership so we are providing more rental units. That's exactly what we are doing. We are working with a number of private sector interests — both on the Yukon Development Corporation side. What we are seeing is this investment into those exact units that the member opposite is asking for.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do remind the minister that, in fact, we did table that information that the minister is asking for last year. It is unfortunate that he is not listening to the stakeholder who is bringing this forward.

The facts on rent control are clear everywhere it has been implemented, including in the Yukon. It doesn't work. The stats provided by the Yukon Residential Landlord Association show this.

As early as last summer, after only a few months of the policy being in effect, there were units being put up for sale, rent was being increased, tenants were being evicted, and landlords were saying, overwhelmingly, that they want out of this market. This policy has been bad for tenants and bad for landlords.

Will the Liberals agree to put an end to this flawed policy and repeal the rent caps that they have imposed?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** As I said in my earlier answer, the rent index was a New Democrat commitment. The index is temporary and will end in less than a year.

I do want to speak for a moment to Yukoners and remind them that it was actually the Leader of the Official Opposition who endorsed the confidence and supply agreement not more than a few months ago that would have actually committed his party to the same rent index that we are actually committed to in the same way — the exact same way. It's a little bit rich to have these questions coming from the Member for Lake Laberge.

I will say that, since 2016, our population has grown by 12.1 percent, and housing construction has kept pace. The number of private dwellings has increased by 12.9 percent. There was \$267 million in residential construction in 2021, which shattered the 2020 record of nearly \$200 million of investment. This year's budget includes more than \$60 million for housing initiatives across the Yukon. Hundreds of new homes will soon be available for Yukon families. The 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Jeckell Street housing project will create 47 affordable homes. The Challenge Cornerstone project will create 45 new homes for vulnerable Yukoners, in addition to market units. Normandy Manor will create 84 new homes for seniors. The Boreal Commons affordable and rental housing project will create another 87 homes. I announced, just a few days ago, 200 lots in Whistle Bend. There is lots going on. The Yukon Party endorsed the rent index. I hope they tell their constituents that.

**Question re: Contract procurement**

**Mr. Kent:** What the minister conveniently forgets is that our offer to tolerate the rent control policy was contingent on a number of things, including the removal of the Deputy Premier from Cabinet, but, of course, we see that she's still there.

However, Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Highways and Public Works. A 2016 Liberal election platform commitment was to tender all seasonally dependent contracts by March of each year. This year's budget claims that they will spend \$43 million on the Klondike Highway. One of the projects that is supposed to start this summer is somewhere between kilometre 466 and kilometre 523, which is between Pelly Crossing and Stewart Crossing. Well, summer is fast approaching and this major highway work isn't on the tendering system. Another broken promise to the contracting community.

So, can the minister tell us what the cost estimate is for this work and when it will be tendered?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** When planning and tendering projects, we are giving contractors the best opportunity to perform the work at the right time. The right time to tender is well in advance of the time when physical work needs to be done. As I indicated in our exchange in Committee of the Whole, some of the examples of timely tendering over the course of the last six-to-eight months included the Justice Centre atrium skylight project last October, knowing that work would begin this spring as it has. We have also tendered the Macaulay Lodge demolition in December and work is now underway. As indicated also previously, we tendered for work on the McCabe Creek bridge in early February, and that contract is already in place for this summer. That is part of the national trade corridor fund. We know that millions of dollars of work is being done and that this contract is in place and that work will proceed. We have also tendered for additional road construction on the north Klondike Highway in December, and a contract is in place so that it can start as well. In addition, we have tendered early for landscaping on the Casca Boulevard in Whistle Bend. I will continue with the great work that's being done in tendering in Highways and Public Works.

**Mr. Kent:** So, just to remind the minister, that 2016 Liberal election platform commitment was to tender all seasonally dependent contracts — not some, but all of them — by March of each year — something that the Liberal government has failed to do since they were first elected in 2016.

When I looked at the YESAB registry regarding the project that I mentioned in my first question — I looked at it this morning — there hasn't even been a decision document issued for that project yet. This is in spite of the recommendation being sent in December 2021. The three decision bodies are: Fisheries and Oceans Canada; Transport Canada; and Yukon Highways and Public Works department. Can the minister tell us why this decision document is delayed and when he is expecting it to be issued so that this project can actually be tendered?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Thank you for the question. I will get back to the member opposite on his specific question, but I will continue to indicate that we have also tendered for the parallel runway work in December so that we will be ready to work, to start this spring. There is an awful lot of work that's being done with respect to the parallel runway to ensure that there is redundancy in service there for 737 service. That work is progressing.

There is also work on the apron. These are exciting times at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, which will occur over the course of the next three or four years, ensuring that we have both resilient and reliable aviation infrastructure in place at the aviation transportation hub of the Yukon.

We have also tendered a request for standing offers in February for aircraft charter services for the summer firefighting season. We have also tendered for the supply and delivery of calcium chloride for summer, in December, as well. There are many more examples.

We have also tendered this year for projects that are breaking ground in 2023. The Department of Highways and Public Works is planning and keeping the Yukon moving forward.

**Mr. Kent:** So, with promises of a large transportation capital budget of \$155 million this year, the Liberals need to get these tenders out the door; instead, they are dithering as the window to get seasonally dependent contracts out in time is quickly closing and another year of breaking their promise to the contracting community is in the books.

One of the projects the minister mentioned for this year was upgrades to the Alaska Highway through Whitehorse from the weigh scales to Lodestar Lane. He told this House earlier this week that the value of this project was \$4.75 million. This project isn't even on the planned projects for Bids and Tenders, and again, like the previous one, no decision document has been issued for it either through the YESAA process, so another broken promise to contractors.

When will this seasonally dependent contract be tendered?

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** I will also return to the member opposite with his specific question with respect to the great work that is going to be done between Lodestar Lane and the Whitehorse weigh scales this summer. In addition, this summer — it's an exciting summer, Mr. Speaker — we are doing upgrades, as indicated in this spring session.

The swimming pool in Pelly Crossing will be completed. We will continue with work on the 10-unit mixed-use housing unit and health and wellness centre in Old Crow. We are also starting work on the Carmacks bypass with an innovative agreement with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation so that there can be meaningful First Nation participation with that First Nation, providing significant benefits to their beneficiaries. I thank the staff at Highways and Public Works for negotiating that agreement.

As well, we also have the Dempster fibre project which is continuing. I had the opportunity last September to attend on the Dempster Highway and see the fantastic technology at work in implementing that project.

There is so much to talk about, Mr. Speaker. This is a great summer coming up.

#### **Question re: Deaths at Whitehorse Emergency Shelter**

**Ms. Tredger:** On January 19 of this year, two young women died by drug poisoning at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter. Like all deaths by drug poisoning, they were

preventable. It has been over three months since they passed. That's three months with no words from the minister on why two people died in a government facility.

This government is responsible for keeping people at government facilities safe. The community wants to know how and why they died. We need a coroner's inquest so that no one else dies at the shelter.

Will the minister call for a coroner's inquest into the death of the two people who died at the shelter?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I think it's incredibly important that we recognize and acknowledge the community harm and pain that is suffered when individuals pass as a result of opioid or drug use. I'm being careful with respect to this answer, because of course, we must respect the coroner's jurisdiction with respect to — and her decisions about what matters she determines are appropriate for an inquest and otherwise.

We continue to support and cooperate with the coroner's office completely — both the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice — for the purposes of allowing her to do her good work and allowing her to make whatever recommendations might be as the result of any investigations done by her office.

**Ms. Tredger:** The coroner does have the power to trigger an inquest, but it is clear in the act that the minister also has this power. I will quote; under section 44 of the *Coroners Act*, it says — and I quote: “The Minister may direct that an inquest may be held into the death of a person ... if the Minister determines that it is in the public interest...”

People died of preventable deaths in a government-run facility. Knowing how to prevent this from happening again is absolutely of public interest. Let me be clear: This is not an attack on shelter workers. We know that they are understaffed. We know that they are kept in temporary positions. We know that this government won't give them training or programming or resources. Maybe that is why this government hasn't called an inquest: They don't want to risk exposing the ways that they are failing vulnerable Yukoners.

So, why hasn't the minister called an inquest into the deaths of the two women who died at the shelter?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I am sorry that the member opposite, in bringing forward this question — which she does clearly with passion — is also prepared to speculate with respect to this situation. I am going to not speculate with respect to this situation. It is harmful to family and friends, it is harmful to workers in the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter, and it is harmful to the people who are close to this situation, with respect to unnecessary public speculation.

The coroner will do her good work. She is responsible for investigation in this situation, and ultimately, we will be pleased to hear her direction.

**Ms. Tredger:** What we are asking for is an end to speculation. We want answers. The community needs answers, and for that, we need an inquest. These women should not have died the way that they did. They deserve dignity. They deserved a government that wants to do better, but for all the months of this substance use emergency, the minister has only given us excuses — excuses for the lack of mental health care, excuses

for the lack of safe supply, excuses for the lack of health care access in communities, excuses for a drug-poisoning crisis that has been going on for years before this government even dared to acknowledge it. The time for excuses is over. The families and Yukoners deserve answers. No one else should have to die for this government to finally do the right thing.

Will the minister request a coroner's inquest into the deaths that happened at the shelter so the system that failed these people can finally be fixed?

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** First of all, with respect to this specific question asked, I believe I have answered it not once but twice. I will move on to indicate that the government's response to the substance use and health emergency is absolutely critical. We are committed to the work done by building partnerships and trust throughout the community.

We have a number of projects underway, despite the misunderstandings across the way. We are working to prescribe safe supply through the opioid treatment services program. We have worked on the development of the physician and pharmacist community of practice group regarding a safer supply. We are working on the expansion of the safer supply, prescribing through the opioid treatment services program. We have worked on a needs assessment to inform the expansion of all opioid treatment services, including safer supply within Whitehorse and the communities. We're working on a public awareness campaign. We're working on renovations to the supervised consumption site. We're working on the development of a renewed opioid action plan. We've installed Brave alarms at the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter to assist residents there.

We are working on phase 2 of a very successful mental health summit so we can continue these conversations. I appreciate the opportunity to outline some —

**Speaker:** Order.

#### Question re: Cost of living

**Mr. Istchenko:** So, yesterday I asked the minister how the government was going to help Yukoners with the rising cost of living, and his answer was that they have a 10-year strategy to move to a renewable future.

Well, Mr. Speaker, as important as the future of renewables is, Yukoners need help right away. The price of fuel has soared, and with it has the price of food, goods and services, and just about everything else. For those living in rural Yukon, there is no other option but to drive. That's why we suggested cutting the fuel tax to keep more money in the pockets of Yukoners.

So, will the government acknowledge the skyrocketing fuel prices affecting all Yukoners and agree to cut the fuel tax?

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, \$30 million in lot development. Another \$30 million in housing. Actually, \$255 million over the next five years for housing — historic investments. In early learning and childcare, \$15.3 million. Inflation relief rebate, an interim electric rebate representing millions of dollars. We are saving Yukoners on their electric bills. In this fiscal year, the carbon levy will collect \$6.9 million from households, but the households will receive

back \$11.6 million in rebates. The northern residents deduction is being adjusted to give more Yukoners access to the travel deduction, energy retrofits — the members opposite laugh about this. It's actually just so disheartening — so disheartening —

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

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please.

The member has the floor. I am having a hard time hearing him. Please be respectful when a member is speaking.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** It makes sense, Mr. Speaker. They have asked this question 100 times. They keep on asking it because they are not listening to the answers. When we start talking about all the programs and all the money that we are putting into making lives more affordable for Yukoners, the members scoff. It's absolutely ridiculous.

Yukon senior income support is being increased; the Yukon homeowners grant to reduce property taxes — \$2 million to seniors to reduce their heating costs — and no new taxes. I didn't even mention the amazing programs that came to support businesses during COVID. The members opposite can laugh all they want, but we are working for Yukoners.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Yukoners are going to be so disappointed that the government and the Premier won't even acknowledge the skyrocketing fuel prices that we are seeing in the Yukon.

Last week, a local economist wrote in the *Yukon News* and calculated what the rising rate of inflation would mean for Yukon families. When he added up the rising cost of fuel for both driving and home heating, the massive increase in food prices, and the cost of housing, it worked out to an average household paying \$5,500 more per year. That is a staggering increase — and all the Liberals have come up with is to give Yukoners \$150 a year of their own money. That will barely cover the cost of the increase in the camping fees.

When will the Liberals start taking the inflation crisis in the Yukon seriously and introduce real measures to help?

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

### Speaker's statement

**Speaker:** Order, please.

During Question Period, I know that members are getting frustrated with the questions and answers that are going back and forth, but I just want to remind all members that we need to be respectful when a member is speaking.

We will continue on with Question Period. Minister of Economic Development.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Look, I think that we have come to terms with the fact that there is definitely a different approach and a different opinion. What I remember is, in 2016, knocking on the doors of the constituents I represent. Their biggest challenge, first and foremost, was the cost of daycare and the hundreds and thousands of dollars that, on an annual basis, was

being paid out. From that point on, we worked as a team with a long-term view, not just with this inflationary scenario that is in place, but how could we make the cost of living for Yukoners cheaper? Other than Québec, there was no other province or territory that could put a solution in place, but we did. My colleagues who I work with put a solution in place. We started down that road to save Yukoners thousands of dollars, and in some cases, the cost of a mortgage payment started to be saved.

Then it was leading in the country. We're happy to see that Canada, at a federal level, has now come on. I think, at this point, every province and territory has signed on to what we did to lead.

We have been at this for five years now — over five years. We have looked at the best places to make sure that life's cheaper. That's the same reason that we're not spending the majority of the money at the Housing Corporation on O&M, which was happening before. We're spending it on — a record \$46 million — on affordable housing.

We can go on, on this. There is a difference of opinion, but we're at a long range and we're looking after Yukoners —

**Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Istchenko:** What I know is that Yukoners are concerned about the cost increase of everything. According to one local economist, Yukon households can expect to pay as much as \$5,500 more a year due to the rising rate of inflation. Unfortunately, in the Liberals' budget, it doesn't even mention inflation. It's clear that they have their heads in the sand about this affordability crisis.

All Liberals were able to come up with, in the face of this massive challenge, was to give Yukoners \$150 of their own money back to them. As I said before, this will barely cover the increased camping fees the Liberals raised this year. It certainly doesn't come close to the \$5,500 extra cost that Yukoners are facing.

So, again, when will the Liberals acknowledge that their plan is out of touch with Yukoners and agree to take some real steps to actually help Yukoners with the rising cost of living?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** I think, again, as we stated, we have taken a long-term view on this from the start. I can remember, during the last election, the Yukon Party coming out against our program for early childcare. They were against it. I know, when you're paying \$1,000 a month out of your pocket to look after your children — in some cases, maybe even more, at \$1,600 or \$1,700 — those are real costs and those are some of the things that we invested in over the last year.

Again, the member opposite can go on. Again, they're trying to make this a regional issue; it's not a regional issue. This is something that the world is facing. We're seeing steps being taken.

I appreciate the Pierre Poilievre handbook that has been used over the last two weeks. I'm glad that he's also writing questions for the Yukon Party. We see the strategy that's at play. The media sees it as well. Look, this is a national issue that's at play. What we have been doing, which has not happened across this country — and it has not been national until we led and put in the strategies to make life cheaper for Yukoners in the long term.

**Question re: Affordable housing**

**Ms. Clarke:** The Liberal budget highlights the failures of their government to address the housing crisis. To quote directly from the Budget Address: “The increases in prices has made owning a single detached home out of reach for many Yukoners.” That’s the Liberal budget.

Let’s quote the Yukon Bureau of Statistics: In 2016, the average cost of a home in Whitehorse was \$420,000. By the end of last year, this has skyrocketed to \$647,000: a 54-percent increase to the cost of a home in five years. That’s the Liberal record.

Will the government agree to finally take the housing crisis seriously?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** When this exact same question was being asked yesterday, one of the things that came to mind was, “I wonder if the member opposite took a look at the housing costs across this country, and I wonder if the member opposite took into consideration that we have either been the lowest — or almost the lowest — of all provinces and territories when it has come to inflation? I wonder if the member opposite looked at the housing prices and how they have increased in Vancouver, how they’ve increased in Toronto, how they have increased in Halifax, how they have increased in Montréal, and then come back and compared them to what has happened here?”

I know the member opposite was not here with her colleagues in the past, but I can tell you this: We are putting record investment into affordable housing. When we talk about Yukon housing, I will share with the member opposite — either this summer or in the fall — I can show that, when her colleagues were running the Yukon Housing Corporation, they spent their money on O&M, not investing in new housing. I can share with the member opposite that we were in a position where, in the first two years, we spent more than the previous four years when it came to lot development. I can share those numbers.

While I’m at it, or while she is doing her research, she can ask the member who is sitting next to her: Why, when we had all of that money for affordable housing, did it all get cancelled?

**Ms. Clarke:** The facts are this: In just five years of the Liberal government, the average cost of a home in Whitehorse increased by more than 54 percent. The Liberals can list all the stats and point all the fingers they want, but the fact is that their record shows they are failing at addressing this affordability crisis.

In fact, their own budget says they are failing at addressing the crisis, and the government has options: They can immediately identify unused YG land and relieve it for the private sector to begin developing; they can create tax incentives to encourage rental developments; they can stop slowing down the release of lots in Whistle Bend.

Why are they ignoring these solutions?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Why? Because fundamental to what this government has done for five years is work in partnership. We worked in partnership with First Nations, and we have worked in partnership with municipalities. Why wouldn’t I do that? It’s because first and foremost, every municipality either

has an OCP in place or is working on one. So, the first thing is, I would respect the OCP. What we heard yesterday and today is, one, a strategy that would totally fly in the face of the relationship of the OCP and the 2006 MOU between the City of Whitehorse and us. Again, we heard yesterday from the member opposite blaming the municipalities on slowing down housing opportunities, because they were saying that there was a lack of capacity to do the work they do. I will speak with them about that.

I think we will continue to work with our partners. We’ll hopefully get this budget passed. I hope that the member opposite stands up strong today and supports this budget, because there is investment like you’ve never seen in affordable housing. There’s investment in lots; there’s investment in partnership with multiple First Nations, and those are the strategies that are going to get Yukoners into their own homes.

**Ms. Clarke:** The Liberals have been so focused on blaming others and avoiding responsibility that this affordability crisis has got out of hand. Here are the two numbers that matter to Yukoners: In 2016, when the Liberals took office, the average cost of a house was \$420,000, and in five years of the Liberals ignoring the housing crisis, that cost has skyrocketed to \$647,000. We need more land developed, and we need it developed faster.

So, will the government immediately make available additional emergency funding to all communities to help them bolster their permitting and zoning capacity?

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** First of all, I think we spoke yesterday, because it’s kind of the same two or three questions that I was asked yesterday.

Again, I will just remind the member opposite that, firstly, we have an accelerator fund that has just been announced and we have spoken with the City of Whitehorse. We will be looking to speak with other municipalities at the Association of Yukon Communities meetings later in May about the fact that there is an opportunity coming to have strategies on human resources.

Again, we are the first government in years to be able to package and now put together conversations, as well as tenders now coming out, to look at private land development. I would urge the member opposite to go back to Hansard — when we talked about packages of land, such as the tank farm, to look at the comments that were made again by the member opposite.

I guess, in closing, I would just say that the comments really fly in the face of the facts — and that is that we haven’t invested and we haven’t been watching, but if that’s the case, why have we had record investment into affordable housing and taken a totally different approach? Why have we had record investment into lot development? Why do we have record investment in our partnerships? Why have we built more units than the population growth? I wonder why there is a problem. I think that we came in and there might have been a problem when we got here.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

#### Unanimous consent to move without notice Motion No. 427

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move without notice the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Aja Mason to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term effective May 24, 2022.

**Speaker:** The Minister of Justice has requested, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion without notice.

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

#### Motion No. 427

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** I move that the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Aja Mason to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term effective May 24, 2022.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Aja Mason to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a three-year term effective May 24, 2022.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** The Yukon Human Rights Commission consists of five members. There is an upcoming vacancy for the Yukon Human Rights Commission that will become available when Karen Moir, a long-time individual who served on that commission, will be ending her term. I would like to thank Karen for all of the work and leadership that she has given to the Yukon Human Rights Commission over the years.

The all-party Standing Committee on the Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees reviewed all applications that were received for this vacancy and have recommended that Aja Mason be appointed to the commission. I look forward to Aja Mason joining the current members of the Yukon Human Rights Commission and bringing her expertise to that work.

I would like to thank all of those who put their names forward to serve on this important commission. I would also like to thank the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their recommendation. I urge all members of this House to support this motion for the appointment of Aja Mason to this Yukon Human Rights Commission. I note that this is one of the boards and committees that must be appointed pursuant to a motion of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, and I am happy to bring that forward today.

**Mr. Kent:** We will be supporting this motion today. I just wanted to take the time to thank Karen Moir for her time on the Yukon Human Rights Commission and welcome Aja Mason to her new role for the three-year term, which is effective on May 24, 2022. As the minister mentioned, this did go through the all-party committee, which we had two members on, and we agreed to the appointment of Aja Mason to this board.

**Ms. Tredger:** I would just like to add my congratulations and thanks to all the applicants, as well as our thanks to Karen Moir for her dedication and work. We look forward to supporting this motion.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?  
*Motion agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the House to move Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2 without one clear day's notice, notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1)(c), and without the Government House Leader providing 24 hours' oral notice, notwithstanding Standing Order 13(3).

#### Unanimous consent to move without one clear day's notice Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2

**Speaker:** The Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges has requested the unanimous consent of the House to move Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2 without one clear day's notice, notwithstanding Standing Order 27(1)(c), and without the Government House Leader providing 24 hours' oral notice, notwithstanding Standing Order 13(3).

Is there unanimous consent?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

### MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2

**Clerk:** Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges:

THAT the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges' Third Report, presented to the House on April 27, 2022, be concurred in; and

THAT the amendment to Standing Order 11 of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly recommended by the committee, requiring copies of Ministerial Statements to be delivered to the Speaker and each House Leader, be adopted.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief this afternoon.

The motion before us today is largely housekeeping in nature. As Yukoners have directed us, in this House, all three parties have been working very well together on the Standing

Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges. This housekeeping matter will allow us to change our Standing Orders here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly to add the following to section 11: Copies of the ministerial statement to be delivered that day shall be provided to the Speaker and the House Leader of each party in opposition to the government at least two hours before the opening of the Sitting. Of course, that is already done in practice, but the House adopting this motion today will formalize it as a requirement of the Daily Routine. I want to thank all members from all three parties for working cooperatively at the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges to make this change.

**Mr. Cathers:** We will of course be supporting this. Just prompted by the minister's remarks, I have to note that we made more progress as an Assembly and as a committee in updating the Standing Orders since the Liberals were reduced to a minority government than the entire previous term. I would like to thank all members on that committee for their work on that.

**Ms. Tredger:** Our caucus is looking forward to supporting this motion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** I thank the members opposite for their gracious remarks this afternoon. I will note, in response to the Member for Lake Laberge, that the Standing Committee on Rules, Elections and Privileges has made more progress under this government in the brief year that we've been in than we have in the last 17 years at least. So, it goes back — a long history. I am really pleased with the work that we've been doing on this standing committee, and it's a real pleasure to be working with the members opposite.

**Speaker:** Are you prepared for the question?  
*Motion Respecting Committee Reports No. 2 agreed to*

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

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

*Motion agreed to*

*Speaker leaves the Chair*

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

## Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

**Deputy Chair:** At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole to provide relief to the Chair this afternoon.

*Member for Porter Creek Centre and Member for Copperbelt South rise*

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

**Deputy Chair:** Order, please.

Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

## Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

## Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am going to be very brief in my opening remarks. I would like to do three things. First of all, I would like to welcome to Committee of the Whole today Deputy Minister John Bailey and, for the first time, our new assistant deputy minister, Heather Mills, for Sustainable Development. Heather, of course, has done great work in Assessment and Abandoned Mines, and it is a pleasure to have them both here today to support the debate of colleagues around Energy, Mines and Resources.

The second thing that I would like to do is correct the record. I was looking back over the comments that I made when we were last here, on April 13, to discuss Energy, Mines and Resources, and I made a mistake. I was speaking about the Beaver River land use plan, and I referred to it as being part of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* under chapter 11 — a planning process under chapter 11 — and I was incorrect. The Beaver River land use plan comes out of a 2018 intergovernmental agreement between the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Government of Yukon and supports the proposed ATAC tote road.

Then, finally, there was an announcement today, and I thought that I would just let the House know that this is about Haeckel Hill wind, which is a four-megawatt project, and I would like to congratulate the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Chief Doris Bill and their development corporation, Chu Níikwän. This project saw just under one-half million



dollars, which came from us, as a government, under the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative, where we help projects to develop. Then, the federal government invested heavily — I think \$13 million, in large part through the Arctic energy fund, which we supported — and then Chu Níikwān also, of course, invested dollars.

The great thing about this, of course, is that getting wind up on Haeckel Hill — it is not baseload power, but wind blows better in the winter, and so we are going to get some good winter energy, and it will help to offset our need for renewables and the diesels that we tend to use in the colder parts of the year.

I just wanted to share that with the House, and I am happy to answer questions as they come up today.

**Mr. Cathers:** And I will start where the minister left off with the Haeckel Hill project that was announced. With the amount that was announced, there seems to be \$13 million in funding from the federal government, in addition to the \$485,000, I believe it was, from the Yukon government, plus \$2 million from a subsidiary of the Kwanlin Dūn development corporation. So, a total of about \$15.5 million for four megawatts. The project had also referenced an expectation that it would displace — I believe it was — 40-million litres of diesel fuel usage, which was the estimate referenced in the press release.

Looking at the amount, it seemed that this was a fairly significant portion of capital cost for the estimated energy produced. I believe that it seems to be a significant amount per kilowatt hour and per litre that is estimated to be displaced with it. What also wasn't referenced in the press release was what rate the Yukon government was going to be paying for that power.

Could the minister please explain what else is being provided to the project in terms of the power purchase agreement rate, as well as whether there are any other contributions from the Yukon government not referenced in the press release?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will work to get additional information for the member opposite, but I believe that the power purchase is happening under the independent power producer policy, which has a very specific rate associated with it. It's not one of these ones where we have a separate energy purchase agreement that is separate, but I will work to confirm that. Unfortunately, I didn't come down with my binder on the Yukon Development Corporation, but I can work to get the information for the member opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** I look forward to receiving that information from the minister. I will just move on to an issue that has had some discussion here in the past, and that is local food procurement and production.

We recognize that there have been some steps taken by the government, which we do appreciate, to try to increase the government's own purchase of local food; however, we have also heard concerns from farmers that some of the standing-offer agreements were not being fully utilized and there was a preference for moving to more of a contract structure.

Can the minister please update us on what the current status is of efforts by his department to encourage local

purchasing, as well as the work they do in partnership with Highways and Public Works as the lead on procurement in terms of trying to support the purchase of locally grown food, whether it be meat, vegetables, eggs, or dairy?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I will begin my answer by talking about the Cultivating Our Future plan, which is our 10-year agriculture policy. It has been working to increase the territory's self-sufficiency and diversity of food production. I know that we are working with Canada, as they look to reinvigorate the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. That has been in place for about four years, and we have done many projects — several hundred projects — that we've helped to fund under that. I know that the provinces and territories are in dialogue with the federal government right now about updating that plan.

With respect to how we are supporting local procurement, I know that the Minister of Economic Development had some meetings and brought the Minister of Health and Social Services to talk about opportunities for connecting our local producers up with the demand that we have in the territory. There are a few ways in which we are trying to increase that connection between our local production and government procurement. I can check in with Highways and Public Works about how that is proceeding.

What I will say is that we have been working in several ways to try to increase the opportunities for local suppliers of food with opportunities here in the government. I will stop there for now.

**Mr. Cathers:** I look forward to receiving additional information on this topic.

I would also like to touch on one that the minister will know, specifically with regard to the issue of large egg producers. Without getting into naming individual farms here in the Assembly, I would just note that the minister will be aware that concerns brought forward by a large Yukon egg producer — in fact, I do appreciate that he took the time to meet with me and my constituent regarding the issue, but there is a long-standing issue that is frustrating for larger producers — that egg production in the Yukon is not part of the national quota system. At its heart, the question relates to the desire of larger egg producers to be either specifically included in the quota system, or specifically granted an exemption from the quota system.

I should also note, just for anyone who is not familiar with the system, that the quota system of Canada does not actually deal with smaller producers. There is a threshold. The issue of being included in quota or not included in quota would — pardon me — included in quota or excluded from quota would not affect the small farms; it would only apply to farms that were large enough producers to meet the trigger in quota.

I would ask the minister if he could update me on what the status is on this issue. It is one that, as the minister I hope is aware, has been frustrating for farmers affected by the situation, as it hasn't really seemed like there has been progress on it being resolved.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, I know, just working backward to the previous question, that there has been an internal task

team set from last year that continues to work with Highways and Public Works around support for local food standing-offer agreements; so that's in place.

With respect to eggs, the Yukon has not entered into the quota system. I'm advised that, if we do move to the quota system, every supplier is affected. So, even if you sell at the farm gate, that changes things — and once you become part of the national quota system, you don't move backward; you can't come back out of it.

So, it has to be a very thoughtful piece. I know that the branch is working on this issue and continues to deliberate on it.

In the meantime, we have worked to look at other options for the Member for Lake Laberge's constituent to see if there are opportunities here in the Yukon, or even nearby in Alaska, for a demand for local eggs. So, that's one of the avenues that we're exploring.

What I will say with respect to this question is that we want to be talking with all farmers who deal with eggs because we don't want to have unintended consequences once we take this step, because, as I understand it, once you've taken that step, there's no backing out from it.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the answer from the minister. I would just note that there does seem to be a bit of a different understanding on what the facts are between farmers affected by this and some within government. I'm not going to attempt to spend too long, especially considering this is the last day of the Sitting, debating the details of it here with the minister. I would just note to him that there does seem to be a discrepancy in what farmers see as the rules at play related to quota and the understanding of some within government. Ultimately, what I'm seeking to see here is a solution that allows larger producers to export if they wish to do so, both within Canada and to Alaska, while of course not preventing smaller producers from operating. As I noted earlier, I would just note that the understanding I have from talking to my constituents affected by this is that their understanding is that there is the ability for smaller farms and farm-gate sales to actually not be impacted by a decision to either allow the larger farms to enter quota or be excluded from it.

I just encourage the minister to look into it further and to press for the specific details of what is in place, because it seems to me that, due to a potential misunderstanding of things by someone, this file seems to be at an impasse and I would just hope to see it move forward to a solution.

With regard to the standing-offer agreements as well, I would just urge the minister — and I recognize that this is not his department's lead, but I would note that the concern that I have heard from farmers and producers is that the standing-offer agreements aren't being fully utilized by governments since departments — once they've entered into them — have some discretion on whether they are actually using the SOAs fully or whether they choose not to use that product. That has led to some apparently deciding that it was easier to not do that — or less hassle perhaps.

That has created a situation where the intent of those agreements is apparently not being fulfilled. I would just

encourage the minister to look into this, to raise it with his colleague, and to consider changing those from an SOA structure to a contract structure under which government would enter into an agreement to purchase that and, as long as the producer was able to meet their commitments to supply it, they would do 100 percent of what they had committed to.

In the interest of time, I am going to move on to another file, and that is regarding the issue of agricultural land development rules. The minister will recall that, under his predecessor, there were changes announced following the agriculture policy that related to the ability to do things, including getting development permits on agricultural land. Those changes were scheduled to come into effect on April 1, 2021. On April 1, 2021, we were, of course, in an election. His predecessor, the then-Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, held a campaign meeting on April 1, 2021 and made a number of promises at that time, including to revisit that file, recognizing that a lot of people who owned agricultural land were upset by the rules that were coming into place that day.

The minister then signed a letter dated April 7 that said, in part — and I quote: “Development Permits on Agricultural Land: A re-elected Liberal government is committed to reviewing and improving agriculture policy, with a particular focus on the process for development permits on agricultural land.” Actually, just for Hansard, let me correct this. I read as the first word “agricultural”; it actually said “agriculture” at that point.

My question with that is — this was a change of the rules that the government was bringing in last April 1. They made a commitment to pause and take another look at it. I understand that this actually occurred, but can the minister just provide this House with an update on what has happened regarding that file and the issue of the rule changes that were announced and then paused? What is the status of those rule changes, and what are the current rules for development on titled agriculture land?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Leading up to the policy, what happened was that we developed an advisory committee with farmers from across the territory, and we got this advice. We came out with the strategy, and when it was just about to come into force, concerns were expressed by the farming community. We did press pause. That work is still in dialogue; we are revisiting it and seeing if it can be improved.

Right now, we are in the middle of that conversation with farmers. I want to be careful here to give a specific timeline. But I think that it is progressing and I do hope to hear something this season. I don't have a firm timeline yet on when it is going to be resolved. I am given to understand that the work is ongoing.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate that answer from the minister. I am pleased to hear that it is still paused. I would just ask two things.

Could the minister commit to providing a copy of what the current rules are just so that I have that to share with constituents? When I receive inquiries from people, that information isn't readily accessible — or at least easily findable

— for people on the website. I would just ask if he would commit to providing a copy of what the current rules are.

The second thing that I would urge him to commit to is ensuring that there is consultation with all owners of agricultural land through the same type of mechanisms that have been used previously: advising them via letter of changes that are being considered. With all due respect to the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee, the challenge with using that structure for consultation is that it is hard for that committee to always reflect the needs of everyone who owns agricultural land. There are many people within the farming and gardening sector who are opinionated and strong-willed and very busy operating their own farms and facilities.

There have been issues in the past — no doubt through no intent on anyone's part — with discussions there not being well-connected to the interest of other landowners. Of course, the members on that committee are not in a position where they have the resources or even the contact information to consult with all of the owners of agricultural land. So, I would just ask the minister to commit that, before putting new rules into place, they provide a copy of those draft rules to all current owners of agricultural land and provide them the opportunity to comment on that before government reaches a final decision on those rules.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, with respect to the interim rules that we have in place right now — or the interim policy that we have in place right now — I'm happy to get it to the member opposite. There's no time now for a legislative return, so I'll just get it across to him and to the Third Party.

I can say that what we're using in the interim is a footprint threshold — the amount of land in production for farm uses is sort of the system that is used. But we'll get that for him.

Will I commit to distributing any draft policy to the farming community? Yes, I will — and give an opportunity for some feedback? Yes, I will — or the branch will.

I can also say that I think it's true that, no matter who we're talking to in the Yukon, there's always a range of opinions, so I think it's fair that it's tough to capture everything all the time.

No problem — I think the branch used the advice that they got. They heard some concerns; we're pausing. I think that's all part of this process.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do thank the minister for that answer and that commitment. I think that it is important to do it in that way — that all owners of agricultural land do have the opportunity to comment on the draft rules. One of the things that I heard and that came up at the doorstep in the election last year as well as elsewhere from Yukoners is that there were issues that emerged after the rules had been announced — and it seems like neither government officials nor the Agriculture Industry Advisory Committee had really thought of them at the time when the rules were being contemplated.

I'm not saying that with the intention of blaming anyone at this point. I'm just framing it as how to do things better going forward to avoid the problems that occurred previously.

I would like to move on to the issue of the Fox Lake local area plan, which has been in the works for quite some time. It would be about 10 years ago that the process started — in fact,

when I was minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. We haven't heard much from government about it lately.

Can the minister provide an update on what the status is of that planning work?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, just to go back, I was correct in my earlier response about the purchase price for Haeckel Hill wind. It uses the independent power producer standing-offer agreement. That price is just over 18 cents per kilowatt hour, I believe.

With respect to Fox Lake, I will have to get some additional information. I can advise that the Ta'an Kwäch'an Council asked for the Fox Lake planning process to be paused while there was a focus on Shallow Bay. The Ta'an Kwäch'an Council is requesting that we do a planning process for the larger area, which includes Fox Lake and north of town. That's the current status.

We do, of course, have local area planning going on in many areas of the territory. I can say that land planning is always busy.

**Mr. Cathers:** I was interested to hear the minister indicate that there was some consideration of doing a larger local area plan for the area north of Whitehorse. I would just remind him that, in addition to the fact that the Ibex Valley area has a local area plan, as does the Hot Springs Road area, there actually was a previous attempt made by a government prior to when I was elected that tried to do local area planning work north of Whitehorse. That was called the Hootalinqua north zoning process. It led to a tremendous amount of public objection from what was a much smaller community at the time due to different interests and needs in different areas. The government of the day ended up abandoning that exercise fairly quickly.

So, I would just suggest to the minister that this type of exercise — attempting to address the needs of communities all in the same way — I would just point out, for example, that there was often no recognition by government, in terms of referring to unincorporated communities — the Hot Springs Road area, according to the number of voters on the elections list, has more people in it than a number of medium-sized towns in the Yukon, including Carmacks and Mayo. The Mayo Road area itself also has more people in it than in towns such as the ones that I have mentioned, and while there are some similarities between the two, they do have their differences as well. The Ibex Valley area is smaller, but there would be in excess of 250 people within the area there. Attempting to address the needs of everyone there, along with the Fox Lake area which is home to a much smaller number of residents, is — I think it is fair to say — guaranteed to lead to public backlash.

I would just suggest that the minister consider addressing the needs of existing local area plans through updating rather than abandoning them and recognizing the shared issues and cumulative impacts individually throughout those plans rather than attempting to lump them all in together.

I would also point out to the minister that, should an effort be made by government to just merge them all into one, there are differences in both the development potential of different

classes of lots throughout that area that would end up being affected, and the ability to subdivide minimum lot size is different between some of those areas, so it would lead to some real challenges attempting to do that.

I will just leave that there and move on to the next question that I have on my list, which relates to the status of the Grizzly Valley lots. The minister will recall that there were 11 lots that were contemplated and zoned for rural residential dog mushing. There was then public objection to that. After a significant amount of time had passed — over a dozen years since those lots were initially contemplated — the public comments on that included a petition that was signed by over half of the residents of the existing Grizzly Valley north subdivision. The government then did public consultation and had paused activity on those lots. I understand now that they have advised residents via mail that they are considering changing the zoning on eight of those 11 lots.

Could the minister please update me on what the status is on this situation with those 11 lots? Is the government indeed planning on changing the zoning on some of those lots, and what are the government's plans with regard to those 11 lots?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** With respect to the feedback, there was a lot of blend or differences in the feedback. Just over 50 percent were in favour of not having dog lots. We are working toward reconfiguring some of those lots. It is in process right now.

As the member noted, we are consulting right now on rezoning eight of these lots to rural residential. We have left a few lots that could remain zoned for dog mushing, but we're not releasing them without more conversation. We will start with the other lots and we will reconfigure them.

When you have dog lots, often they are quite a bit larger, so we will probably reconfigure to match the other lots in the area. So, they will be a minimum size of three hectares. We're talking with local residents; we're talking with Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation. That work is in process right now in engaging with residents and the First Nations.

**Mr. Cathers:** I'm pleased to hear that consultation is happening.

The minister mentioned reconfiguring those eight lots and suggested a minimum lot size of three hectares. That would seem to indicate that, since those lots were larger than that, the government is planning on subdividing or reconfiguring those lots so that there would be more than eight.

Could the minister indicate how many lots they're anticipating those eight lots changing into through whatever subdivision or reconfiguration they are considering?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I'm just going to confer with the department and check in on it. I'll get back to the member opposite.

**Mr. Cathers:** I appreciate the answer from the minister on that and I look forward to receiving that information.

I would just flag as well that, if they are considering increasing the number of lots in the area, it may also potentially create concern from residents about the increased development in the area. An additional factor — I know this is not the minister's responsibility and this falls under the Department of

Education — is that there still has not been school bus service provided to the subdivision or even at the entrance to Ursa Way. That is a growing issue now but will, no doubt, increase with more development that is done in the area.

I'm going to move on to the issue of Shallow Bay. As the minister will recall, the Shallow Bay rezoning process actually started back in 2014. There was strong support shown in the initial survey. It had a very high response rate of residents and very strong support for allowing the subdivision of rural residential lots.

That then changed through the Shallow Bay zoning process that the government undertook, and there were proposals presented — the minister will also recall — that became, in the lead-up to the election last year and during the election, an issue. Many people in the area were upset about the proposal, specifically where it included the loss of existing rights for current property owners. Some of those issues, as the minister may recall, are the proposed riparian buffer on titled land that would be applied back from the creek and from the lake. While riparian buffers are not a new concept, what has been the practice within the Yukon is that those are typically done through local area plans and zoning and affect the future disposition of land, rather than being applied on titled property.

Using the Ibex Valley zoning area as an example, when the setback was put in for the Takhini River, that affected how close new applications could go to the river, but did not impose a buffer or any restrictions on existing titled property.

The proposal that went out included putting in no-development conditions as part of that, which, as proposed at the time, would have actually prevented someone whose home or outbuildings were destroyed in fire from replacing them. That was very concerning for some people, especially those whose property is closer to creeks and Lake Laberge.

In one case — I won't name them here in the House out of respect for their privacy, but they will know to whom I am referring, and officials may, as well — had that proposal been put in place, it would have affected their home of many years and all the buildings on their property — a property that they actually cleaned up after they owned it to deal with historical contamination left by the US Army. They were in a situation where they were faced with a concern that, should they see a fire or other trouble occur, they would be unable to replace their house.

There were also restrictions proposed that would have prevented new paths from being developed by people on their property. As the minister knows, there was a lot of public dissatisfaction with that.

There were also other issues within the proposal that would have affected — some lot owners would have had the loss of housing development potential, such as the ability for some properties to add a rental unit on them and the case of proposing that existing development rights be removed. There were also changes that would have negatively affected the existing subdivision potential of some lots and would have taken away some of the current allowable uses through the zoning on certain lots that in some cases would have resulted in people with activities that they're currently undertaking going from

being fully allowed on those lots to being classified as a “grandfathered non-conforming use”, which as the minister no doubt is aware, would allow them to continue it at roughly the same size that they’re currently using, but would prevent things such as the expansion of equestrian facilities, for example, on existing lots.

Another example that I will give was the concerns that people had about the proposal that riparian buffers would have prevented horse riding within those buffers near waterways.

That’s not an exhaustive list of the concerns, but considering how deeply it affected people, I did want to give a few of the examples on the record.

Can the minister provide an update on what the status of the Shallow Bay zoning process is now? What next steps are contemplated in terms of public consultation, especially consultation with existing landowners who would be affected by any potential changes?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, there was a citizens steering committee which drafted some potential proposals that did raise concerns, and the member has noted several of those concerns here today. I know the department is aware of those concerns.

We got a bit of a wakeup call last summer with the flooding in that area. I think with respect to the Land Planning branch and the steering committee, I think they’re working on a “what we heard” document. I have also asked that everything should be on hold until we get some flood-risk mapping. You want to be thoughtful about what rules you put in around allowing development and subdivision in areas where you’re at potential risk of flooding.

So, I think that the important thing here is that we need to get some detailed flood-risk mapping. Of course, under *Our Clean Future*, that’s one of the things that we’re doing across all of our communities. I think that work is underway. Those are the next steps.

I should just, while I’m on my feet, say that I appreciate the concerns that are raised by residents around planning processes. They always have challenges, but we believe fundamentally in planning processes. I don’t think they’re easy; I just think they’re important.

**Mr. Cathers:** I certainly don’t disagree with the minister that planning processes are important.

I also just would note, in terms of the Shallow Bay situation, that in contrast to neighbouring zoning areas where, for example, there has been a reduction in the minimum lot size for rural residential lots, which is actually how the Shallow Bay process started, others have seen a reduction from a six-hectare minimum lot size in both the Mayo Road area and the Hot Springs Road area.

The Hot Springs Road area actually has reduced the minimum lot size twice — first to three hectares and then to two hectares for rural residential.

The zoning rules on the minimum lot size for the Shallow Bay area, in contrast to the areas I mentioned — and some others — has not actually changed since — I think it’s 1973 that the original order-in-council was put in for the Whitehorse periphery interim development regulation, I believe it was called.

I would just note that, for some of the people who are looking to subdivide and retire or who see housing shortages around them and the concerns around that and want to provide that opportunity, especially for members of their family, it is frustrating for some of them that this has been many, many years in process.

For some of them who have owned the lots since the 1970s or 1980s, they were involved in the first time that there was consideration of reducing the minimum lot size back in the 1990s, which stalled. Now the current process has been underway for close to eight years.

I would just remind the minister of that and point out that, in some cases, it is affecting people’s ability to see their children provided homes. There are some urgent and semi-urgent — or at least time-sensitive — situations related to it as well. There are consequences associated with delaying this for some of those families who are affected.

I want to move on to — just one more question on the issue of Shallow Bay. I don’t think that the minister provided timelines on when they expect to have more public information or consultation related to Shallow Bay. Does the minister have some sense of that he can provide?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I am hopeful that we have the flood-risk mapping done sometime this year and that we can then pick things back up in 2023 with respect to the planning around Shallow Bay. I will also note with respect to Grizzly Valley that we are looking at whether we can increase the number of lots from the ones that we have identified that were originally set aside as dog lots. Eight of the 11 lots that we are looking at are being reconsidered to possibly be reconfigured to get a few more lots out of them, but that is all part of the engagement that we will have with the neighbours around what is going on.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate that information from the minister about Grizzly Valley and would just ask if he could provide me, as I’m sure he doesn’t have it in front of him, with a copy of the letter and any maps that went out to people about that; I would appreciate it.

I want to move on to the issue of Stevens Quarry. The minister will be familiar with the issue. We have discussed it a number of times in Question Period. The minister will recall that, last April, his predecessor made a commitment to — and I quote: “... maintain the administrative hold that is currently in place on Stevens Quarry ... It will not be developed...” over the next mandate.

We have discussed the issue of impacts to farmers, including people whom the minister has recognized in this House, from the potential development of that. What I would ask the minister is if he could talk about what work the government has done, or is contemplating, on other gravel options. My understanding is that — at the tank farm property, for example — there is a significant amount of gravel reserves identified there, as well as other existing gravel reserves that the government has identified.

Could the minister talk about what reserves are currently identified, and could he indicate whether they are doing any

work, either directly or in cooperation with the city, to identify new potential gravel resources?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** So, I will answer a few ways. First of all, in broad terms, I have sat down a couple of times now with the city to talk through the issue of gravel. I am sure that the department has met many times with them. We have asked that together we review all demands for gravel and all potential supply — existing, private, government-owned, and potential. For example, one of the places that we discussed was the tank farm and we talked with the city. I know, as well, that the Minister responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation has also had conversations about the tank farm with the city. We both have discussed that there could be a potential for gravel there, but it has to work within the city's rules.

We have discussed Stevens Quarry and have gone over it again, and so I will say that I fully anticipate honouring the commitment that was made by the Member for Porter Creek South with respect to Stevens Quarry. We see potential in Stevens Quarry. We think that we should keep our eyes on it, but if it were to be developed, it would require quite a bit of planning because, when the YESAB assessment happened in 2012 — or in that area — there was a list of conditions placed on the potential of developing Stevens Quarry — I think there were about 40 or 50 conditions — but significantly, there were several in there that required specific planning.

That is where that is at. I'm not sure that we've had a discussion in this Legislature about the impact on agriculture. I did hear the Member for Lake Laberge weave that into his tribute yesterday, but I wouldn't call that a "conversation" yet. I will say that the department has let me know that it has identified 14 leases within Whitehorse. As I've said, we're working on assessing both the supply and the demand. I've asked the department as well to look nearby outside of the city as well, in case that is of utility for the City of Whitehorse.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do appreciate the minister indicating that he plans to honour that commitment. I would just note that the issue of potential development of Stevens Quarry — every time that it has reared its head, there has been concern from people in the area, including farmers, about the impact on them. Both current and past cattle operations have been very concerned about the impact on their livestock of active quarries right across the river from them or right next to them. I'll just give an example from 2012 during the YESAB review that occurred prior to government making a decision when I was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to not allow that project to proceed. One of the farms that I visited at the request of constituents — when they took us down to the edge of the Takhini River and showed where the development would occur — also showed the map boundaries as provided to YESAB and where that would be. It was quite evident that, looking at it from a map, it is not as obvious an impact as when you're standing there on the property and realizing that you could almost hit the edge of Stevens Quarry by throwing a stone across the river at where that was and that it would have taken away the hillside as well, which would have not only increased dust for the farm, but also for any Yukon paddlers, either recreational or wilderness tourism-related, using the Takhini River.

It would have significantly changed the rural and wilderness quality of the river by having an active gravel pit next to it. Those are some of the concerns.

I would urge the minister to take a look at the multiple submissions that residents in the area made during the review by YESAB in 2012, which culminated in 2013. That, I think, would help him understand some of the specific impacts — including on farmers — of developing that area.

I would just note as well that, as we did previously in government, we urge government to work on identifying other gravel options, because there does need to be gravel to meet the needs of the territory, but the impacts — as YESAB recognized and the government previously recognized — that would occur on farms, tourism, and other businesses and residents in the area are indeed real. That is why, every time the project has been proposed, there has been strong opposition to it.

I am going to move on to some other questions related to YESAB in this case. According to timelines, decision documents for BMC's Kudz Ze Kayah project should have been issued last May. However, on July 16 last year, the Yukon government and the federal government wrote a letter to the executive committee of the YESA board indicating that they expected a decision document to be issued for this project in the next three months. We are now over nine months since the letter was posted, and no decision document has been issued and no updates have been provided on when we can expect it.

Can the minister update the House on when he expects a decision document to be issued for this project?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is a lead for us as a major project with the Executive Council Office — I am working at all times with the Premier on this file.

He and I, and our department folk, have raised this with the federal government at every opportunity. I will honestly say that, in every meeting that I have had with my ministerial counterparts since I took this role roughly a year ago, this topic has been raised.

I'm not able to speak for the federal government — I'm sorry. I don't have anything that I can add to the floor of the Legislature today.

I can say that I have a meeting coming up this weekend with one of my counterparts from the federal government. We have set an agenda, and I have asked that Kudz Ze Kayah be on that agenda. I'm working to get the information as quickly as possible. I'm working to encourage the federal government to complete its work. We believe that it's important to have a coordinated decision. We'll continue to encourage the federal government to do that.

**Mr. Cathers:** We certainly hope to hear more soon. The delays in the permitting process are concerning and impact investor confidence.

As the minister knows, over 50 percent of the Yukon's land base is currently off limits to new claim staking. A large part of this in the Ross River Dena Council's and the Liard First Nation's traditional territories. On April 6, the government extended the ban in these areas to April 20, 2024.

Can the minister provide us an update on negotiations to remove these bans? When was the last meeting held, and when is the next one scheduled?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** This is being led by the Executive Council Office. I will check in to see if there is any information about a latest engagement with the Kaska, both the Ross River Dena Council and the Liard First Nation.

**Mr. Cathers:** The last time Energy, Mines and Resources was here, we asked about the resource road regulation that was supposed to be happening this spring. My colleague mentioned that some companies felt that their YESAA assessments were delayed because it wasn't in place, and the legislation was passed last fall to enable it.

We saw yesterday in the media that a mining company near Ross River has withdrawn their project and has indicated that they are waiting for this regulation before they resubmit. Can the minister tell us when this regulation will be ready?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** As I said on April 13 when I was last on my feet responding to questions from the member opposite — the Member for Copperbelt South at the time — our current timeline for the resource road regulations is now early in 2023. It has just taken longer than we anticipated because of engagement and consultation, so that work is underway right now. We, too, are looking forward to those regulations.

Again, my thanks to all members of this Legislature for passing the bill last fall that will enable this. It is important, not just for the mining industry or other resource-based industries, but also for clarity for our communities and for making sure that we can protect the environment.

**Mr. Cathers:** We have highlighted growing concerns with the fuel-wood supply. Those concerns occurred over the past year and affected the ability of firewood suppliers this winter, as well as the price. We have highlighted those growing concerns about the upcoming season. We have also mentioned the concerns that we are hearing from harvesters, including those near the Watson Lake and Haines Junction areas, about things, including permit conditions, that prevent them from hauling during April because of concerns about wildfire risk when, of course, there was a lot of snow on the ground.

The minister had told us basically that he had received assurances from officials that the situation was okay. Can the minister tell us if he has reached out and talked to anyone in the industry about this situation? If so, who has he talked to about it?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The question was pretty specific. I think that it was about when I personally had conversation with members of the industry. I would have to look back to try to see when last I had texts or phone calls with some of the folks, but I know that the department has been in conversation. I have asked for information following questions that were raised here previously. I did say that we would want to hear from our wildfire specialists about when the risk was too high or not too high. I want to be careful when we are talking about the major producer from Watson Lake. He is harvesting in British Columbia, just across the border, down the Stewart-Cassiar, and so, for that, we are not involved directly in the permitting

process, but we do, from time to time, work to reach out to the BC government to facilitate permitting, if there are challenges.

**Mr. Cathers:** I do also just want to note — although I know that this specific change was not the minister's portfolio, it affected the fuel-wood industry, which largely deals with him. The changes to the rules around weigh scales, as well, is something that we heard from firewood sellers was seriously impacting their ability to deliver wood to people in the Whitehorse area.

Ultimately, when it comes to government regulations, or to permitting and assessment, while it does matter which department or board is dealing with something, ultimately, for companies that are trying to navigate the system, as well as their customers, if the system isn't working, they don't really care who is to blame; they want to see solutions. The fact was that we were in a situation last year where producers were forced to import logs from British Columbia for firewood that could have been sourced here. It was not a cost-effective outcome and it was not even the most environmentally responsible outcome because of the increased emissions in hauling them.

So, my point on that is I just want to emphasize to the minister that people want to see solutions. We've done our part to provide some suggestions on that, but I would encourage the minister to work with people in the industry to hear what their problems are and to come up with solutions to actually fix these problems, rather than arguing over who's to blame for the problems.

I want to move on to another issue that is regarding a platform commitment the Liberals made regarding — saying that they would — quote: "Use wood salvaged in fuel breaks to heat local buildings, transitioning ten large buildings to biomass by 2025."

Can the minister update us on this commitment? How much wood has been salvaged, and how many large buildings have transitioned to biomass?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I agree with the member opposite that when you're presented with — when the public comes to you and presents challenges, you do work across departments to see. For example, when I heard about issues with respect to the delivery of firewood, I did reach out to the Minister of Highways and Public Works and was engaged with him on sorting that out, although I think that was really about local firewood delivery from in and around Whitehorse to nearby areas; it wasn't so much about firewood coming up the Alaska Highway, but it's fine.

I know that it is the Department of Highways and Public Works that is working on getting the buildings put across to use biomass, but we have created a group where we deal with Community Services, because they have the Wildland Fire folks, ourselves, because we have the Forestry branch, and also, I think Economic Development has been involved, but Highways and Public Works, to create the demand side on this. I'll check with my colleague to see if I can figure out how many buildings have — or what the plan is for the buildings to get across on to biomass — but that is correct that we are working together.

**Deputy Chair:** Would members like to take a brief recess?

**All Hon. Members:** Agreed.

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

*Recess*

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

**Mr. Cathers:** Continuing on the topic related to biomass, I just want to ask the minister about what is being done regarding targeted harvesting in and near communities to reduce wildfire risk. The minister will recall that we have urged the government in the past to do more on this. As well, we want to acknowledge the work of FireSmart Whitehorse, a citizens' group, for the work they have done in bringing this to the attention of governments and the work of fire experts, both within the government and outside, on identifying the potential wildfire risk in Whitehorse and in communities.

As the minister knows, an evaluation of Fort McMurray and other wildfires provides some lessons for the Yukon. The number one lesson is the importance of doing that targeted harvesting work and other fuel abatement and preparations before it's an emergency, because, in an emergency situation, it can very quickly get out of hand.

Fort McMurray, as the minister will no doubt be aware — we heard in the post-mortem report that was provided and shared at the Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre a while ago — I don't recall the exact date of that — had also done some comparisons between our situation and theirs. Fort McMurray was much better set up for fleeing during a wildfire situation and has more options than we do in terms of wildfire risk.

The minister will also recall that information indicates that, typically in the summer, the prevailing wind is from the south more often than from the north and that the statistics around highest risk would suggest that we do face the greatest risks in the Whitehorse area if there were to be a wildfire south of town or in town, but that is not the only direction that it could approach.

Just setting the stage there, my question for the minister is — recognizing all the discussion that has gone on — and we know that some work has been done on a fire break — can the minister update us on what the current status is of doing targeted harvesting in and near communities to reduce wildfire risk? What's underway now? What is anticipated to occur?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all, to answer the previous question about biomass, we have buildings in Dawson and Teslin. We also have several in and around Whitehorse: Yukon Gardens, Raven Recycling, and Hobah Apartments. The Correctional Centre here uses pellets, but they are expanding to additional buildings for the Young Offenders Facility and

Takhini Haven. I understand that Elijah Smith school is considering a biomass heating system. I know that we have had conversations with the City of Whitehorse about several. I know that the Energy Solutions Centre has provided some funding and support through the good energy program to maybe eight or so buildings with respect to biomass. From talking with the Minister of Highways and Public Works, I understand that there are a dozen or so other buildings being considered.

With respect to wildland fire and the community safety aspect and using those opportunities for harvest, we are doing projects across all Yukon communities. It is being led by Wildland Fire Management within Community Services. That work is underway for each community. We started with Whitehorse and Haines Junction. We identified fire risk and started there. We have a team that sits down to work with the community to talk about that risk and to map out preventive measures. It isn't always just about a fire break. It is possible that sometimes it is about making it so that our attack crews can get in and do better work and redirect fires. The forestry branch is working with Wildland Fire Management on those projects.

**Mr. Cathers:** It is worth noting — as my colleague, the Member for Kluane, pointed out — that the fire-break work that was intended for the Haines Junction area was — depending on the Quill Creek area that went out to the private sector for logging — and that, of course, because of a condition of the permit that shut them down on April 1 due to an abundance of over-caution regarding the potential wildfire risk in April, considering what this year has been like — they were prevented from doing work that actually would have reduced the wildfire risk this summer in the Haines Junction area. I do want to note that, in that area, I do appreciate that some work has started. I do want to emphasize again the importance of doing that before it's an emergency.

I recognize that, while we appreciate the work that is being done by government in preparing for flood season, nature doesn't always cooperate with planning work and we could indeed see a summer that is problematic for forest fires. For any community that is in a situation where there is a higher fuel load in and near the community than we can deal with effectively should a wildfire occur, the risk from that is not something to overstate, but not something to minimize either. Unfortunately, the best available information tells us that, in the Whitehorse area, we are not well-prepared for dealing with such a situation, and if the wrong wildfire occurs — and the wrong wind and temperature conditions — it could be extremely problematic for Whitehorse and the surrounding area.

I do want to move on to some other issues. I want to ask the minister about the ongoing elk-agriculture conflict. The minister will recall that we have suggested, as have farmers — and my colleague, the Member for Kluane, and I signed a letter about that, urging the government to broaden the exclusion zone to broaden the Takhini Valley.

Can the minister update us on what work is currently ongoing to deal with the elk-agriculture conflict?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** First of all — and I say this respectfully — we here are elected officials, but we have



experts. So, when it comes to wildland fire, I just again say: Can we please defer to our experts at Wildland Fire Management to give us their best indication about when risk is too high and when it is not? I just think that it is a mistake for us to not defer to them. Of course, we are very well aware of the risk of wildfire. I will leave that there. This is what I have said here previously. I don't think that this should be a political decision; I think that it should be a decision led by our emergency response teams — in particular, the wildfire folk from Community Services.

With respect to elk and agriculture and the conflict, this summer we come to the end of our two-year trial that we were running. We had already pulled together stakeholders to have conversations about how that went and where we should go. I think that they have even met a couple of times this week. The Yukon Agricultural Association, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, First Nations, the Fish and Wildlife Management Board, the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, and the Department of Environment are part of it. They are sitting down right now to talk about all potential options and to discuss a way forward.

**Mr. Cathers:** The minister seems to take issue with my colleagues and I saying that there is not a high wildfire risk right now with the amount of snow that is on the ground, suggesting that we leave that conclusion to the experts. Don't get me wrong; I do respect the advice of experts, but common sense is also something that hopefully most of us do have. Some of us in this House do have some familiarity and understanding of seasonal normal conditions as well as wildfire risks, so it's a little bit hard for me to not challenge the minister on the statement that suggests that we shouldn't question what he claims the experts are saying.

I am going to pursue that one a little further. I am going to ask — he says that we should listen to the experts. My question is: Did the forest resources branch consult with Wildland Fire Management before putting in the April 1 condition on the Quill Creek permit requiring them to stop? As the minister knows, it took effect regardless of what the conditions actually were this April.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Yes, as the plans are set, there are conversations with various branches, and I will also say that my background is in climate change risk analysis. I authored the paper talking about the risks here in the territory, where I indicate that our single highest risk is around wildland fire. I'm very familiar with this issue. Still, I would defer to the experts at Wildland Fire. I appreciate that all folk in this Legislature, or all MLAs, have common sense and are all here to do their best. I just continue to say, even with that background of mine, that I think we should make sure to be checking in around these risks with our professionals.

**Mr. Cathers:** Again, I don't disagree with the minister that it's valuable to check with experts, but when the decision was made — whoever made it — that clearly doesn't make sense in the current weather conditions — and as I mentioned, as pointed out by my colleague for Kluane, the work in Quill Creek where the private sector operator had to stop, in addition to helping them provide fuel wood to their customers, that

project itself was also intended to reduce the fuel-wood risk south of Haines Junction, and because of a —

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

**Mr. Cathers:** — fire risk — thank you to my colleague. It was intended to reduce the fire risk south of Haines Junction, and because the operator shut down April 1, while there was a lot of snow on the ground out there and a very low wildfire risk, we resulted in a situation where Haines Junction is actually at greater risk of a wildfire problem this summer due to that work not continuing in the month of April.

Ultimately, I'm not disputing that whoever was dealing with this probably meant well, but a mistake was made, and it is part of our job to point that out and suggest what government should do to correct it going forward, which includes not putting in an arbitrary date of April 1 that can't be adjusted in permits such as this if there is a future situation where, during the month of April, there is an exceptionally low wildfire risk due to snow remaining late on the ground.

I want to ask the minister about that April 1 date that was included. Is it the government's intention to include this as a standard condition on other logging and fuel-wood permits, or has the government recognized that was a mistake, and will they endeavour to ensure that future permits provide, at the very least, more flexibility to acknowledge weather conditions, if there's a low fire risk situation?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I don't know how many years ago — I'm just looking across to my colleague, the Member for Kluane — but there was the fire that started nearby to Haines Junction, and it started from a slash pile that was left for some work. So, you do have to be careful. Again, that is why it's good to talk to our experts.

I did ask the department about where this comes from specifically. The fire season is legislated under the *Forest Protection Act*. This was a condition that YESAB set coming forward.

Look, I think we're arguing the wrong way in this Legislature right now. Do I understand that there is a lot of snow on the ground? Yes, there is across the territory. Of course, I can't tell you how much snow we will have on the ground next year yet. Could there be the possibility of getting conditions that are different and more flexible? Possibly. I'm happy to look at it by talking with experts, by making sure that we're following the rules.

I appreciate that the member is characterizing this as though we, as a government, have stepped in and done something that is not common sense. Actually, I think what we're doing is following those things that are prescribed for us, and it's about being cautious.

I appreciate that there is a difference of opinion about this, and we can continue to debate it — I'm happy to do so — but this is about making sure. I think the value that we are trying to uphold here is to make sure that the communities are safe while, at the same time, providing as much opportunity for the private sector and the wood supply.

I think that the debate is — I appreciate it — but I will just be turning back to the department to ask for their suggestions and advice on this. I'm not advising them to do something

different other than to follow the rules and to make sure that our communities are safe.

**Mr. Cathers:** I would like to pursue this at greater length, but I'm just going to make a couple of brief comments before turning it over to the Third Party, as agreed, to provide them with the opportunity to ask questions.

I just want to note that I appreciate the minister's response, but I think that he is missing the mark. Ultimately, the situation is not to do it in a way to raise fears about wildfire risk this year, but there is a reality that, while government is focusing on preparing for a flood, it actually might be a wildfire year and that the work that was going on in the Haines Junction area and Quill Creek actually would have reduced the wildfire risk this summer, and it is possible — hopefully, it will not be the case — that the work that could have been done in April could have made a material difference if there is a wildfire problem in the area.

So, I would encourage the minister, if they are basing it on what they see as a lack of flexibility in the rules, to do as we have suggested in the past, and as industry has suggested, and revisit those rules that are creating problems unnecessarily.

With that, I will wrap up my comments and just thank the minister and the officials here, as well as those supporting him. As agreed with the Third Party, I will turn the floor over to them for questions.

**Acting Chair (Ms. Clarke):** Member for Whitehorse Centre.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to my colleague. I appreciate the chance to ask some questions.

I want to start by following up on a question that my colleague asked about the Kudz Ze Kayah mine. The minister said that they are currently encouraging Canada to move forward with a decision. That suggests to me that the Yukon government has the information they need on their end to make a decision, and I am wondering what the position is of YG on that project.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I believe that we indicated our support for the project more than a year ago and that we were encouraging the feds to get to the end of their deliberations.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you for that answer.

I wanted to talk briefly about the better building program, which I understand is under the Energy Solutions Centre, and I am wondering when that is expected to be operational.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The split in the work is that Community Services is working with municipalities to address how the local improvement charges will be managed through the property tax system, but in unincorporated areas, we are the taxation authority. We can get to that work right away. I will have to check with my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, to find out what the timing will be in unincorporated areas.

In terms of getting from the Energy Solutions Centre side of this, we already do this work where we go in and assess buildings and advise on how they can do retrofits and support that. It is already done by the Energy Solutions Centre, so that can happen. Of course, we might need to scale up and ramp up,

but the piece that I would need to check in about is how the taxation or local improvement charge side of that is handled.

I am just getting a note suggesting that it will be late this year when that begins. I can also indicate that we just got funding from the federal government to do training across our communities for folks to be energy auditors and to build up that expertise across the Yukon.

**Ms. Tredger:** I just want to make sure that I understand correctly. Is the minister saying that the loan program is already available for unincorporated communities and that people can access it right now?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** No, what I am saying is that the work of the Energy Solutions Centre to audit buildings and residences, and to advise on how to retrofit and all that work, is in place now. We do that work, but we don't loan out money for it. We provide grants for that work.

The loan system under the better building loan program will come in, we think, this fall. We need to get the regulations in place, so we think our timing for that is later this year. Then we can begin to do the work in any unincorporated area where we are the taxing authority. So, the loan part of the better building side will come into place once the regulations are in place. Then finally, within municipalities where they are the taxing authority, there is work ongoing now with the Department of Community Services to facilitate those municipalities to get on board as well.

**Ms. Tredger:** Just to make sure that I understand correctly, the audits are available now — and I had one a couple of years ago and it is a great program. We're expecting the regulations for the program to come by the end of the fall, at which point the loans will be available to unincorporated communities. Then in other municipalities, it will come at a later date that is not sure yet. So, if that's correct, that would be great. If not, perhaps the minister can correct me.

Otherwise, I will move on. I want to talk a little bit about *Our Clean Future* and specifically some of the provisions around quartz mines. Item I6 calls for new provisions in the quartz mining licensing process to ensure that their infrastructure is designed and built to withstand climate change by 2022 — which, of course, is this year.

Where is that work at?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Just to support the earlier review, what the member opposite said about the development of the better building program is true.

By the way, I anticipate — I sat in with the minister in conversations with municipalities and I heard that they were quite supportive, so I anticipate that it will come pretty quickly with getting them there as the taxing authority.

As the member noted, under *Our Clean Future*, there is a requirement for our mines to give us their emissions. The way we're doing that is that, when we reissue licences for those mines, it will become a condition of their licence. That's starting this year. We will issue guidance to the industry later this year.

There are a couple of our actions — both I6 and I7. We will send a note out to the industry later this year, and then, on

any renewal of their licences, it will become a condition of their licences.

**Ms. Tredger:** So, the note will go out later this year. Then I am assuming that, in 2023 when they renew their licences, at that point, we will start getting reports. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** We will ask all mines to report to us right away. We will also make it a condition of their licence on a go-forward basis so that it is a requirement for them to do so. That will happen as their licences renew.

Not every mine renews their licence every year. It will happen over time.

But I can say this as well: We have been working through the chamber of mines, through the producers group, through various folks to give them an indication of this. Generally speaking, it has been pretty well-received — that is my feeling for it. I think that most mines are working to support us in how we're moving forward under these things, noting that we're all working together to try to transition off of fossil fuels.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that. I'm wondering if we can expect those reports about mining emissions to be made public. Will that be included in the territory's emissions report?

I'm also wondering about the work for the intensity-based greenhouse gas reduction targets for mines — if we can have an update on that work.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** There are a couple of ways. The main way in which we track emissions for mines — or for almost anything in the territory — is through fuel sales. That is the best way we have to track those emissions. We understand that, for different fuel types, they have different emission profiles and we just use those sales, largely. As we have indicated to mines, that is the best way for them to track for it. Yes, we will report that information as we get it. The answer to the question about whether we will report that information is yes.

The work is ongoing right now regarding mining intensity targets. Last week, I met with the Yukon Minerals Advisory Board. We discussed them taking this on as one of the issues that they can advise me on. We have had that type of dialogue. We are preparing information for them right now on potential options. The Sustainable Resources branch has been working to develop options around mining intensity targets. The real challenge is around how you measure the productivity of mines and compare them. That's the thing that is most being worked on.

**Ms. Tredger:** I am wondering if there is an idea of when those targets will be in place. I am also curious if there is a sense of the time over which those targets will be realized. Do we have a sense of what percent reduction in intensity-based emissions we are looking at?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** One of the things I can say is that it's our stated goal under *Our Clean Future* to develop those targets this year. By the end of the year is when we anticipate having those targets ready.

We understand very well that our ultimate target is 2050 and zero emissions. Whether they are intensity- or absolute-based targets, it's all zero at that point, so they come together.

The real question is what intermediate steps to develop, because you don't just want to have a target that's far out. You need steps along the way in order to ensure that you are moving in that direction. That is where the conversation lies with the industry right now.

I think that it is fair to say that we should have an intermediate step similar to what we have with *Our Clean Future*. For *Our Clean Future*, we have a 2030 intermediate step, so we should have something similar to that with mines.

**Ms. Tredger:** That is great. I would be very happy to see a target by 2030. Do we have a sense of what percent of reduction in the emissions that we are looking for?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** That is certainly part of the conversation that is going on right now, but again, it should be similar. If you are trying to get to 2050, you need to make it significant over the next eight years or decade in order to move it down the path. Without having an answer specifically today, because that work is not complete, I can indicate that it should be comparable.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister. I am very excited to see the results of those conversations. I am going to jump around a little bit, trying to pack in a few last questions. I want to talk about the abattoir.

The Yukon's only year-round abattoir is closed, so that leaves Yukon farming businesses with only the mobile abattoir, which doesn't run in the winter and can't get to all farms. For example, West Dawson can't be accessed when the ferry is not running. It is pretty critical to northern food security that our farms are able to operate and that we are able to move product from farms to local restaurants and everyone else who relies on Yukon-grown meats.

I am wondering what the minister is doing to ensure that farmers and farms have year-round access to government-inspected abattoir services.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I met last Friday with YBAR — Yukon Born and Raised Meats — regarding their abattoir. They had taken the decision to end their lease where they had that abattoir set up, so we are in dialogue with them as we speak, but not just them. The folks who run the mobile abattoir — in fact, I understand that the Yukon Agricultural Association executive director was here just recently in the Legislative Assembly.

They are meeting with a group of stakeholders next week to work through a conversation on this issue. I have had a few conversations with the Agricultural Association. I know that the department is working on it, and I think that there are a few options on the table. What we want to make sure is that we have winter abattoir services, and we also need to make sure that there is support between now and when we get to a solution so that we don't run into problems. There are a few key issues to work on, and I would like to say thanks to all the folks in the industry who have reached out to talk to us about this.

When I talked with the executive director of the Yukon Agricultural Association, he referred to this as "growing pains"

— meaning that there has been a lot of movement in the Yukon to increase our food production here, and now, as that happens, we need to deal with this piece of infrastructure, because it is going to be critical for our farmers and our producers. So, we will work to resolve this, but I think that our overall goal is that we don't want government to be the ultimate solution. Over time — there might be an interim piece where we are there, but as soon as we can move out of the space, that would be important for us as well.

**Ms. Tredger:** Could the minister clarify for me — was he referring to the Yukon government-owned mobile abattoir, or was he referring to a private mobile abattoir?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** When we first got involved with the mobile abattoir, it was envisioned that the government would be involved for five to 10 years and then remove itself from it. Now, that could mean a variety of things. That could mean that the mobile abattoir becomes totally private, or that could mean that there are enough private fixed facilities that it could handle work across the territory. So, it is a range of possibilities, but I meant more broadly than just the fixed abattoir.

**Ms. Tredger:** Thank you to the minister for that clarification.

I wanted to skip back to mining just for a moment and mining emissions. This is a conversation that we have had a few times in the Legislature, but I want to really drill down on it, and that is the question of the emissions caused by habitat — in particular, wetlands degradation, but other types of environment as well which isn't currently captured in *Our Clean Future* as our emissions which, as the minister had mentioned, are mostly measured through fuel sales.

Yet we know that this is a really important source of carbon — they're very important carbon sinks, and they have the potential to release a huge amount of carbon into the atmosphere when disrupted. I believe the Minister of Environment had said that they are working on a way to measure how much carbon we can expect to be released by different types of development.

I guess the question for me is — we're in a climate emergency. Do we need to know exactly how big of a problem this is to know that it's a huge problem? If we're trying to get our emissions down, do we need to really narrow in on exactly how much carbon this would emit, or can we just say that needs to be left in the ground?

I'm wondering if the minister can update us on that work to measure that and what their plans are to include it in any kind of targets.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I understand that some of our folks had a workshop on this yesterday. Again, there are several — there are many ways in which we store carbon in the Yukon, or across the country. Our boreal forest would be one; wetlands is one; soil is one — they all have carbon storage in them, and depending on how you disturb them and how you treat them, you can change that balance.

It is important to study it — absolutely, it is important to study it. It could be that we have activity happening in those areas right now, and we may have misunderstood what type of

risk there is with that. It is really quite important to get a sense of the order of magnitude. Now, it will never be exact.

I have been around this issue long enough to see Canada, internationally, talk about forestry and what it can and can't do with respect to sequestering carbon. It's, I would say, a complicated situation whenever you are dealing with the natural world and our relationship with it.

I think that wetlands have many values for us as Yukoners, not just as carbon stores. They do many ecological services, and so they should definitely be considered. I will say again that we have a wetlands strategy that is currently being engaged upon across the territory with industry, citizens, First Nation governments, and also the public at large. I think that's important work.

I guess I will disagree with the member opposite that, if something has any emissions, we should stop it because we have a trajectory. We have a lot of vehicles, heating, many things that have emissions to them. We're not looking to try to put a hard stop on that; we're trying to look to transition as smoothly as possible. I spoke yesterday at the closing of — at the final evening of the Renewables in Remote Communities conference. It was great to hear all of that interest in moving things forward, but it's still a journey that we're on together. I agree that there is an imperative, but I don't think that you can just turn off a tap.

**Ms. Tredger:** I'll come back again to: We're in an emergency.

I am looking forward to the release of the wetlands policy. I have to say that I hope it looks quite different from the draft, because the suggestion that wetlands would be open for development unless they were specifically nominated by someone of special interest or of special importance puts an immense amount of onus on Yukoners to actively try to protect these areas. I really think it should be the other way around, that we say that these are important areas. If we think it's okay to develop them, if we can make the case that it is safe, that it is necessary to develop them, then we can do that, but the idea that they're all open for business unless someone is able to go through the process of nominating them is really problematic.

But I do want to skip around a little bit just to — back to *Our Clean Future* and some of the housing developments. I do apologize for skipping around. Under item H8, which is rebates for thermal enclosures, is this program fully subscribed this year, and do we have a sense of how many applications there are each year?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** I just got a note from the Energy Solutions Centre to indicate to me that the program is not fully subscribed yet this year, so I hope that is the information that is being sought. I will also just encourage that, because we are engaging now on the wetlands policy — I am hearing the concerns that the member is raising about the wetlands policy, but like all Yukoners, I welcome all that feedback into that engagement system, and I am happy to get it.

I think that we are probably drawing to a close today, and I would just like to thank the colleagues from Energy, Mines and Resources and, in particular, to thank assistant deputy

minister Heather Mills for her first time here in the Legislative Assembly.

**Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger):** Is there any further general debate on Vote 55, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

**Mr. Cathers:** Since there is surprisingly an opportunity for one more question, I will just ask the minister — we have seen an indication in the budget about money for the electric vehicle station chargers, both for fast charging and for business and home. Can the minister please indicate what is the estimated impact of increased power consumption due to that? What is the plan for providing that power, and what is the impact on neighbourhood grids in terms of transformers, substations, and wiring that may need to be upgraded as a result?

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** With respect to the broad part of that question, that is exactly the 10-year renewable plan of Yukon Energy. It has always been to fuel-shift from the transportation toward renewables and to build up renewables at the same time. So, that plan is in place. I think that the member opposite knows about it.

With respect to the very technical question about neighbourhoods and transformers, I would have to talk to ATCO Electric to look at it, but luckily, I know that Yukon Energy and ATCO are working closely with each other around how that will work. I think we can get the technical information for members opposite. Just as a reminder, we did invite those

#### Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

**Deputy Chair:** The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 32<sup>nd</sup> sitting day of the 2022 Spring Sitting.

Standing Order 76(1) states, “On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting, pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, if the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole at the time, shall interrupt proceedings at 5:00 p.m. and, with respect to each Government Bill before Committee that the Government House Leader directs to be called, shall:

“(a) put the question on any amendment then before the Committee;

“(b) put the question, without debate or amendment, on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill, including all clauses, schedules, title and preamble, be deemed to be read and carried;

“(c) put the question on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill be reported to the Assembly; and

“(d) when all bills have been dealt with, recall the Speaker to the Chair to report on the proceedings of the Committee.”

Pursuant to the Sessional Order adopted on March 8, 2022, through the adoption of Motion No. 282, Standing Order 76 only applies to appropriation bills for this Sitting.

It is the duty of the Chair to now conduct the business of Committee of the Whole in the manner directed by Standing Order 76(1). The Chair will now ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the appropriation bill now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** The government directs that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be called at this time.

#### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

**Deputy Chair:** The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

The Chair will now recognize the Member for Klondike for the purpose of moving a motion pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** I move that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be deemed to be read and carried.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that all clauses, schedules, and the title of Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Count.

#### Count

**Deputy Chair:** A count has been called. The Chair will ring the bells and conduct a count.

#### Bells

**Deputy Chair:** Order.

All members in favour of the motion, please rise.

*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** All members opposed to the motion, please rise.

*Members rise*

**Deputy Chair:** The results are nine yea, eight nay.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion agreed to*

**On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures**

**Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,419,022,000 agreed to**

**On Capital Expenditures**

**Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$546,477 agree to**

**Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,965,499,000 agreed to**

*Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to*

*Schedules A and B agreed to*

*Title agreed to*

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

**Deputy Chair:** It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

*Motion agreed to*

**Deputy Chair:** As the appropriation bill identified by the Government House Leader has now been decided upon, it is my duty to rise and report to the House.

*Speaker resumes the Chair*

### Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

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

### Chair's report

**Ms. Tredger:** Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**Speaker:** I declare the report carried.

Standing Order 76(2)(d) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting, pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Speaker of the Assembly, when recalled to the Chair after the House has been in Committee of the Whole, shall:

"(d) with respect to each Government Bill standing on the Order Paper for Third Reading and designated to be called by the Government House Leader,

"(i) receive a motion for Third Reading and passage of the bill, and

"(ii) put the question, without debate or amendment, on that motion."

Pursuant to the Sessional Order adopted on March 8, 2022, through the adoption of Motion No. 282, Standing Order 76 only applies to appropriation bills for this Sitting.

I shall therefore ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the appropriation bill now standing on the Order Paper for third reading should be called.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Mr. Speaker, the government directs that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be called for third reading at this time.

### Bill No. 204: *First Appropriation Act 2022-23* — Third Reading

**Clerk:** Third reading, Bill No. 204, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

**Speaker:** It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 204, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House.

Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Division.

### Division

**Speaker:** Division has been called.

*Bells*

**Speaker:** Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

**Hon. Mr. Silver:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McPhee:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Streicker:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Pillai:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Clarke:** Agree.

**Hon. Ms. McLean:** Agree.

**Hon. Mr. Mostyn:** Agree.

**Mr. Dixon:** Disagree.

**Mr. Kent:** Disagree.

**Ms. Clarke:** Disagree.

**Mr. Cathers:** Disagree.

**Ms. McLeod:** Disagree.

**Ms. Van Bibber:** Disagree.

**Mr. Hassard:** Disagree.

**Mr. Istchenko:** Disagree.

**Ms. White:** Agree.

**Ms. Blake:** Agree.

**Ms. Tredger:** Agree.

**Clerk:** Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

**Speaker:** The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

*Motion for third reading of Bill No. 204 agreed to*

**Speaker:** I declare that Bill No. 204 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

*Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp*

### ASSENT TO BILLS

**Commissioner:** Please be seated.

**Speaker:** Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

**Clerk:** *Act to Amend the Education Act; First Appropriation Act 2022-23.*

**Commissioner:** I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Clerk.

Dear members, thank you for your work during the Spring Sitting. Enjoy some rest and the nice-ish weather — although today is really nice.

You will soon receive a personalized invitation to events organized over the next few months to celebrate Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee.

I would like to thank Brenda McCain-Armour, who is listening over there, Legislative Assembly Office operations manager, for her work over the years and for her welcoming presence. Thank you, Brenda, for the great conversations that we had over the last four years while I waited for the invitation to come into the House to assent to bills or to read the Speech from the Throne. Enjoy your retirement and have fun with your new e-bike.

Merci, thank you, shaw nithän, günilschish, mahsi' cho.

*Commissioner leaves the Chamber*

**Speaker:** I will now call the House to order.

Before I adjourn the Spring Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments. I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, and the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole, and on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to Clerk Dan Cable, Deputy Clerk Linda Kolody, Clerk of Committees Allison Lloyd, Director of Administration, Finance, and Systems Helen Fitzsimmons, and our retiring Operations Manager Brenda McCain-Armour, Finance and Operations clerk Lyndsey Amundson, as well as Sergeant-at-Arms Karina Watson and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Mewett, who all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for all of us to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners.

As well, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the skilled team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all the other background staff and contractors who keep this Legislative Assembly operating.

I would also like to thank our camera operator, Chris Rogers, our camera operator for the Assembly. I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who deliver services to Yukoners and support to all of us members in our work.

I wish all Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best after this long winter. I hope that all of us can look forward to a summer of family, friends, and the great Yukon outdoors. Thank you very much.

As the House has, pursuant to Standing Order 75(4), reached the maximum number of sitting days permitted for this Spring Sitting and the House has completed consideration of the designated legislation, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that this House now stands adjourned.

*The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.*

**The following sessional papers were tabled April 28, 2022:**

35-1-51

*Report of the Chief Electoral Officer — Election Financing Returns — 2021 Territorial General Election (Speaker Harper)*

35-1-52

*Report of the Chief Electoral Officer — Recommended Changes to the Elections Act 2021 (Speaker Harper)*

35-1-53

*Report of the Chief Electoral Officer — The Administration of the 2021 Territorial General Election (Speaker Harper)*

35-1-54

*Department of Education 2021 Annual Report (McLean)*

**The following legislative returns were tabled April 28, 2022:**

35-1-58

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: teacher remuneration (Streicker)

35-1-59

Response to Written Question No. 5 re: housing projects (Pillai)

**The following document was filed April 28, 2022:**

35-1-67

Yukon's Policing Priorities for 2022-23, letter re (dated March 25, 2022) from Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Justice, to Chief Superintendent Scott Sheppard, Commanding Officer, RCMP M Division (McPhee)

**The following written questions were tabled April 28, 2022**

Written Question No. 21

Re: bid value reductions associated with First Nation procurement policy (McLeod)

Written Question No. 22

Re: general duty policing review report (Cathers)

Written Question No. 23

Re: Old Crow health and wellness centre and tenplex housing project (Kent)

Written Question No. 24

Re: value of claims exchanged for compensation (Kent)

Written Question No. 25

Re: health care in rural Yukon communities (Cathers)

Written Question No. 26

Re: mental health services (Cathers)

Written Question No. 27

Re: home care in communities (Cathers)