



Yukon Legislative Assembly

1st Session

35th Legislature

Index to **HANSARD**

October 4, 2023 to November 23, 2023

NOTE

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

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YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	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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 Lesley Cabott, Chair, 4317–4330

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Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 150

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, October 31, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	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, October 31, 2023 — 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: Mr. Speaker, we have several guests here for the tribute to Carl Friesen. Could everyone in the Assembly please welcome Robyn Tripp-Friesen, friends Brenda Morrison and Brenda Estabrook, and Adele and Paul Lackowicz. We have Karin Waterreus, Dominic Alford, Arden Meyer, Mike Pemberton, Brandon Kassbaum, Ted Adel, Mike Kearney, and Pat Ross — if we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Carl Friesen

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the late Carl Friesen, who died last year at the age of 69. Carl was a land surveyor, involved in many projects across the Yukon and the north. Carl was a partner at Underhill engineering, working there for some 50 years, leading the Whitehorse office for many of those years, and, by the way, Underhill is celebrating 110 years as a company this year.

Carl brought me to the Yukon to work as an engineer — something that I am forever grateful for. I remember him picking me up at the airport and taking me downtown in the 1990s. Carl asked me what my first impressions were, and I could tell that he loved this place and was checking to see if I had the same sense as he did.

Carl believed in serving his community. He was the president of the Association of Canadian Lands Surveyors in the early 2000s and the president of Engineers Yukon from 2011 to 2013. In recognition of his long and distinguished career, he was made a fellow of Engineers Canada in 2014.

Carl was rightfully proud of his role as a trusted resource for Yukon First Nation land claims surveys. Carl was involved in these historic land claims surveys and worked with Yukon First Nations and Indigenous governments in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, including Carcross/Tagish First Nation, Kwanlin Dün, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Kluane, Selkirk, Vuntut Gwitchin, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, Teslin Tlingit Council, as well as the Inuvialuit, Gwich'in, and Nunavut land claims.

As an employer, Carl was smart and hard-working and expected solid, responsible work from his teams. He was a strong, tough boss, and we all had a lot of respect for Carl.

Carl himself had a deep respect for Indigenous communities, including First Nation businesses. For example, for many years, Underhill has been one of the key sponsors of the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce's big event at Roundup. Carl was a key negotiator in Underhill's partnership with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and Victoria Gold on the Eagle Gold mine.

I am grateful to Carl for his contributions to the land claims work that forms a fundamental part of the Yukon's governance today. The agreements that he helped support play a crucial role in fostering reconciliation, empowering Indigenous communities, and building stronger relationships through meaningful dialogue and shared decision-making. The Premier asked me to relay that Carl was a mentor for him — a professional, personal, and political mentor. The Premier and I have spoken often about how much we appreciated Carl's role as a mentor.

Carl was a grandfather, a father, and a husband. He loved his family, he loved golf, and he loved the Yukon. I remember working with him out in the field and I think he really loved to be out in the backcountry on top of mountains.

Today in the Yukon Assembly, we take a moment to remember Carl Friesen and thank him for his service. Today, Mr. Speaker, is actually Carl's birthday. Greatly missed by his family, friends, and colleagues — happy birthday, Carl.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise today on behalf of my colleagues in the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Carl Friesen.

Carl's contribution to the Yukon has been deep and wide. He made a long and lasting impact on the business community here in the Yukon and throughout the north, serving over 50 years with Underhill Geomatics and Underhill and Underhill including, most notably, as a partner and the lead for the Whitehorse office for several decades. He was very active in a variety of professional associations and held many leadership roles.

The Association of Canada Lands Surveyors, the board of Professional Surveyors Canada, and Engineers Yukon were just a few of the ways that Carl tried his best to play a leadership role within the business community and within his profession.

As his career progressed into the later years, he certainly remained closely involved in the happenings at Underhill but also often stepped in to fill leadership roles in the business and professional community as a whole.

Carl had always expressed that it was his duty, as someone with his experience and knowledge born out of his decades in the private sector, to give back to his community, so he became involved in pretty much every business association in this territory. For the chambers of commerce, the Yukon Contractors Association, a variety of industry working groups, and pretty much any group or organization that needed a

representative who could speak to the needs of the business community, Carl would step up.

I got to know Carl throughout my political career, and I think that, for many of us here today, Carl was always willing to share his thoughts about current political happenings. Regardless of which party was in power or what policies they were pursuing, Carl was always willing to share his thoughts and advice with anyone who would ask. In fact, I seem to recall him offering pointed advice a few times without me even having to ask, but he was always honest and sincere in the feedback he would provide. While that sometimes meant he could be critical, he was never shy to compliment or support when he thought that was warranted as well.

I know that Carl's loss was very difficult for the team at Underhill, but I also know that he was confident in the resiliency of the company and felt that, under Sandy and the rest of the leadership team at Underhill, the company was in good hands. I hope that his colleagues know that his loss is shared by the entire business community. Carl also notably served on the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments in 2018 and he often spoke about his pride in that work. He was particularly proud of the appointment of Pat Duncan as senator. He told me several times that not even I could disagree with that one.

Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I also want to say a few words about his family. Carl was a committed family man. Time won't allow me to speak about his entire family, but I want to mention his special affinity and pride for his grandson, Jax. Carl knew that I was friends with his daughter, Zoe, and that she was quite close with my sister, so whenever we would speak about policy, procurement, or anything else, Carl would always fill me in on the latest with Jax and ask me about my kids as well.

It was always clear that he was a very proud father and grandfather. I will conclude by saying that Carl made an incredible contribution to Underhill, to the business community, to the entire private sector, and, of course, to the Yukon as a whole. To Robyn and the rest of his family, our sincere condolences. He will certainly be missed.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to share condolences with those who are feeling the loss of Carl Friesen. We thank our colleagues for their tributes. We wish all of you feeling your loss peace and comfort as you grieve.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 101 of the *Public Service Labour Relations Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board annual report.

Mr. Speaker, I also have, pursuant to section 103 of the *Education Labour Relations Act*, the Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board annual report.

Finally, I have, pursuant to section 9 of the *Public Service Group Insurance Benefit Plan Act* — I am tabling the Government of Yukon's financial accounting benefits report for the Public Service Commission. The report summarizes the financial results of the Government of Yukon's group insurance plan with Canada Life for the fiscal year of April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a statement in my capacity as Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a statement in my capacity as Minister of Community Services.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the *Final Report of the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*.

Speaker: Are there any further 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: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to live up to the Government of Yukon's commitment to transparency and accountability in financial reporting by following the *Financial Administration Act* and tabling the Public Accounts on or before October 31.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to treat all Canadians equally and expand the carbon tax exemption on home heating oil to all home heating fuels, including propane.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Finance to provide an update on the current amount of money in the carbon price rebate revolving fund.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to stand up for the Yukoners struggling with the cost of living in Canada and lobby the federal government to provide a permanent carbon tax exemption for people living north of 60.

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

THAT the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform's final report, presented to the House on October 31, 2023, be concurred in.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse and the Lansing Point Condominium Corporation to resolve the issue of seasonal flooding.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Carbon tax exemptions for home heating fuel

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Yukon Liberal government expressed their disappointment in the federal Liberal government for the decision to remove the carbon tax from home heating oil. The Prime Minister has been clear that this exemption of the carbon tax on home heating oil is because the carbon tax is making life more expensive and that people were struggling to afford to heat their homes. However, the Yukon Minister of Finance doesn't agree. He said that he wants to see the carbon tax on home heating oil stay in place here in Yukon.

This means that, as far as we can tell, the Yukon Liberals are the only government in Canada that wants to see this tax stay in place on home heating oil.

Does the Minister of Finance really believe that keeping the carbon tax on home heating oil while Yukoners are struggling with among the highest costs of living in the country is really what is best for the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, the part of the narrative that the Yukon Party continues to forget is that every single dollar collected from the federal carbon price does get returned to Yukoners and in the individual bucket, on average, Yukoners will get more back than what they put in. This is a convenient absence in the narrative from the Yukon Party.

We have a suite of other inflation-relief mechanisms that we, as a government, have been providing, not just in this budget but in all of our budgets. We will continue to work down a pathway where we focus in on making sure that lives are more affordable for Yukoners.

We won't follow the narrative of the Yukon Party. We got stats out just today that the Yukon population is now at 45,000 — another growth of 1.2 percent, I believe, this year. If you go back to the Yukon Party, the first year after they signed Yukon to a carbon-pricing mechanism, they said that everyone is going to leave the Yukon, and that is just not so.

We will continue to offer inflationary rebates. We will continue to return 100 percent of the federal carbon-pricing money to Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: This narrative isn't coming just from the Yukon Party; it's coming from the Trudeau government and every other government in Canada.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said that he agreed with the Alberta NDP's opinion on this matter and quoted the Leader of the Alberta NDP. Yesterday, the Alberta NDP made their position clear and tabled a motion calling on the federal government to extend the federal carbon tax exemption to all home heating fuel. Here's what the main part of the motion says — quote: "...the federal government's recent changes to climate policy announced October 26 should be applied to all Canadians, regardless of geography or home heating method, including natural gas."

As my colleague pointed out yesterday, there are more than 700 homes that are heated using propane in the Yukon. The federal changes are clearly unfair to those Yukoners. Will the Yukon Liberals push the federal Liberals to extend the new carbon tax exemption to propane as well as home heating oil?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's interesting reading the Yukon Party's press release on the topic saying that the Yukon Liberals have never pushed for exemptions in the Yukon. That's just simply not true. We have pushed for a suite of rebates and exemptions, and we have had to change and pivot those when the federal government decided this time last year that the price signal is the biggest variable when it comes to their carbon-pricing mechanism. They changed that — by their statements just in the last week — when it comes to heating fuel. We are asking them now the same thing that other governments are asking: Where do we go from here? What else is going to be the next thing that falls off of a carbon-pricing mechanism, which, in my opinion and in the opinion of many different think-tanks right across the world, is the most effective way of putting a price on carbon?

The Yukon Party has an absence there in their think-tank when it comes to what they would do to put a price on carbon to address climate change. We saw their actions when they were in government as woefully inadequate. Now they are saying: Even though we signed on to carbon pricing for the Yukon, now we want you to get rid of it. So, it is a mixed message there.

What we are asking from the federal government is some clarity. We need to know that they are committed to putting a price on carbon, because we don't think that the taxpayers should be paying for climate change; we think that the polluters should be paying for climate change.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, this is interesting to see. Now the Yukon Liberals have veered to the left of the Alberta NDP on this issue. I suppose that I shouldn't be surprised, though, given that they are one of if not the only government in Canada that is actually arguing that the carbon tax should stay on home heating oil.

We continue to hear from Yukoners that the biggest issue facing our communities right now is the rising cost of living, and that is for good reason. We face some of the largest increases in cost of living in the country, and now the federal government has finally admitted that the Liberal carbon tax has been contributing to the soaring increases in our cost of living,

and they have exempted home heating oil from the carbon tax to try to give Canadians a break.

But what we learned yesterday is that the Yukon Liberals don't want that break; they actually want the carbon tax to continue to make it more expensive for Yukoners to heat their homes this winter. Now they are the only government in the country to take that position.

Mr. Speaker, how can the Yukon Liberals be so out of touch?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think "out of touch" is not having a plan to deal with climate change. I think "out of touch" is maintaining this narrative that the carbon pricing in the Yukon somehow comes into the Yukon coffers; it doesn't. It goes back into the pockets of Yukoners, businesses, individuals, First Nation governments, municipalities, and, on average, individuals get back more money than they put into this carbon-pricing mechanism.

What is "out of touch" is the Yukon Party signing us up to a carbon-pricing mechanism — which I applaud — and then, during the election campaign: Absolutely, we are going to do this. Then, when they don't win the government of the day, they go back to: We don't believe in carbon pricing. That, to me, is out of touch. That is also a little bit unscrupulous.

We need to hear from the Yukon Party what their plan is to deal with climate change.

On this side of the Legislative Assembly, we believe that carbon pricing is the most cost-effective method of dealing with climate change. We will also continue the full statement that the Yukon Party continues to forget about, which is that every single nickel that is collected from the federal carbon pricing in the Yukon — different systems in different areas of Canada — but in the Yukon, all of that money goes back to Yukoners.

Question re: Public Accounts and carbon tax

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, according to the *Financial Administration Act*, the Minister of Finance is required by law to table the Public Accounts for the last fiscal year by today. He did not and has broken the Yukon's most important financial transparency and accountability law.

Public Accounts are important as they are audited by the Auditor General and are the only government financial statements certified as accurate by independent experts. It also allows Yukoners to see if government is living up to some key promises.

For instance, the government continues to promise that Yukoners will get back more money than they pay into the carbon tax, but since the tax was created, the amount of tax revenue that the government received and is sitting on is millions higher than the amount of tax rebates that it has given back.

My question for the Premier is simple: If the Liberals give back every single nickel — as the minister claimed — to the Yukoners paying carbon tax, why is the carbon-price revolving fund growing by millions of dollars per year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: The simple answer to that question is: It's not growing by millions of dollars. What is happening is that we are working — and I have to give credit to the public

servants who are working on this all the time to make sure that the businesses apply for the money they are owed. Of course, if we are not going to be able to get to all those businesses — the first year, it was tough because people didn't necessarily know how to apply. It was a new program. As we move down this road, it gets easier and easier because of the dedicated public servants in the Yukon government who are making this known to the businesses and getting to that dollar value.

Is the member opposite asking me to book money in a fiscal year that is not spent? Well, I won't do that, because the same part of the question that the member opposite is asking is about breaking the financial rules. If we want to go back to the Public Accounts conversation, I can answer that in the next response.

But to say that we are holding back money — no, we want all that money out because it's not ours. It is Yukon citizens' money; it is Yukon businesses' money, and the public servants who are working on this do an excellent job of making sure that we get this money into the rightful hands, which is Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: The territorial Liberals talk a good line about giving people back more money than they pay in carbon tax, but the Public Accounts continue to show an inconvenient truth. According to the most recent audited Public Accounts, the amount of carbon tax revenue that the territorial government was sitting on at the end of March 2020 was \$2.7 million. By March 2021, it grew to \$6.9 million. In March 2022, that had ballooned to a whopping \$18.8 million in carbon tax revenue that the government has not given back.

Even using Liberal math, sitting on \$18.8 million in carbon tax money doesn't equal giving people back more than they paid.

So, a simple question for the Premier is: How many millions of dollars in carbon tax revenue was this Liberal government sitting on at the end of the last fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I believe the same question was asked in Committee of the Whole. If not, I can get the updates for the member opposite.

Again, we are not sitting on this money. We want it out the door. We don't want it in our accounts. We want it in the accounts where it is designed to be. We fought extremely hard to get a Yukon-made carbon-pricing mechanism that refunded back into Yukoners' pockets every single dollar of this carbon-pricing mechanism.

The way that it gets accounted on the books — yes, we have to follow the rules of the Public Accounts, absolutely, and we will do that as much as we possibly can. But at the same time, to hear the Yukon Party say or suggest that we are trying to hold this money internally — that is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Minister of Finance to actually read the Public Accounts. When the territorial Liberal government created the *Carbon Price Rebate Act*, it took over control of how carbon tax rebates were paid out in the Yukon. When the Prime Minister announced recent changes to the carbon tax, he said: "If you live in a rural community, you don't have the same options as people who live in cities do. We get that. So, this is even more money in your pocket..." He then announced that the rural top-up rebate

would be doubled. But yesterday, the Minister of Finance seemed to indicate that this increase to the rebate would not be available in the Yukon.

Did the Minister of Finance misspeak yesterday, or will he confirm that, despite the changes announced by the federal government and the fact that he has been sitting on over \$18 million in carbon tax revenue, according to the Public Accounts, this Liberal government has no plans to increase carbon tax rebates for Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am going to have to go back to look at the Blues again to try my best to follow that narrative to see what exactly the member opposite is talking about. If he is talking about the rural rebate that the federal government talked about the other day, well, we are looking at that. We already offer a rural rebate when it comes to carbon pricing. It is 10 percent more. The federal government is saying that they want to offer 10 percent more on top of that. We need to take a look at our numbers and make sure, as we rebate every single bucket — whether it is individuals, businesses, municipalities, or First Nation governments — that we do it fairly and that we make sure that we continue that narrative of more money back, on average, than what was actually put in for those individual groups.

That is what I am talking about. The member opposite can try to spin a narrative as much as he wants about us trying to keep some carbon pricing dollars — no, we fought extremely hard to be in a situation where we can give all that money back out. As far as the accounting of that, the Public Accounts is a moment in time that has to actually account for the dollars spent, but that doesn't mean that we are not doing our utmost to make sure that this money gets into the pockets of Yukoners.

Question re: Old Crow garbage disposal

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, in 2012, the previous government installed a waste-to-energy gasifier in Old Crow. This was to be a step forward for the community. At the time, Old Crow was the last community in the Yukon still burning its garbage. The intent of the gasifier was to eliminate the community's dependency on the burning of garbage, which, in turn, polluted the air and the Porcupine River. A few years after the gasifier was installed, it broke down and Old Crow has since returned to burning its garbage. It has been at least five years.

What is the government's plan to get the Old Crow gasifier up and running again?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, investing in renewable energy projects is part of the many initiatives that the Yukon government is taking to meet the goals of *Our Clean Future*. We are excited to be nearing completion in 2023 of three biomass and two solar initiatives that, combined, will offset 837 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year. We are conducting renewable energy feasibility studies to evaluate biomass, geothermal, and other renewable heating options at over 50 sites across the territory. These studies will identify several renewable energy projects that could be constructed over the next several years.

I have no information before me on the state of Old Crow projects, but I will certainly get back to the member opposite with some answers to that question.

Ms. Blake: With the gasifier out of commission for so long, waste is piling up at the Old Crow garbage dump. The recent growth in construction activity has resulted in increased piles of construction waste being stockpiled near the burn area. Earlier this year, that pile caught fire, creating a significant hazard. Luckily, it was extinguished, but this situation is an accident waiting to happen. The backlog of trash is so large that the construction waste will have to sit until at least the spring before it can be burned in the burning vessel.

What is the government's timeline for dealing with the safety hazards created by not having a functional gasifier at the Old Crow garbage dump?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am pivoting away from our renewable energy initiatives into how we are handling waste in the territory, which is, of course, another issue that is very important to me and to this government. We are working toward a sustainable model for solid-waste management in the Yukon and we are investing in waste management facilities that reflect modern and sustainable practices that benefit the environment and the economy.

We are also investing with our municipal partners. We have entered into interim regional agreements with Watson Lake, Teslin, Mayo, and Carmacks. Dawson has operated a regional solid-waste facility for approximately 20 years. These agreements provide financial support to rural municipalities for modernizing their solid-waste facilities and extending their waste management services to unincorporated residents within the regional boundary.

We will continue investing in the infrastructure to ensure sustainable waste management services across the Yukon, including Old Crow. Once regionalization is fully implemented, all waste-disposal facilities in the Yukon will have gates, operating hours, tipping fees, and on-site staff to monitor and manage waste streams. This will reduce environmental risk and help to extend the life of landfills and the costs associated with liabilities. We are currently in phase 2 of our plan, Mr. Speaker. Phase 3 involves Beaver Creek and Old Crow.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I don't think residents in Old Crow could drive their garbage to the garbage dump in Dawson. In 2021, a study was conducted and published by the University of Waterloo. The study measured the levels of contaminants in residents of Old Crow. That study found that persistent organic pollutants, such as HCB, lead, cobalt, and manganese, are higher for Old Crow residents than in the rest of Canada.

HCB has been banned globally under the *Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants*. Lead and manganese cause neurological toxicity. Exposure to cobalt can cause cancer and harm the eyes, skin, heart, and lungs. What is the government doing to address these very serious health concerns and support the citizens and the Vuntut Gwitchin Government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I really do thank the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin for the question this afternoon. It really cuts at the heart of what we've been talking an awful lot about this last session, which is better management of our waste treatment facilities across the territory. That's really what's at the heart of it and that's what we're doing here, Mr. Speaker.

We have a plan that was initiated in 2016 by the Association of Yukon Communities. It was then carried on by the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste. That committee actually laid out a plan for which we can deal with solid waste in the territory. We started with Whitehorse and its environs. We've now gone beyond that to municipalities like Carmacks, Teslin, and Watson Lake. Now we are going to Old Crow in phase 3. It's on the list and we will certainly get to it as phase 3 now resolves, but we have to get through this second phase, which we are in right now. We are working through those issues right now, which includes investing in our communities, so we have regional landfills in every single municipality that is managed and looks after our environment. I am very glad to hear the member from Old Crow supporting that initiative.

Question re: Vimy Heritage Housing Society funding

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the Vimy Heritage Housing Society has been working toward a new seniors housing option for many years. The past extension that the Premier signed in January includes a clause committing to fund the Vimy Heritage Housing Society as the government funds other similar projects in the Yukon. In return, the NDP will prop up his government. There are many organizations providing housing solutions for Yukoners asking for money. For example, the Safe at Home Society received an additional \$700,000 to continue their operations until the end of March.

Can the minister tell us how much funding is now being provided to the Vimy Heritage Housing Society?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I can go back and speak with officials. Actually, I think that later on this afternoon, we are going to be in Committee for the Housing Corporation for the supplementary budget. That will be a great time to dig into some of the deeper numbers. I will have our Finance folks here, but where things are at with the Vimy Heritage Housing Society — right now, they are in engagement with CMHC. There is a current program — they were working toward accessing money. Over the last 24 months, I believe, that program changed their criteria. Now they have moved the criteria back to where it was, which gives an opportunity for significant funds for Vimy. We continue to be in very close contact with Vimy. We continue to hold their lot in Whistle Bend. At this particular time, we are just trying to figure out how to best support them in their continued vision toward building some independent living for many individuals here who helped build the Yukon.

Ms. Clarke: Last spring, the minister shared that Vimy reported that they are about \$5.5 million short compared to what they expected to need to proceed.

Over the past few years, Yukoners have seen public announcements about funding to other housing organizations in the territory. Safe at Home announced that they have found additional funding from an undisclosed source to complete their project. Yukon Housing is now renting a total of 26 units at the Normandy Living seniors residence.

Can the minister tell us what work the Liberals have done to help Vimy close the funding gap?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, we have put more support and time into the Vimy project than any other housing project. It has been seven years now. They are still in a position where, if they came to the table today, they probably would not know exactly the amount of money they need. That makes it very difficult. We have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars in support, de-risking the project. What we need to have is a very clear path forward. They are in engagement with CMHC. The co-investment program has changed criteria. It could be very advantageous for them. My latest briefing on this topic was last week. We continue to be extremely supportive. We have had engagement with multiple housing ministers at the federal level as well as the CEO of CMHC directly on this topic. It has been a priority for the MP for the Yukon as well as for many others. We want to see this project come to fruition.

We know that the Yukon Party was asked, during their time in government, for support. I don't know if there was support. I know that we believe in this project and we have put a tremendous amount of effort into supporting Vimy, and we will continue to do that.

Question re: Teacher staffing

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, both school councils of Holy Family Elementary and Selkirk Elementary have raised the alarm about the lack of teachers on call, or TOCs, to their schools. Holy Family has said that they are often 15 to 20 percent short each day in teacher coverage. It is leading to stress and low morale among the staff, as they have to juggle schedules and often ask vulnerable students to stay home because their EA is covering a class. Councils are asking about thresholds to cancel classes and even close their schools. We have heard that this is the top concern at most every school in the Yukon. Now they are calling this a crisis situation.

What action has the minister taken since last week's meeting at Holy Family to address the TOC shortage in schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, as I have said previously on other occasions, effective teachers are one of the most important factors in a student's success at school, and we work to attract and retain the best educators.

As of October 18 of this year, in terms of the number of registered teachers on call, we have 151 registered. The number fluctuates a bit because — I think that it's really important for folks to know that, as we are recruiting for positions in schools, some of the teachers on call have taken on other positions, so we've had 22 teachers on call — 14 in Whitehorse and eight in rural Yukon — who have now moved from the teachers-on-call positions into temporary positions supporting schools since the start of the school year. We continue to recruit teachers on call

and recognize that the demand for coverage continues to be a challenge. We continue to evolve our recruitment efforts to attract candidates for these roles. An information session, for instance, has happened and is continuing to happen with Employment Central. We also have open houses at various schools, including Selkirk.

Ms. Van Bibber: One suggestion is to deploy staff from the Department of Education to help on days with low coverage. This was done at the height of the pandemic to cover staff vacancies. One school asked for this a couple of weeks ago and was met with a hard no from the Department of Education. Has the minister instructed staff from the department to deploy available staff to help with the TOC crisis?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will continue with some of the efforts that are taking place in terms of working to attract more teachers on call and to ensure that they are feeling supported in these positions. We are planning, as I have stated, an open house at Selkirk Elementary School as a pilot to generate interest to provide information to community members on the teachers-on-call role. We have also increased advertising through various mediums, including Facebook, in universities, on YuWIN, Employment Central, and other recruitment sites. We also recognize the renegotiation of our collective agreement at the end of the current term in June 2024 as a joint opportunity to work within those negotiations.

In terms of temporary vacancy management, there are a number of tools that schools can work with. Schools have several options available to help them manage, should they have a need. These include but are not limited to temporarily adjusting staff teaching assignments, adjusting to student learning groups, and the use, of course, of teachers on call. There are a number of other tools that are available to each school as they manage.

Question re: Beaver River watershed land use plan

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, way back in 2018, the now Premier trumpeted what he called “a new way of doing business” by announcing that a sub-regional land use plan would need to be completed before an all-season road to mining claims north of Keno could be permitted. At the time, the Beaver River land use plan was to be ready in two years — by March 2020. Unfortunately, it has been hampered by missed deadlines, industry backlash, and even a lawsuit from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun against the Liberal government.

Earlier this year, it was reported that perhaps a draft plan would finally be ready by December 2023. Can the minister confirm that the draft will be ready this year, and what is the new timeline for a final plan?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank the member opposite for the question. To begin with, let’s talk about how we are trying to work with First Nations rather than against them, which is what the Yukon Party was doing. Yes, it is a new way to work. I have met with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to talk to them about land use planning broadly and about advancing the Beaver River watershed plan. It is continuing.

I had a bilateral this morning at 8:00 a.m. with Energy, Mines and Resources. I asked them to give me an update on the plan. I understand that they have ongoing meetings with this plan and are also making sure that it works well with regional land use planning, which we are working toward. The work is ongoing. I don’t have a date to provide for the member opposite today, but we continue to work on the Beaver River land use plan.

Mr. Kent: So, Mr. Speaker, no answer on timing — when it was promised to be ready in December of this year. I have to remind the minister about the lawsuit and the appeal that the government filed against the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun when it came to a project in this planning area.

A business law bulletin about the Beaver River plan put out by McMillan LLP in February raised — quote: “... questions about how permitting decisions will be affected in cases where the government has established ad hoc ‘land use planning’...” When we asked about this in the spring, the minister dismissed it as an opinion piece from an Outside firm. As this was making its way around the investment community, we were concerned about damage to our investment reputation.

So, what policy actions has the minister undertaken to ensure that our investment reputation is protected in light of this disastrous planning process that the Premier launched almost six years ago?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, let’s talk a little bit about history here. The Peel was the plan that ended up in the Supreme Court, and I appreciated how that resolved. We signed off on the Peel plan, and I disagree with — I believe that the member opposite who is asking the questions was once the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and probably was involved in that. I think that is the wrong approach.

So, we have been working, for example, on the Dawson regional land use plan, and even though these plans do take longer to achieve, they are the right thing to do. We are committed to them through our final agreements and we believe that we have to do that hard work with nations.

When it comes to Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and their traditional territory, the regional plan is the Northern Tutchone plan. We have talked to all three nations within that plan, and we may have to change the internal boundaries to allow them to go at the pace at which they wish to go. We have had conversations about the Beaver River plan and how it would work within that broader context, and we will continue to do that important planning work for our mining industry.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I need to bring the minister back to what we are actually talking about here today, which is the sub-regional planning fiasco launched by the former Premier.

In the spring when we questioned the Yukon’s investment reputation, the minister was quick to reference the Fraser Institute’s 2021 investment attractiveness index for mining and dismissed the legal bulletin regarding the Beaver River plan.

On March 23, he told the House — and I quote: “The Fraser Institute listed the industry in the top 10 last year, so that’s pretty good — top 10 jurisdictions in the world.”

In 2021, we were ranking ninth overall in the world, but one year later, that ranking plummeted to 20th overall for 2022. That's the lowest ranking for Yukon since the Premier had us at 23rd in 2019.

So, now that the minister's preferred measurement — which is the Fraser Institute ranking for Yukon — is in freefall, will he take this issue seriously and tell Yukoners what steps he is taking to restore investor confidence in Yukon's mining industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I know the question is about Beaver River, but then it strayed off to investment attractiveness.

The member opposite knows very well — holds the record probably over the last two decades for that — \$6 million in investment into the exploration industry under the member opposite who is asking the question. Now we are at, usually, about \$200 million. In his day, holding that record of \$6 million versus \$200 million — but he gets up to criticize us.

All I know is that the most significant major mining companies in the world are looking to invest in the Yukon. We know that. We know that some of the biggest companies that do offtake — Glencore, Mitsubishi are here looking to invest in the Yukon. We know that they have the means to be able to put up appropriate security. We know that they have to be focused on corporate social responsibility and they are the right players. We know what is happening in the Yukon when it comes to this industry. We believe that continuing to work with First Nations at the table, looking at modernizing mining legislation instead of hiding and running away from it, thinking things will get better, which they don't — but taking this on and showing leadership is the way to move forward and that is what we will do. We will continue to do that work, and we will continue to support that industry.

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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*. Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 32: Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am just welcoming to the Legislative Assembly the Deputy Minister of Justice Mark Radke and Mina Connelly, who is the drafter with respect to the bill that is before the House. Welcome to both of you and I look forward to our debate here in Committee of the Whole.

In my earlier remarks during second reading, I provided a high-level overview of Bill No. 32, the *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*. This bill will enhance protection of client information that is voluntarily provided and is collected in the provision of services by the Victim Services branch under the *Victims of Crime Act*. I will provide some context that underscores the need for these changes and a bit about the bill in greater detail.

These proposed changes establish a framework for the treatment of victim records, which are currently subject to access-to-information requests. The right to access information includes information about the public body as well as any personal information held by that public body. The right of individuals to access their own personal information means that any member of the public can request copies of records that contain their name, their address, or other identifying information. There are limits to the type of information that an applicant may receive. For example, copies of responsive records will have any third-party information redacted.

The Victim Services branch operates several programs that provide victim-led, trauma-informed supports for anyone who has been victimized. Programs such as the sexualized assault response team, the independent legal advice program, and the family information liaison unit are examples of programs managed by the Victim Services branch.

Victims or clients are given assurances that any information that they share with a service provider will not be shared with anyone else unless disclosure is compelled by an enactment, a court subpoena, or voluntarily disclosed by the client. The assurances of confidentiality refer not only to the content of information provided but also to the very fact that an individual has sought help from Victim Services. An individual who consents to the provision of services will be given information about options that they can pursue to improve their safety, their psychological well-being, and themselves. This could mean counselling, it could be a referral to medical care, or it could be the opportunity to explore legal options.

Victim Services guides clients to whatever help they wish to receive. If a client chooses to receive services or maintain their relationship with Victim Services — if they choose not to do that — then no records are produced for that individual. But

if they choose to receive assistance and that results in records being created, those records may contain the name of an offender or an alleged offender or other individuals who are peripheral to the offence. It is important that these records and sensitive and personal information be protected from those who may seek to harm a victim. The records not only contain information about the victim and the services that they may choose but also information about the offender. For example, service providers may record the personal information about an offender or an alleged offender in a personal safety plan for the victim or a victim of intimate-partner violence, of sexualized violence, or of family violence. If this information is accessed by an alleged perpetrator through a request for access of information, it could potentially divulge sensitive information that could then be used to further harm the victim.

Through these proposed amendments, we hope to provide more protection to victims' records and ultimately then more protection to victims. Firstly, in this bill, we introduce the definition of "victim record". This includes any record created in the provision of services on behalf of a victim of an offence or an alleged offence. The introduction of the category of victim records specifies what those records are, why they are created, and how they are different from other records. Secondly, the bill also introduces the definition of "protected information". This protects both the type of information in a record and the existence of that information from anyone who may present a risk of harm to a victim. "Protected information" by definition includes the personal information of an access request applicant.

The risk of the current operation of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* is that, by confirming to an applicant that a record exists at Victim Services containing their own personal information, this inevitably confirms that their alleged victim has sought service and support through Victim Services and shared their name or other identifying information. A confirmation of records containing an offender's personal information is particularly dangerous for victims who are trying to leave a situation of intimate-partner violence or for those who cohabit with a violent or coercive individual.

Lastly, the final term defined in this bill is "harm". This definition specifies the types of negative outcomes that may impact a victim if protected information is made known to anyone else. "Harm" is defined broadly to include physical or mental injury and includes emotional trauma, humiliation, damage to reputation or relationships, as well as economic loss or deprivation of property. While service providers cannot know the level of risk that an access request could present for a particular client, any additional risk of stress, fear, humiliation, or safety is an unacceptable burden on a vulnerable victim.

It is important that victims can trust that, when they come to Victim Services, their sensitive information is treated with care and those who have harmed them will not be able to know if they have sought care or be able to retaliate against them for seeking care and support. As I said earlier, those assurances are made that the information they give to Victim Services will not be disclosed to anyone.

There are already discretionary provisions in the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* — also known as the ATIPP act — that prevent a victim's records from release to access-to-information requests. This is particularly important when requests are submitted by individuals who have been named by the victim. However, the process for refusal prescribed in the ATIPP act is onerous and leaves some gaps and uncertainties that this bill will address.

This is why we are here today. The proposed changes would add section 14.01 to the *Victims of Crime Act* to address the non-disclosure of protected information. This section aims to expedite refusal on the basis that the release of protected information contained in victim records or even acknowledging the existence of the victim records can present a risk of harm for a victim.

Section 14.01(3)(a) enables the department head to refuse access to requests to any individual named as an offender or an alleged offender by a client. Refusal is expanded in subsection 14.01(3)(b), stating that protected information will not be disclosed to "any other person, unless the public body is satisfied that the disclosure cannot reasonably be expected to cause harm to the victim." Section 14.01(3) does not apply to victims requesting access to their own records.

With respect to access-to-information requests, an additional provision expressly prevails over the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* to the extent of any conflict or inconsistency. Refusal of access is based on the belief that information provided by a victim should remain private. This is the core belief behind this bill.

Generally speaking, no individual outside of service provision should be able to find out that a victim has sought help. Refusal to grant access will only apply to a small set of access requests with a very narrow scope.

The amended act retains the right of the public body to disclose information if it means that disclosure is necessary to protect an individual or a group of individuals or if the matter is of such public interest that it outweighs victim privacy. By retaining the right to use discretionary disclosure, the public body is afforded some flexibility for unforeseen situations where disclosure would be necessary — for example, to alert an individual that they are in danger.

Victim Services only provides supportive services and resources; they are not adjudicators or law enforcement.

The amended act would only apply to requests for information under the ATIPP act and does not apply to the collection of records compelled by any other enactment. The amendments would also only apply to access requests for protected information contained in a victim's records, so it's very specific and quite narrow. Any requests that fall outside the scope of these amendments will not be impacted and Victim Services will continue to be responsive to any access requests of other kinds. Protecting the privacy of victims by limiting the access to information that is collected through the provision of services reinforces a victim's trust in that they can safely and confidentially access services when they need them most.

I am very pleased to bring this bill forward to enhance the protection of privacy and the safety and privacy of victims. I

look forward to comments or questions and to the support by the other members of the Legislature to make this very narrow change that will protect the safety and privacy of victims.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair, and thanks to the minister for her opening remarks introducing this bill in Committee. I appreciate the overview. I would also like to join her in welcoming her officials to the Legislature as well and thank them for the briefing on behalf of my colleagues who attended. They informed me that all of their questions were answered at that briefing.

Of course, access to information is very important, but there are reasonable limits to that. The protection of the personal safety of victims is an obvious example of that, so we will certainly be supporting the bill and don't have much in the way of questions today.

I would like to give the minister the opportunity, though, to discuss implementation a little bit — if she could indicate how this bill, once it becomes law, will be implemented. How will public bodies and departments take action to implement the bill? Any other information that the minister could provide us about implementation would be appreciated. After that, I will cede the floor to my colleague from the NDP.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to address the concept of implementation and how the public will be advised of this. There are a few details that I can provide today as a result of the question.

The implementation of this new law, should it pass the Legislative Assembly, will be upon assent. So, almost immediately, the new rules will begin to be enforced and applied. They will apply to all active ATIPP requests, so even for an ATIPP request that was made last week but has not yet been answered, the new provisions would apply going forward.

The other note that I can add — because it was a question that I had as we were working on this matter — is that the very narrow scope will be enforced through this process because all of the requests that this new bill will impact will be requests to Victim Services. Victim Services will be the only public body that is affected, and therefore, any of the requests that are coming to them — they will be well aware of the requests of someone looking for their own information and be mindful of the new provisions to protect the privacy of that information.

Ms. Blake: The safety and privacy of victims of crime is of critical importance. The minister indicated that changes to this act will further reinforce privacy rights for victims and help them to stay safe. I just wanted to follow up on one of the questions that was asked by my colleague the Leader of the Third Party.

In terms of victims who are dealing with domestic violence, if the offender or person causing harm files for access to information in regard to someone whom they have caused harm to in a domestic violence situation, how are the privacy and safety of the victims of domestic violence upheld if there is a request for information — if that makes sense?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I think that, in general, what I would like to say about that is that this is exactly the intent of the provisions of this new bill — that the privacy and safety of any victim, no

matter why they access services at Victim Services, are intended to be protected here, whether it is intimate-partner violence or whether it is domestic violence. For that reason, any — I am going to call them an “ATIPP applicant” — who is seeking information about themselves in a file will enable Victim Services to refuse to disclose any of the information in that file, including the existence of the file, because sometimes it is enough information if somebody is trying to use the ATIPP act in this way to request information — it is enough that there is a file that exists. That would tell an offender or an alleged offender that their partner or their victim, depending on the circumstances, had, in fact, either attempted or is accessing Victim Services. That is the core concept here.

I hope that answers the question.

Ms. Blake: What measures are in place to support victims if protections provided by the act are breached? For example, will victims be able to complain if the act is breached and through which channels?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member for the question. The question is about what recourse is there for victims should the new provisions of this act be breached and their privacy or safety be breached.

I will say, firstly, that we don't expect that there would be breaches in these situations, because all of the requests of this nature, to which these new provisions apply, would be requests directly to Victim Services for access to information that is in their files only. It will be Victim Services and the officials there — and the officials at Justice, under which Victim Services operates — who would look very, very carefully at these kinds of ATIPP requests.

However, if there were a breach, all of the provisions of the ATIPP act — or even a concern or question that there could have been a breach — with respect to recourse in those situations still apply and, of course, some of those would lead them to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and complaints that could go there. All of those provisions would still be applicable.

Ms. Blake: In terms of potential breaches, can family members or non-governmental organizations file complaints on behalf of a victim if there has been a breach, or does it have to come specifically from the victim?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: This is something that I can respond to in a further letter or note for the member opposite. It would clearly depend on the circumstances of the potential breach or of the complaint and what provisions of the ATIPP act — which I don't have at my fingertips — would apply and how they would apply to the particular situation. There is certainly no limit — in my recollection, and it's getting pretty old with respect to the ATIPP act on a daily basis when I worked with it. But certainly, there are no restrictions on who might come to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and what sort of concerns they might bring. I would say that generally other people could ask about a situation, but if it involves personal information — of course, I won't speak for IPC — that would limit what could be brought to them, but it would depend on the circumstances. I can find those provisions of the act with

respect to taking complaints or concerns forward under the ATIPP act.

Ms. Blake: I just feel it's important to ask about potential privacy breaches, because that's something that I've noticed occurring in different organizations and First Nation governments in the territory, especially when there are data or records kept on a computer system.

I know that for victims of crime or victims who are dealing with domestic violence, it's not always easy for them to reach out and ask for support or reach out for help.

Are victims notified if there is someone putting a request in to access their information?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to clear up the scope or the specifics of the kinds of requests that this bill will apply to, and those are requests that are made for an offender's — I will call the person an "offender" and an "alleged offender" — information.

So, if an offender is asking to see or to know as to whether or not there is any information about them in a Victim Services file, that is when this bill or the details of this bill will kick in — if I can say that.

If I am the offender — that's probably a bad example — I can't ask for a victim's information in Victim Services anyway, because that is the victim's private information, and the "regular provisions of ATIPP" — I will call them that for the purposes of this discussion — would apply, and that would be another party's personal information, which I am not permitted to have.

But if I am looking for whether or not my name exists as the offender or an alleged offender in a Victim Services file, we note — and therefore have brought forward this bill — that even the existence of that information and what it might say about an offender or an alleged offender is enough to potentially put a victim at risk.

These provisions apply when someone is asking for information about themselves that might exist in Victim Services. The protections exist here to make sure that this information isn't disclosed in there, which then, inadvertently, would allow someone to know that someone they are accused of victimizing has mentioned them or has told someone that the alleged offender against me in the file is so-and-so, with their address, their name, where they work, and some personal information about that party.

Of course, anyone is entitled to seek information under ATIPP or to just request information from government files about themselves. In this context, the existence of that information in Victim Services files could put a victim at risk, so these are the limitations.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response to that question.

The next question I have is in regard to protecting witnesses of crime. I am sure we all understand the challenges that witnesses sometimes face when they come forward with information — whether it's regarding their safety or their well-being when they are witnessing some form of crime. Will these changes help to protect witnesses to crime who come forward in the same way as a victim?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to take a moment to thank my officials who are getting up and coming over to help me, as opposed to me normally having to get up and move around a bit, but I certainly appreciate the set-up today.

With respect to the question regarding witnesses, if an individual is receiving the sort of gate upon which someone enters into Victim Services, receiving services of any kind from Victim Services, then a request through the ATIPP process for someone to seek information about themselves would fall into this category.

But this is about protecting the information that is in Victim Services' files and the reason that Victim Services' files are created is because someone is receiving services from Victim Services. That may be witnesses on occasion, but this is not specifically designed to protect witnesses unless they are also, as a witness or for some other reason, receiving services from Victim Services.

Ms. Blake: I think that is an important question that we didn't even think of until someone who is tuned in to the debate right now called in with this specific question. I know just from my past work experience that witnesses often face challenges too, whether they are coming forward to the RCMP or Victim Services, and there are concerns of safety and protection when witnesses are coming forward with information on a crime that has been committed against another person.

I think the person who tuned in and called our office really wants reassurance that they will be protected as a witness with this act coming into place.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the concern expressed by the member opposite. If that person's name exists as a witness in a file that exists at Victim Services, then information would not or could not be disclosed in that situation. But to give a broader assurance of witnesses' potential names — for instance, when a crime is committed or alleged to have been committed and there is an RCMP file and there are witness statements, they proceed to the Crown's office and then the Crown proceeds to bring the matter to open court. In our system, a witness might be called or subpoenaed to court. This act and the amendments here in Bill No. 32 don't have any impact on any of that process. A witness's name, for example, who is going to be called to a trial is disclosed to the alleged criminal or to their legal counsel through that process. That is the way that it works. The protections for individuals who are accused of a crime and the potential loss of liberty for those individuals is what is protected. Therefore, the full aspects of the alleged crime and the witnesses are disclosed to them in documentation as well as witness statements, et cetera, so that an individual can meet the case that is going to come against them from the state.

That being said, these particular provisions do not protect the information or the name of that individual once it has been disclosed, for instance, to the alleged offender. However, just to be clear, these provisions do exist to protect information that is in a Victim Services' file when someone is seeking services from Victim Services.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for the response. As per article 14.01(3)(b): "A public body must not disclose protected

information to ... (b) any other person, unless the public body is satisfied that the disclosure cannot reasonably be expected to cause harm to the victim.”

So, if an access-to-information request is granted to the individual, will the victim be notified, and will the victim have any say as to whether information is disclosed or not or what types of information can be released?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member for the question. As a matter of practice, I think what the member opposite is asking is: If there was a decision under 14.01(3)(b) that information was to be disclosed — again, information about an offender or an alleged offender that is being asked for — would the victim be consulted in that decision and be advised of that decision?

I would expect that to almost never happen, because the provisions in this bill have been crafted so that the default position — when an alleged offender is asking for information about themselves in a Victim Services’ file — is that it will not be provided.

It would be an extremely rare circumstance in which a decision would be made that there would be no harm, because the assumption is that if this information was disclosed — if the existence of a Victim Services’ file at all was disclosed — it could result in potential harm.

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the minister for her response.

I am glad to see that the definition of “harm” includes mental injury and emotional trauma, as victims often struggle with the aftermath of what they have experienced.

The question I have is: Who will make the judgment call of what constitutes harm and who decides what circumstances would warrant disclosure or not?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The definition of “harm” to be included in this piece of legislation to impact the *Victims of Crime Act* is a new term that is added to section 14.01 of the amended act. It is incredibly important to the operation of the new provisions. “Harm”, of course, in the new *Victims of Crime Act*, or the act to amend it, is defined as “bodily or mental injury...” — as noted by the member opposite — “... personal humiliation, reputational or relationship damage, emotional trauma, economic loss, or deprivation of property.”

So, it is very broad. It is defined to be very broad intentionally. The definition of “harm” in the amended *Victims of Crime Act* will form the basis of a test that is applied to determine the non-disclosure by the public body. That is part of the answer.

The other question before me is: Who will decide? These access requests will all come to Victim Services. They are ultimately dealt with at the level of director and service providers, so there are individuals named in each department in the government to determine what information they have that exists in response to an ATIPP request and therefore what could possibly be disclosed, and then to apply the provisions of the ATIPP act to make sure that they can disclose that information or redact certain information. That is the process, very generally.

It would ultimately end up at Victim Services, as they will review the access request. Ultimately, as noted in this bill that is before you, it is the responsibility of the deputy minister or deputy head, as they are called in the acts, to make the determination. So, it will occur in the Department of Justice, and the department head making that decision is consistent with the operation of the ATIPP act. While this will impact victims of crime and those provisions, they are all in alignment. As I said earlier, the ATIPP act continues to operate, but if we have someone who is asking for information about themselves in a Victim Services’ file, alarm bells will go off and the application and the protections that exist in this bill will be applied, and quite likely, that information will not be provided or even the existence of that information being in a file will not be given in response.

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, I thank the minister and the officials for the response to my question. Will the provisions to this act apply to all victims even if their cases do not go to trial or if their cases were dismissed or filed as unfounded?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member for that question, because it is one that is of concern and should be understood by Yukoners. Again, the provision applies to all files that exist in Victim Services. Often individuals come to Victim Services and seek support or seek help or advice about where to go and they seek assistance of Victim Services even if there ultimately are not criminal charges or are not charges involving their cases or whether they do or do not end up in a courtroom. Certainly, the provisions that Victim Services is providing through the sexualized assault response team, as an example, is something that we say on a regular basis to everyone. It has nothing to do with whether or not the individual even speaks to police. If they seek services from Victim Services and those are provided, that’s the scope of the files that we are dealing with in this situation and it doesn’t matter whether or not criminal charges are laid or how they proceed through the courts.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for answering that question. The next question that I had is just in regards to education on the changes to the act. Whose responsibility is it to educate anyone who is carrying out the changes with the provisions of this act? Will there be training for implementation if needed? And what is the timeline to ensure that resources are allocated to educate and raise awareness for the public and service providers to know about the provisions of this act?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I thank the member for the question — again, it’s important as we proceed. First of all, the most important piece of information I think that I can provide today is that Victim Services is fully educated about these changes and ready to implement them immediately. The ATIPP office — so, the administrator for government as to how ATIPP requests come through — has been notified of the plans to change and will be briefed of changes to answer any questions that might come to them immediately.

There is really no other work required for implementation, because Victim Services and the folks in the Department of Justice who deal with these ATIPP requests — which is where

they will all end up — have been advised and educated about the changes.

I will just be clear: The implementation will be upon assent, so it could be very soon if this bill proceeds through Committee of the Whole into third reading, which is not very often the case with respect to legislation. I am pleased to say that it could be almost immediate.

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, I don't have any further questions. I would just like to thank the officials for being here today, and I thank the minister for answering my questions.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*?

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

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of the Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 32 read and agreed to

Deputy Chair: The Member for Vuntut Gwitchin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 4 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: Second Appropriation Act 2023-24 — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Yukon Housing Corporation

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I would like to first welcome the officials — our president from the Yukon Housing Corporation, Justin Ferbey, as well as our acting vice-president, Beth Fricke, are here with me today. So, thank you to them but as well to all the other officials who have worked to pull together our supplementary budget, to prepare for today, and to undertake the briefings with the opposition parties.

As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I am pleased to rise today to outline our first supplementary budget estimates for 2023-24. Our government is committed to expanding housing supply, increasing wide availability, improving affordability, and integrating housing programs with supportive services. In short, we are committed to improving housing outcomes for all Yukoners.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank, again, the staff from Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work and dedication in helping us deliver on this commitment.

First, a few updates on new capital projects: In August, the corporation opened two accessible duplexes, one in Mayo and the other in Carmacks. The work is progressing on duplexes in Dawson City and Faro. All of these new duplexes are affordable and will help to meet identified housing needs.

We are also nearing completion of a tenplex in Old Crow, which will add much-needed housing for this community as well. It is worth noting that the construction of this facility, along with the new health centre, created at least \$10.5 million in economic benefit for the community from employment, shipping, accommodations, and other related benefits.

I am also pleased to announce that we recently broke ground on the new Housing First initiative in Watson Lake, a project to provide low-barrier supportive housing to those experiencing homelessness and struggling with mental health and/or addiction challenges. The complex was designed with input from the Liard First Nation Chief and Council, the Town of Watson Lake mayor and council, and local community members. It is a perfect example of how a partnership-based approach to supporting housing solutions is what is required to deliver results for Yukoners.

Beyond bricks and mortar, the corporation is improving client service and collaborating with partners to unlock new funding opportunities and support the diverse housing needs in Yukon communities. In early summer, we launched the housing flood recovery program to support residents affected by the devastating flooding events in the Klondike region. The program is on track to support more than 20 households with grant and loan funding to help recover from last May's floods.

I also have a few announcements to make regarding our collaboration with the federal government. First, I am pleased to note that we recently secured \$5 million from CMHC's rapid

housing initiative — cities stream — to support nine new affordable housing units.

Second, we are currently in negotiation to expand the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. This is our subsidy program for renters in need. The expanded program will include a dedicated stream for survivors of gender-based violence.

On a lighter note, I would like to acknowledge the little things that we were doing to foster stronger communities and neighbourhoods in September. Staff at the Yukon Housing Corporation hosted a community barbecue at the mixed-income, mixed-use 401 Jeckell building, which is now fully tenanted. The barbecue was a great success. Residents and neighbours came together and made connections with staff and representatives from local NGOs — a great example of community building in action.

Even with all of the progress we have made, more work needs to be done. We are committed to further increasing housing supply, to get more shovels in the ground. Yukon Housing Corporation's development pipeline alone includes a 34-unit building on the Korbo lot in Dawson, a 45-unit build at the Ryder site in Whitehorse, a 10-unit build in Mayo, sixplexes in Teslin and Carcross, among other projects, not to mention other capital projects being led by our partners.

Moving these capital projects forward will require an unwavering commitment to get the job done. We are in a time of global challenges, such as high inflation, interest rates, and building costs, which are adding to daily complexities and impacting project timelines. In part due to these challenges, the Yukon Housing Corporation's supplementary budget estimates for 2023-24 include \$6 million in deduction from the main estimates. The supplementary budget also includes a \$455,000 increase to the corporation's operation and maintenance budget. This is due to obligations associated with the new collective agreement, retroactive to April 1, 2023.

Overall, therefore, the supplementary budget entails a decrease in total appropriation of \$5,540,000, for a revised total for both operation and maintenance and capital of \$71.8 million. Of the reduction to the capital budget, \$2 million is a decrease for the developer-build loan program, which helps to finance new residential land infrastructure projects and multi-unit residential building construction. This adjustment is due to lower than anticipated uptake in the application-based program.

An additional \$4 million capital decrease is the result of delays to the Korbo project in Dawson City, which is being partially funded through CMHC's northern carve-out program.

In conducting their due diligence and planning for the project, staff at the corporation, in conversation with Yukon Energy, discovered that significant energy infrastructure upgrades would be required to support a building of this size. Now that the plans are in place to make these upgrades, the Korbo project will be forging ahead.

We will continue to move capital projects along and meet challenges head-on. Again, Yukoners are depending on us to deliver.

Thank you, and I will open up the floor to questions from the opposition.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to thank the officials for the briefing and welcome them to the House.

Last year, the Auditor General found that the Liberal government was not adequately supporting Yukoners with the greatest needs when it comes to affordable housing. They made several recommendations for the Housing Corporation, which the government accepted.

Can the minister please provide us with an update on his work plan to address the issues outlined in the Auditor General's recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services continue to work together to address the gaps identified in the 2022 Office of the Auditor General of Canada report on housing. Of the 25 actions Yukon Housing Corporation is responsible for in the OAG report work plan, four actions have been completed. We are: amending the prioritization system and eligibility requirements as part of the community housing operational policies; commitment to a multi-year MOU between the ministers of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation to create a framework for cooperation on affordable housing and housing with services; establishing the terms of reference for the joint Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services assistant deputy minister steering committee; and publishing of the 2019-22 housing action plan report.

Three actions have not been started; 11 are underway with partners, such as the Health and Social Services and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics; while seven continue to evolve, based on the housing needs of Yukoners.

The Yukon Housing Corporation and Health and Social Services released that work plan in December of 2022, consisting of the 36 actions to address the OAG recommendations.

Again, a high level would be that we are including: liaison with Yukon First Nation governments, municipalities, community groups, the university, and the federal government to share information and data on housing in the Yukon; conduct community assessments of all Yukon communities within an established reporting cycle and publishing an annual summary, including recommendations to inform decision-making and resource allocation; and to develop program monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer. The Yukon Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee made six recommendations to Yukon Housing to better serve Yukoners. Can the minister share what progress has been made to adopt those recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are going to come back with a note on the specific six items that were identified from Public Accounts and just bring back a legislative return with progress on that.

Ms. Clarke: The supplementary budget includes a \$6-million decrease to the capital budget of the Yukon Housing Corporation. Can the Premier please outline where these funds are being reallocated?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The work that is done within the Yukon Housing Corporation is — part of our obligation is to go back and look at the funds that we will use within the time frame of this fiscal year. We don't then identify where it goes; we identify what we need. What I outlined today was some of our programs that were undersubscribed. I also outlined in the preamble areas where we needed additional funds — really because of the collective agreement. Then, within that process, all departments across government would then identify and provide similar information: needs they may have or, in some cases, funds that they will not use within this fiscal period. Then, it's the work of the Finance department to coordinate a response to that.

So, it's not the work of Yukon Housing or me to tell you where it's going to come from or where it's going to go. It's the work of the Department of Finance to identify all of the requests that are submitted as we get ready for a supplementary budget process.

Ms. Clarke: Last spring, the Premier said that the \$5 million they had budgeted for the developer-build program would support community development partnerships that would increase housing supply in the territory. A couple of weeks ago, he confirmed that the program is undersubscribed and that funds would be reallocated.

There seems to have been some discrepancy between the numbers we were given in the briefing and the numbers the Premier has around this program. I am hoping that the Premier can confirm how many applications the Yukon Housing Corporation received for the program and how many were approved.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am just going to reflect back on the question. I think the question was: How many applications did we receive for the developer-build loan program? We received two applications for the developer-build loan program as of last week, or a week or two ago, when we were having this discussion. One was withdrawn, and officials have just told me that we have just received one more application for the developer-build program, so right now, you would be looking at, for this fiscal, a total of two applications for the developer-build loan program.

Ms. Clarke: Considering the urgency to expand housing in the territory, did the Premier consider alternatives, such as expanding eligibility to this program, rather than reallocating a considerable portion of the money available?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that, under the current circumstances, the criteria for the program have not seemed to be the challenge. I think that it is something where we heard that developers who are in that sector talk about the fact that they need to offset some of their costs, especially when they are looking at horizontal services. I think that it was actually pretty innovative for us to move in this direction. I guess I would say that I am open to the debate about it, but what would be the criteria or scope change within the program that would — we think that some of the projects that are being identified will be coming back next year requesting some of the funds that we have not spent this year.

We think that some of the projects are going to stretch out their timeline, so we are still going to be supporting those projects. Again, it was 2022 when we looked at land development. Actually, this is driven — probably in this case, we know of at least 150 more opportunities just on one of these projects. When you consider that the City of Whitehorse's threshold for annual lots that they wanted to see was 200, the fact that this one tweak of this program is leading to 150 lots is, we think, very innovative. I am definitely open to suggestions or advice from the member opposite on ways that we could change criteria to increase interest in the developer-build loan program.

Ms. Clarke: I just wanted to touch on some of the work that was included in the Premier's mandate letter for himself, as Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, from March 2, 2023. He has committed to develop new land parcels and lots. Can the Premier provide more information on this? How many new land parcels and lots have been developed since March, and how many lots have been developed since the 2021 election?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: From our standpoint, the work of the Yukon Housing Corporation is to support work for both Community Services and Energy, Mines and Resources. I know that Community Services has had an opportunity to come and have a long dialogue here. I will leave it to Community Services to talk about their portfolio on land development. I think the question specifically pertained to new innovative ways to look at land development.

Of the things that I am focused on that would pertain directly to that line in the mandate letter, the first one actually pertains to the last question that I had, which was about innovative ways to look at other land development. I think that we are on pace right now. The lots are in the midst of being developed. I don't have the breakdown right now of Chu Níikwán. I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition was up on-site and did a walk-through with the CEO of Chu Níikwán, and I have as well. We have been on that ground. We have put our feet on those new roads and looked at those lots and those new neighbourhoods. There is a portion of work right now that is being done in that phase. There are 24 lots in that first phase that are being developed, so that is something that is key.

I also would touch on the work around the tank farm. There are no lots available just yet, but I think what is really important about the tank farm is that there is the potential, as far as we are aware, of 100 lots in the tank farm area. I think that the Yukon government has done a good job of making this a priority. There have been lots of discussions back and forth. We have requested — and supported the city and asked what they need for this. The City of Whitehorse wanted to go through a master planning exercise.

Our last conversation with officials was that we should be in a position this winter where they will bring that to their mayor and council. They would then be looking to support it. Then it will also give us a better sense of what our needs are. As the member opposite said, you are not going to get some of these things done in 90 days or over the summer season

from a March mandate letter, but you will make important progress in moving projects like this ahead.

For a little bit of extra information, the remediation of the land known as the “tank farm” between the Valleyview and Hillcrest areas and Hamilton Boulevard is now complete and the site is ready for development. The government acknowledges the tremendous effort on the part of private, municipal, and Yukon government stakeholders to develop and bring a sizable lot on to market. There have been discussions happening between the private sector — that I am aware of — and First Nation governments. They are also looking for partnership in that area.

It is probably the most complex undertaking when we see land development from a governance perspective, because you have multiple private sector holdings, two self-governing First Nations, and the City of Whitehorse and the need for the Government of Yukon to be part of that work as well.

I think that, over the winter, we are waiting to see the master plan completed. It was done by local teams. There was significant consultation with neighbours and in the adjoining area.

The other piece of work that we have kind of sparred over here in the House — but I think it is important — is 5th and Rogers. We are waiting right now. We have only one proposal that was received over the summer. I believe Energy, Mines and Resources is working closely with the Yukon Housing Corporation on a final review of that submission. Of course, we are looking at appropriate pricing for the lot. There is also a deeper dive into what that work would look like. We want to see significant development in that area. That would be something that would be pertaining to that language in my mandate letter.

I think it is also important to add that, in my discussions with municipalities — and there have been a few that I have had discussions with on this topic, and we will be offering this up to many.

You will have to go back and look at some of the things that we have done. The first would be a pretty significant agreement that was put in place and would also pertain to that line, which is our work and our significant work toward lot development in Watson Lake. That was work that was done directly with the Liard First Nation but also with the leadership of Mayor Irvin and the council in Watson Lake. Again, that's another project where they are looking at how they are going to roll out lots in a phased approach. We think we want to do more work like that as well.

We also have offered to support municipalities. If municipalities want to go out and look at potentials as well on their work, I think that is something that is going to be very significant. Whether it is a municipality that goes out and does an expression of interest or they go out and do some sort of RFP for land acquisition that they want to undertake, I think that is something that we could be party to as well.

Those are a lot of things that we are trying to be involved with, but there are also planning and design projects underway, including Willow Acres, which is serviced expansion, in the

area 3 country residential subdivision — that is in Haines Junction.

We have the lower Dome Road and Dredge Pond phase 2 in Dawson City — that is work that is underway. We have Mayo's 7th Avenue north and the joint Yukon government-Teslin Tlingit Council-Village of Teslin green subdivision in Teslin. There are some other projects that we have an eye on as well.

Maybe I will stop there; that kind of gives an overview. We could probably spend a bit more time going over these, but that is some of the work that we are focused on at this time that pertains to different and innovative ways of lot development.

Ms. Clarke: Thanks to the minister for that answer.

The minister mentioned 5th and Rogers — that there is one proposal — and they are looking at the pricing. He committed to release the 5th and Rogers land parcel to the private sector. Could he give me more of an update on where we are on this idea?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, the officials at Energy, Mines and Resources and Yukon Housing Corporation are reviewing the submission from the private sector. As far as I know — I don't have full detail, but I think that it is all a number of Yukon-based companies — all Yukon private sector. I think that it is a mix between private sector entities as well as First Nation development corporations. That is what I am aware of. They are reviewing the proposal at this time. I am hoping that it will come to a final decision quite quickly. We would like to see an opportunity — the officials are saying that they expect the final decision this calendar year, before the end of December. We would like to see, hopefully, a good deal in place for Yukoners. We want to see appropriate value put on the land but also an appropriate plan moving forward that meets the needs of our housing ecosystem.

That's our update at this point in time. I'm hoping that we will just be able to bring further information here in the remainder of this calendar year.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. In his mandate letter, he also committed to create opportunities for public and private partnerships in land development. Can the minister explain what has been done so far?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Well, I think that the earlier questions going back to the mandate letter and when we talked about what some of these ways are to move land development out — the public/private partnerships. The start of the dialog today was the developer-build loan program, which is our ability, as a public entity, to work with private entities to be able to move things forward. I would say that the majority of answers that I have given have been about public/private partnerships, whether it be the work around the tank farm, the work with Chu Nii kwän, the work being done with some of the municipalities, and 5th and Rogers as well. That type of work is what we're really focused on — trying to have the public side be innovative and help de-risk and make things easier to finance in the public markets and, at the same time, have the private sector execute that particular work.

Ms. Clarke: The Premier also wrote in the mandate letter that he will develop and maintain Yukon government

staff housing in rural communities in partnership with First Nations and development corporations. Can the Premier give us an update on where we are on this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our government continues to provide employee housing in rural Yukon communities to help with staff recruitment and retention. The Public Service Commission's employee housing policy was revised in 2019 to prioritize housing for essential positions, such as health professionals and teachers, with limited tenancies to three years to encourage alternative housing options and support private-market housing development and to help realign each community's rental rates to be closer to the private market.

A review of the policy changes from 2019 is underway to determine their effectiveness. While it should be noted that some tenancies are limited to three years, the policy also allows for extensions in some situations, such as where alternative housing options do not exist in the employee's community. So, normally, what we would do is — I will give an example: If there is a teacher in a community, for instance, what they will do is that they will have the opportunity to work through the Department of Education and request an extension for the unit that they're in. Part of that, especially in previous work on the housing file, is that you will go out to one of the communities and have that conversation, but it's really a policy that is communicated through the Department of Education, as an example.

I just want to touch on this, because we have talked about it a bit in the House earlier in this session. It is concerning staff housing requests from the Department of Education. I just want to touch on a few notes here.

Between May and December of 2023, in our communities, we had a total of 27 requests, and from those, we have filled 25 of those requests. We had two individuals in Carmacks, one in Dawson, two in Haines Junction, two in Mayo, one in Old Crow, four in Pelly Crossing, two in Ross River, two in Teslin, and nine in Watson Lake, and all of those were filled. We have two outstanding requests from September, and I will go back and find out if we have had solutions to those. One is in Mayo — so, we have filled two, and we still have one in Mayo, and that is, of course, what we had talked about earlier where we had finished off our duplex and as well under the affordable housing piece. In Teslin, we still have one outstanding, and we are working right now on a substantial build in Teslin. Our hope is that there could be a private sector solution on the Teslin piece where we could help de-risk. We have been chatting a bit about that, but we also have plans in place, if not, where we have the ability to build something out.

The question was, as well, I think: How is that going in the sense of this commitment to include the work around staff housing? Right now — just to give a sense — we have three individuals in Beaver Creek; three individuals in Carcross; 14 individuals in Carmacks; 37 individuals in Dawson City; two in Destruction Bay; 10 in Faro; six in Haines Junction; seven in Mayo; seven in Old Crow — with Old Crow, we have, of course, a tenplex that is coming online quite quickly; we have 10 in Pelly Crossing; 18 in Ross River; 10 in Teslin; and 37 in Watson Lake.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate that answer from the minister. Now, at this year's AYC AGM in Watson Lake, the Premier promised that he would provide resources to municipalities to support them to apply for federal funding. What has been done so far to fulfill that commitment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I had a discussion with an AYC official over the last two weeks. It was brought to my attention that — I don't know; I will have to go back. I spoke with officials today just to make sure that we reached out to the executive director of AYC, but I think that part of that challenge was — absolutely, the commitment was made to support the Association of Yukon Communities in their ability to leverage money, primarily from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities — from FCM.

I made that commitment, and then there was a request made from AYC leadership to follow up on that particular item. I don't think we had a letter after the event that said: How do we move forward? And our officials had been waiting. It was brought up to me just the other day — actually, two weeks ago, on Friday morning — and I spoke with officials, and we are just going to reach out to Executive Director Hassard on that note.

Ms. Clarke: I do have a little longer question here, so make sure you have a pen.

The Premier committed to support the community land trust to advance its project in Whitehorse. Can the Premier provide a status update on this?

I have a few other questions related to the community land trust. The government pledged to support the land trust society through a letter of intent in December 2022, committing to provide them with a lot in the Whistle Bend subdivision in Whitehorse. Can the Government of Yukon give land as a land trust to a society? How would this free land transfer be accomplished?

The key to the land trust model is protecting the affordability of the home by allowing the owner to resell at prices that can be inflated over time but only at the rate of inflation. Can the Government of Yukon actually control the resale prices? What happens if an owner of a condo doesn't abide to sell the condo at the required price? Is this allowed under the condo act or the land titles act, and does the government have any estimates of the total cost, and has it been budgeted in the fiscal framework?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that, with a question framed in that particular way with such technical ability to frame it, I think our best option would be to come back with a legislative return. We will take it from Hansard, and we will come back on each one of those very technically structured questions.

I want to make sure that the Legislative Assembly gets the best available information, so that's how we will respond.

Ms. Clarke: Can the minister provide us with an update on the old Macaulay Lodge site, and what are the next steps? This spring, he was very keen to demolish it and rezone the land for use other than seniors housing.

Does the Premier have a specific project that is being considered for the lot, or is seniors housing still an option?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to correct the record. First of all, I believe that the zoning change was something that was

requested and suggested by the City of Whitehorse planning department. I can go back, but that was my sense.

I definitely wanted the lot demolished, and I know that it wasn't a department that I am responsible for that had gone through some of those key conversations with the City of Whitehorse. I can find out from my colleague about that. I believe it was Energy, Mines and Resources that did that work.

My sense is that the work was done to demolish the site. I think it was done well. I will go through and share a couple of notes with you here. It was demolished in September of 2022 to repurpose the site for new housing development. The demolition of Macaulay Lodge provides for a variety of opportunities for future land use, which we initially explored through the expression of interest issued in the spring of 2022.

We are committed to making housing available. There have been no barriers put in place to see some level of seniors housing put in the area. I think the biggest change with the zoning, as I recall, was really around the fact that there was the potential for commercial on the first floor. I believe that — I will go out on a ledge a bit here — it probably pertains to the official community plan and the work that would have been done by the City of Whitehorse and the City of Whitehorse wanting to see more opportunities for commercial activity in that area. We have absolutely no projects that have come to us to this date. I just want to see housing built there, and I want to see the private sector — whoever it is — do that work and hopefully to do it quickly.

So, at this particular time, I think that the latest conversation I had was, near the end of this calendar year; we were supposed to be in a situation where there would be an opportunity. What we had said publicly was that we want the private sector to build this. We talked during Question Period a bit about Vimy, and so, we are focused on working with Vimy. We are focused on looking at some of our other community housing models, which include a very broad demographic of individuals — it is seniors in many cases, as well as some of our most vulnerable folks, in sort of a collective.

We continue to be focused on seniors housing. We continue to work with Vimy on their project. We are not eliminating any options on the lot in Macaulay, although that has been some of the dialogue here. It has been framed incorrectly. We want somebody — whoever it is, whether it is a development corporation or others — to hopefully look toward building that, and I think that it is Energy, Mines and Resources — I'll check — that is going to be dealing with the procurement side of this.

Again, the rezoning application of the former Macaulay Lodge — yes, it was approved in May 2023. The zoning was amended from public service — because we did have a government-run building there — public service to comprehensive neighbourhood commercial, which permits mixed-use residential and commercial development, with supportive housing included. So, you would be looking at multi-tiered — you could have a daycare, you could have something along those lines on the first floor, and then you could have people living on the second floor, to give you a sense.

I know that the city — even if you look at 5th and Rogers and some of these other areas, they have really looked toward having — throughout the community plan — more opportunities for commercial or business, usually within the continuum of what is being requested to be built.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer.

We know that there are 26 units in Normandy Manor reserved for Yukon Housing Corporation tenants. Can the minister confirm what the Yukon Housing Corporation is paying for each unit? Is the Department of Health and Social Services covering any portion of the rent or the cost for services, and what is the tenant responsible for covering?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, all the units are occupied, so all 26 units are occupied. The fee is paid by the Yukon Housing Corporation. We pay \$2,990 per unit, and that's what we are paying for both the unit and for service costs, with an inflationary adjustment over the life of the agreement. The residents who are there have access to recreational programming, community meeting areas, 24-hour security, customized menu options for three meals a day, laundry services, and housekeeping. But our clients who are in there from Yukon Housing Corporation are paying 25 percent of their income and 40 percent toward the services that are also provided. So, again, we're paying \$2,990 — almost \$3,000 — and then there is an offset with what's affordable to those seniors who are in those 26 units with a very good array of services that they are being provided.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. I'm going to move on.

I would like to ask the minister about some of the practices for tenant issues. We have heard stories of tenants who have paid the majority of their rent but come up short. In circumstances like that, what is the Yukon Housing policy for dealing with tenants?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I guess, Madam Chair, respectfully, it's very difficult — first of all, we would not discuss a particular case, as stated, where it's like: We heard a story. I know there is something.

I think where I go to is this: What we would be doing is, if there is a discrepancy with payment — and to be fair to the member opposite, I have sat in on community meetings and I met with tenants in all of our buildings in downtown last year and our bigger multi-use buildings. There definitely were times — to be respectful in answering — when there was a situation. I think that a bigger thing was that there was some disruption in somebody's life, and they were probably a very good long-term tenant who had been consistently paying the rent — and then what happens is that, because there is some disruption, there's a conversation and it will potentially lead to a letter from the corporation. The letter would talk about things such as eviction, potentially, or some measure of action, so it comes as a very strong letter and the individuals, of course, have anxiety from that. Then, usually there is a follow-up with our liaison staff who will then come in and remediate the situation.

What we try to do in any of these cases — whether it's a situation that has to do with a financial transaction or with a

maintenance issue — we are always going to try to have our folks at the Yukon Housing Corporation work with those tenants. If there is a situation where there is not enough money for payment, we try to work out a payment plan. I think what was asked was — if the individual paid up front and then there was some disruption. Overall, what we are going to try to do in every case is have our liaison folks work directly with them.

We have approximately 1,100 units, so there are a lot. There are new units that are in our portfolio where we are dealing with less maintenance, and then there are buildings that sometimes need more tender care, and therefore, that will lead to more maintenance calls in many cases. There is a lot of work that gets done by our folks at the Yukon Housing Corporation. As well, as you can imagine, you have your potential maintenance issues.

We have talked about some of the other challenges as well with some of the other buildings. Then you have your tenant-to-tenant relationships and potential conflicts. Some tenants don't always follow the rules exactly, and when something like that happens, it can set off a lot of interaction between neighbours and the corporation. There are times when — our process for access to the building is that we make sure that first responders have access to our buildings with keys, and then you find out that one of the first responders — one of the entities that do that — has lost the keys and it's potentially an organization that is outside of the responsibility of the Yukon government. All of those different things are happening simultaneously, and we try to make sure that we manage — so, yes, we have 1,150 supported households.

I would go back and say that if there is a discrepancy on a financial issue — and I have watched that work out in real time — you would have our head of client supports — our folks within that part of the shop — who would be reaching out and trying to work through that issue as well.

Ms. Clarke: I really appreciate the minister's answer on that one. Does Yukon Housing ever follow up directly with tenants or is a letter of notice the only method of contact?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, we do follow up with our tenants in modes other than written communication.

Ms. Clarke: If a tenant has identified maintenance issues, what are the response timeline standards for the Yukon Housing Corporation to fix the issues in units? Does Yukon Housing track if they have fixed issues within their service standards?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, I think that at this time it is definitely not a fine science. First of all, there is a bit of a bottleneck from COVID when we didn't have the ability to go into units. That was probably one of the most challenging times, because there were moments when clients needed to have a maintenance issue addressed and you were trying to ensure that you have government employees at that point — or the folks going in are subcontractors that we have worked through to do that work. In many of those cases, they couldn't address it. If it was something that was critical, we would address it and we would figure out a way to look at it.

To give you the example of the magnitude of what we are talking about, from January 1, 2023 to September 15, 2023, the

corporation completed 2,310 minor repairs and emergency works in Whitehorse and 851 minor repairs and emergency works in our communities.

The corporation also completed 65 major repairs — or are under contract to complete them — from April 1, 2023 to September 15, 2023.

The corporation employs four building maintenance workers in Whitehorse to respond to emergency calls and complete work orders and vacancy repairs. The four workers rotate on-call duties to provide emergency on-call service after hours and weekends in Whitehorse. In addition to the four workers on that team, Yukon Housing Corporation has two maintenance contractors in Whitehorse who complete work orders and vacancy repairs.

The Yukon Housing Corporation contracts with maintenance contractors in the communities to handle the after-hours and emergency calls as well as to complete work orders and vacancy repairs.

The corporation is working on internal system improvements to accurately track work order status, so a lot of that data collection is underway. It's work that we are still doing. We do have a backlog.

Coming to the timing, look, I think it would be fair to say that you can see the amount of work that was done during that period of time, but I would have to come back and discuss that, because I don't know how much of that work is some of the backlog from 2020 to 2021. Those would have been minor repairs that we are working on.

I have been in meetings with the tenants in separate buildings when we talked about maintenance. It depends on some of the issues. Sometimes it's a lighting issue, and I have sat there with Ron, who leads our work, and I have listened to that dialogue where we can pivot quickly and work on some of those minor repairs or maintenance issues, but then it might be something where there is a long-term issue in a bathroom and you are trying to work through two or three things in an older building that has some challenges. You are trying to get the parts. You might have to bring a plumber in on contract — all of those things.

I would say that we are constantly trying to ensure that our clients are comfortable and are well supported. That's the key, and I see the commitment and passion of our team at the Yukon Housing Corporation and their empathy toward the situations we are discussing with clients. I think they do their very best to do it in a very timely manner. Also, for the record, we spent \$5 million more on repairs and maintenance last year in the fiscal year than we did in 2021-22, so it gives you a sense of the scale that went on after COVID versus when we were in the middle of COVID.

Chair: Would members like to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. Clarke: I am hoping that the minister can also provide an update on the current wait-list for both social and seniors housing. Wait-lists remain long and we continue to hear reports of empty units. Also, can the minister take us through the policy for vacant units and tenancy offers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it's important to start by saying that we were in a position a number of years ago where we had a lot of pressure at that time on our housing wait-list. I can remember at least 525 or 530. As of October 26, 2023, though, just last week, there were 301 eligible applicants on the wait-list for our rent-geared-to-income program, with 250 in Whitehorse and 51 in our rural communities.

A quick breakdown of the wait-list, going through our communities, is: one in Carcross; one in Carmacks; 20 in Dawson City, which is why we have to look at significant capital buildouts there; we have none in Destruction Bay; three in Faro; five in Haines Junction; three in Mayo, and we have talked about more substantial investment there; none in Old Crow; none in Pelly right now; and 10 in Ross River. It is appropriate to say, of course, that in Old Crow and Pelly, it would just be Yukon government staff, because the nations support their own seniors and non-seniors housing stock, but we are still having broader discussions about how we can play a more collaborative role in both of those communities on that housing stock.

In Ross River, we are looking at a total of 10 — so, eight non-seniors. We did just move some emergency housing. We met with chief and council in May, and I believe, just in the last number of weeks, the housing has arrived there to be put in place and installed. They are modular-style — mobile-style units. In Teslin, we have three people on the wait-list, and in Watson Lake, 15 are on the wait-list — so that would be eight non-seniors and four seniors in Watson Lake and then the three employees whom we talked about. So, 311 is the total.

I won't get into a demographic breakdown. I think this is important and this gives you a sense, I think, of where things are. Some of the work that we started to do when we were in this discussion is: How many individuals are on our wait-lists who are new to the wait-list? I think that is important. When you think about our total of 320 — first of all, you will say that there are 320 wait-listed by time, versus the 311, but that is because some people are on the wait-list in two places. They have applied in the community, and we had a challenge here at one point because one of our community MLAs was advocating for somebody, appropriately — and family was as well — but didn't know that the individual had actually applied both in Whitehorse and at home. We do have that happening in some cases. They will apply from the community and at home as well.

I think that what is important is that out of that 320 — and asking how we make those decisions. The majority of people are folks who have joined the wait-list over the last two years, so they are not folks in a long-time situation. It has mostly been

— 163 people have been less than a year, and 85 of those people have been one to three years. I just wanted to touch on that. The majority — there are some seniors — probably 62 seniors but 100 seniors in total. That is why we thought that the partnership on the Normandy lots was good. That is why we think that continuing to support Vimy is also really important for us to do, as well as look at how we build up more of our own stock.

So, that is sort of the numbers. I guess I will just go through our by-name list again, which is another piece of work that we do. Housing partner with Safe at Home Society — that is the start of our by-name list, and you've probably heard that. It is a way of using multiple organizations to work and support individuals — to prioritize housing for individuals experiencing homelessness or if they are precariously housed.

The rent-geared-to-income units are allocated based on the following: 20 percent are for individuals who are on the by-name list; 20 percent for individuals based on their experience of intimate family violence or medical need; and 60 percent for individuals who indicate having only affordability needs. That is our criteria and our breakdown based on that.

Ms. Clarke: I really appreciate the minister's answer, and thank you for that. With respect to the new asset cap that has been placed on seniors looking to secure housing with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, it appears that those who hold assets in excess of \$100,000 and who are unable to remain in their own home due to health or other reasons are now ineligible for seniors housing. What options are there for these individuals in this situation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The 2022 Auditor General of Canada's report to the Yukon Legislative Assembly, as we spoke about earlier today, on Yukon Housing Corporation identified concerns that the Housing Corporation had applied different asset cap criteria for seniors and non-seniors in community housing. Again, the government recognizes the importance of ensuring that the program eligibility is transparent and equitable for all tenants.

In December 2022, to address this concern, Yukon Housing Corporation implemented and revised the asset cap policy where new applicants to the rent-geared-to-income program, including seniors, must not have over \$100,000 in assets. At the time of implementation, 37 clients on the wait-list had assets over the cap, three have since been housed, and we ensured that all 34 who remained on the wait-list — 34 remained on the wait-list because they fit the eligibility criteria at the time of their application.

I think that is important, because I have sat with individuals in some of our communities. I think probably the most significant conversations that happened and really stand out were in Watson Lake, and it was really individuals who had been taken off the list, and so, we went back and said: Look, they met the criteria at the time of the policy.

We probably could spend a lot of time on this topic. What I will say — just some high-level points — is that, without going too deep, I think our cap is the highest asset cap in western Canada. I think our bigger challenge is that we need to ensure that we are still supporting the private sector and the public/private partnerships so that there can be more housing

stock built in the communities, especially when it comes to rental or more supportive living so that we can see individuals who want to stay in their communities stay there, because, in many cases, they need to have those options.

I think that covers it, but there was one part of that question — I think it was something about Hospital Corporation — it might have been Housing Corporation — but I just want to make sure that I have covered the question in full.

Ms. Clarke: I'm just looking at the time. It's 4:37 p.m., and I still would like to give the Third Party a chance to ask their questions, so I will have one more question, and then I am going to pass it to my colleague.

My last question would be — the Safe at Home Society has publicly suggested that they have found additional money to move forward on their renovation of the old High Country Inn for affordable housing units. They have been hesitant to share where that funding is coming from, so does the minister know where Safe at Home has sourced that additional funding, and if he does, could he share those funding sources with the House and confirm if the Yukon government has promised additional capital funding to the Safe at Home Society for the project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our government does, as I have said all along, support the Safe at Home Society's vision to develop 55 units of permanent and supportive housing. While the resources have been provided to date from Yukon government and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, there were a number of challenges that continue with the delay of this project.

Yukon government, CMHC, and Safe at Home — CMHC being the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation — are working to explore practical options to address these challenges, including the code compliance issues, which was the big issue.

So, what I know to date is that Safe at Home has continued to work on identifying funds. Actually, today, I was taken aback a little bit with the question — that they had found other funds that they haven't announced. All I know — what I have been told is that things were progressing positively. I thought they came up with some solutions which, in turn, would be either a reduction in budget or they would access more funding.

I know that the team at Yukon Housing Corporation wants to meet and have a discussion with me soon on the subject, but I think they were waiting to have further clarity from Safe at Home about how they were going to proceed. I am hoping that they were in a position to come up with some new funding sources that will work for them on that project. I think this project is very important. I was waiting to see how it was going to proceed. I know it has been delayed because of the code issue with them and working with the City of Whitehorse on that code issue, but I hope that there is a solution forward. I haven't had a formal ask put in front of me for any more resources. We will make appropriate and prudent considerations on that. Again, I am hoping that can move forward.

The officials are also just saying that we are waiting to get a sense. They seem to be pulling the pieces together on the capital part of the project, but we are also trying to get real clarity on what the ongoing O&M requirements will be for the

project as well and figuring out which departments are going to be supportive and which NGOs as well, just to make sure that we have visibility on those costs moving forward.

MLA Tredger: I will start by welcoming the officials here, as well as all of those listening in, and I thank the minister for making himself available for these questions today.

I want to start by talking about Vimy. In Question Period today, the Premier said that this government has put — and I quote: "... more support and time into the Vimy project than any other housing project." In the context, I think it is "housing project".

I was pretty surprised to hear that, because I went back and I looked. Normandy Manor has gotten in the neighbourhood of about \$4.7 million. Cornerstone got close to \$2 million from this government, as of 2018 — it might be more by now. I haven't heard of millions going to Vimy. I assume by "support", he means intangible support — things like meetings and help in applying for funding, and I think that's great; I'm glad that's happening. I'm glad that's underway for Vimy, but I think that they would probably appreciate some actual tangible funding as well.

So, is the government planning to turn that intangible support into dollars? Will there be funding for, for example, design work for predevelopment work for Vimy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, I think that I would say that, yes, money is part of the equation with working to de-risk a project, to define a project, to understand a project. What I was talking about is the amount of support — technical conversations that have happened at the public service level and the political level — throughout. Yes, in some cases, you can be in a position where there is a quantum identified financially. You can make a decision on that. You can look at what kind of a return for that investment, for that support, and does it fit into that criteria that you're looking at from a mandate or from inside a policy? Those decisions can be easy but substantial because of the funding.

In this case, I think what has happened is that everybody, from the board right through to the partners in government — I think the scope of cost has changed, the partnership models have changed, and all of that has led to more of a challenge.

What I am hearing from the member opposite, to get right down to it, is: Are you going to put money into it? Yes, we are. I think that the clarity is that we have to de-risk it. The other question was: Are you going to put money toward getting a better sense of what the costs are? Yes, we have seen some new asks, but we are also made aware that CMHC have changed their funding criteria, which will have some potentially significant implications for the project.

When the project scope is moved on a number of occasions, this announcement on the co-investment fund, which I believe our officials have been in the room for and there have been discussions on that in the last two weeks — so, for clarity, there has been some movement. We are at the table, and we want to understand what the financial model is for the project. We are going to hold that land and continue to work with Vimy.

I think it is important, and I would love to get into this discussion to get it on the record with more detailed questions, but what I would state is that I did attend the annual general meeting. In that general meeting, I stated that either Vimy as a society will move forward to try to figure out how to get this project built, but it's also important — and we said: Look, if there needs to be support from the Yukon government — this started before our government.

This goes back — there were a number of people, before the current leaders inside of Vimy, who wanted to see this done. This goes back probably over a decade, in different iterations of the model, the vision, the scope, and the cost. All of those things have continued to evolve, and I think that there are a lot of individuals who have been along and part of that discussion for a long time.

I think that when there is clarity to understand about how much exactly needs to be put in, we can do that. I think that when we know the model exactly, that is important, and we need to make sure that the project is de-risked. There is some early work that we have done. I think the lates — I can go back and take a look. I am checking with the officials. We have offered substantial funds, as well, as of late in a phased approach to, again, de-risk and figure out what the total cap ex is on the project. I think that there have been discussions just even in the last couple of weeks on that.

MLA Tredger: I heard the Premier say that once there is a clear ask, that then they will give the funding. So, is he saying that they are waiting for a clear ask from Vimy to give them funding?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are different pieces. Part of it is that we have continued to have discussions with Vimy on what I would term as “feasibility work”. I know that, within that work, we, as of late, have just offered up more funds. I think that our latest is \$300,000 that we have just put out again — and offered up. The model at Vimy of how they will fund their project, as well, and trying to understand the project — what is important about that is that we have changed — we seem to be seeing some sort of a change in how they will access funding.

It is important to note that, within the Vimy project, just a short time ago, Grey Mountain Housing was going to partner with Vimy on this project, and now that partnership has dissolved. This has been a long time moving through the process. What I was getting to is what will be really important — really important after this — is to understand exactly what the capital cost will look like. We provided funds — I think over \$400,000 previously.

We have the land commitment on our lot and another \$246,000 that we put through as well in funding today. Just to give you a sense going back — some of the preconstruction management preliminary work was done in 2013 for \$74,000. In 2016, there was \$50,000 from Highways and Public Works. That was the functional plan to give us a sense of what they were going to build. Then, in 2018, we did another \$23,000 and that was for the comparative site analysis. Then we did another \$78,610, which was the comprehensive business operations governance and construction plan — just so we knew what was going to be built. Then, in 2019, we did another \$5,000 which

was through Yukon Housing Corporation to help the society with an application to CMHC.

What I was chatting about today was that they went to CMHC, and some of that modelling was based on, I believe, \$75,000 per door, and then there are criteria within that. That is the co-development fund.

To be fair, Vimy was going through a process to leverage that money. As I understood it, then CMHC came back and said that they would no longer be offering support at that quantum of \$75,000 a door, so they had to change their project again.

In 2022, we did another \$15,000 from the HIF, which is our innovation fund as well. On top of that, we have just offered another \$300,000 toward feasibility to try to get a number on the costing. It's not quite that simple. In the original request, I think they were looking for, to be clear, another \$1.2 million to get better numbers on the construction cost. We have come back and said that we can do a phased approach and support them. That's \$300,000. Then, on top of that, we have \$1.35 million as well for the land that is being held and looking to be transferred.

Vimy, as of this date, has not completed — after the funding that has been put in place — a detailed architectural or engineering — again, we have offered \$300,000 to advance those documents. Those documents are extremely important work to be done. We did help offset the costs of them working with Colliers on a lot of that extra work as well.

I think what I am trying to illustrate is that we are completely committed to the project. We need to go through a stage-gate approach on de-risking it. We need to understand who their partners will be or will not be, and we want to see this built.

But again, we also have offered up to take a more significant role, if need be, in helping to manage this project or helping to look at our own capital build and to get something in place. One of the concerns that we have tabled as well is that, within the model that they are looking at, they want to look at a food services requirement, so they are looking at having their own commercial kitchen and also having food services staff. We are trying to get a sense of: Is the business model that has been developed also considering the current challenges within that labour market and the extra pressures to cover and manage those costs? That is also a piece of it that we are looking at — trying to figure it out before we get a real sense of what the total cost will be.

There are a number of pieces that we are trying to de-risk and trying to get to a solid sense of what this building will cost and what the building will look like. I think they have got good partners with their architect, but I think that they have probably lost some ground from their announcement around their partnership — and now that dissolving — and looking to continue on just as the organization as a stand-alone.

MLA Tredger: What that answer really illustrated to me is that it is a miracle that anyone at Vimy is still working on this. The Premier said that previous to his government, I think, it has been in the neighbourhood of 12 years, and they have completed plan after plan after plan and they are still not getting the support that they need.

The Premier said that other funders have backed away — so they have to back away too? Other partners have fallen apart, so that is when you need a partner the most. When your other partners are leaving, that is when you need YG to step in the most and be there for you, not to say that everyone else is stepping back, so we better step back too.

Like I said, it is a miracle to me that the people there are still so dedicated to this project and are still pushing through obstacle after obstacle when they are trying to get a building built and they are being asked if they can staff a kitchen.

The question I have is — it sounded to me like the Premier said that they have committed \$300,000 for the architectural design. Can the Premier confirm that they have offered \$300,000 to Vimy for an architectural design? Is that underway, and is it good to go?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have to reply to that. It portrays an absolute lack of understanding from the member opposite. To challenge the fact that all of the officials and years of work to de-risk a project and to sit with individuals month after month is not support is absolutely disrespectful to the officials.

It shows a lack of understanding of how to actually oversee and support a project. It makes great political hay inside the Legislative Assembly at 5:00 p.m., but the reason it's annoying is that it is so disingenuous to what we have been doing. To simplify it to the point that we're saying that we are trying to find kitchen staff is, again —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: Member for Whitehorse Centre, on a point of order.

MLA Tredger: I believe that “disingenuous” is a violation of Standing Order 19(h).

Chair: Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Premier is not suggesting that there have been false motives. He is talking in a way that is describing the words that are being used. It's not disrespectful.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I believe that this is a dispute between members. I would just caution members to not use words that may be out of order.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I would just say that the comments from the member opposite do not support the facts.

What is important to state is that when you are looking at a capital project, the key thing is: What is the cost of building it? Over the years, we have been putting dollars and support into figuring out the cost of building it. We don't know the cost to build it. The member opposite wants to simplify this and say to just give out the money and write a cheque. Well, I need to know what the number is. Then, have we supported the team? Yes, we have come back and said that we could do another \$300,000. The term was — quote: “... is it good to go?” I don't know what “good to go” means. I know that we sat down two

weeks ago. We have seen a different model and we are looking to support Vimy in that work.

The member opposite is giving no help to Vimy today — absolutely no help. If the goal today is to help support this project, it is absolutely degrading the work that has been done and it is of no use. If today's Committee of the Whole and the supplementary budget request where Vimy is not even identified here — it's going to take this project back two steps by flooding the air with misinformation; that is not going to do any good. I look forward to getting back to the supplementary budget in detail and to questions from the member opposite.

MLA Tredger: I think that we have probably taken that topic about as far as we can go. I just have to say one more comment. We have heard a lot of comments about de-risking this project. If there was ever a time to take a risk, it feels like a housing crisis for a non-profit trying to serve seniors would be it.

I am going to leave it for now; I will pass the comments on to Vimy and I hope that things can get resolved and move forward.

I want to ask about the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. My understanding is that how much people are eligible for through that benefit depends on their family size — how many adults and then how many children and siblings are in the family. I believe that if you have siblings that are the same sex, they have to share a bedroom, and if they are of a different sex, they are eligible for a bedroom each. Could the Premier confirm that and let me know if, depending on how many children of different sexes that you have, that changes the amount that people are eligible for through that benefit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The Yukon housing benefit is a rental subsidy program run by the Yukon Housing Corporation that provides financial support to help Yukoners meet their housing needs. The subsidy is paid directly to the individual, allowing portability and tenant confidentiality. Since the program's launch in November 2020, it has helped over 300 households. As of October 26, 2023, we have 128 households that were approved for the benefit this year. This fall, the corporation will begin a targeting campaign to promote the subsidy.

A little background — in our communities, most of the individuals who are using it are in Dawson at this time and Whitehorse and Haines Junction as well. We are in the midst of trying to leverage some more funds for that program over the next number of years, because we think this is a good tool that can be used. We can give up to \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800 a month, depending on the household income. The corporation, as I said, is working on another stream that really focuses on the support of survivors of domestic violence.

A bit more criteria — clients must rent in the Yukon and not be receiving other housing benefits for the subsidy. Clients must have an annual household income below the affordable household income limits for their eligible unit size. Clients must have less than \$100,000 in assets and clients must file annually with their Canadian income tax return. Approved clients receive cheques before the first day of the month. We did 165 out of our subsidies from April 2022 to 2023. We have

done about \$433,200, so the average subsidy has been a bit over \$200.

Going back to the particulars on unit numbers, I think we have had this discussion before. It's based on bedrooms, but officials want to come back with some more information about the sharing of rooms according to the National Occupancy Standard and how that pertains to the funds.

MLA Tredger: I was reading the National Occupancy Standard earlier today and I believe it is that children over five are required to share a room — or are eligible for a shared room — if they are the same sex and for separate rooms if they are different sexes. I am wondering if, when Yukon Housing Corporation applies that criteria, children who are non-binary are considered a different gender or sex or whatever they want to call it. Are trans children required to have legally changed their gender or sex in order to be considered?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will go back to the corporation and find out what sort of analysis was used — if there was an analysis on that policy at all or if there has been any determination of the policy buildout from the federal government as well that also takes into concordance within the TPA that we have. I know that we have gone back and forth a lot on this with housing ministers, primarily because, going back to the previous questions, if you take into consideration how we work through our wait-list, an individual who has experienced domestic violence in some cases is at the top of our list.

This new money that we're looking at coming in — the criteria around it was really around domestic violence.

The challenge that we said is: Look, we think we are doing a really good job, and we are meeting the needs of individuals who have been in this horrible situation, but we still want those funds. The reason I reflect on that is because the criteria within the TPA can be very descriptive, so I am hoping that, also, Canada has identified how the national occupancy standards should reflect in our policies as well. Yes, the officials are saying that is part of the work in reviewing our program as well. I want to get back to the member opposite with an appropriately detailed answered on this subject.

MLA Tredger: I appreciate the Premier saying that he will get back to me, and I will just provide some information. A family came to me recently. This is a family with one parent and two children, both teenagers. One of them is a girl, and one of them is non-binary. The one who is non-binary has not changed their sex legally on their ID — as many trans people don't ever, for a lot of reasons, and certainly, many trans teenagers don't — but has been living as non-binary at school and in their personal and public lives for many years. They have been told that they are only eligible — that those two children, the girl and the one who is non-binary, have to share a room, and that is how their eligibility for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit is being calculated. The household income is based on the two children sharing a room.

That is pretty frankly discriminatory. I hope that, while that review is underway, the Premier can direct his department to have a provisional policy that would treat that family and other families more fairly. I am also wondering if this also applies to

being eligible for Yukon Housing Corporation units and their eligibility to apply for those.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think we will go back and just take a look at our policy overview on this topic. I would also share with the member opposite that, if the member opposite wants to reach out directly to me, we can provide the appropriate application form so that the member opposite can advocate on behalf of that particular family.

You have our commitment at a macro policy level to take a look at it, but also, that might help those individuals as well, because we are not aware — or I am not aware — but as long as we have that sign-off from the family identifying that, I think this is something that we can probably go back and take a look at pretty quickly.

MLA Tredger: I will absolutely follow up with the minister about that family in particular, and I look forward to wider policy changes on that.

There were a bunch of numbers that the Premier shared about the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. I may have missed this, but is the program fully subscribed right now?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, it's not.

MLA Tredger: I am very glad to hear that there haven't been people who haven't been able to access it for that reason yet.

In the spring, we had talked about — this is actually all related to the National Occupancy Standard. According to the National Occupancy Standard, single people are only eligible for a bachelor unit under this program, which is fine, except that, in most parts of the Yukon, there aren't bachelors available. The minister said he was going to look into that. Could he provide an update?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am looking over to officials. If I remember the conversation in the spring session, it was really around the fact that, as well, you have these individuals — which the preamble identified — who were finding a one-bedroom and, in some cases, only a two-bedroom, and that was all they could find. Yet, they wouldn't be — the funding wouldn't be applicable. Let me go back. I want to look at this in a more operational sense. I just want to know if we are now accepting any individuals who have come through with that sort of application so we are not leaving anybody out.

What we are getting back from our officials is that we are housing based on available units in the community, so that would then give the person the ability to look at something that's outside of a bachelor, if that is all that is available. That's what our officials are telling me. If there is any sort of space between what we have here in data and a real-world situation that the member opposite is aware of — some sort of an example — please let us know. But I think, coming out of last spring, we were in a position that we would be accepting clients based on what's available in their community.

MLA Tredger: So, just to clarify, if someone was, according to National Occupancy Standard, eligible for a bachelor, but all they could find was a one- or two-bedroom, would they get the subsidy that was appropriate for a one- or two-bedroom unit?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That's what the Yukon Housing Corporation officials are telling us — that they have made that change. We want to make sure that is correct, that's what it is. So, one, would we support the two-bedroom if they were only one individual, as an example? I want to understand if they are also ensuring that there's an increase in that. I just want to make sure there is proper data there.

Are you just getting \$200 — because I know that the average that we are rolling out is about \$218 or \$219 for each of the 165 applications. I want to make sure that, if we do support you in getting your two-bedroom, are we also looking at that extra cost that probably comes with a two-bedroom and then are we increasing the Canada-Yukon housing benefit at the same ratio as the rooms. So, let us get back to you on that one, please.

MLA Tredger: I appreciate that, and it is exciting to hear that might have changed. I am sure that will make a big difference for a lot of people.

I wanted to ask a little bit about the Yukon home ownership program. In the briefing, I believe the numbers that we had — please correct me if I am wrong — were that there have been 40 applications, but only one of those had been approved. If that is correct, could the Premier explain why so many of those applications are getting denied?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, look, there have been a number of applications that have been denied, and it has really been around the strength of the applications from a standpoint of — it is something that is set out — the criteria are set out using a risk analysis. We are looking at 2.5 percent down is the normal rate. We had a third-party analysis done, I think in 2018 — and the officials can just check on that. What we did was we looked at — the same way that when you go to an institution to get a mortgage at a bank and you are walking in, they will go through criteria. Ours is more lenient, and our debt-to-service ratio — I think that the only change was that it went from 40 percent to 42 percent — right?

Okay — so, a very minor change that was directed by a third-party group — it was mortgage-lending programs. Of course, we don't build the mortgage-lending programs — we implement, with help from experts — and that supports programs for eligible Yukoners to build or purchase a home, based on loans at one percent below the average posted five-year rate of major banks, and we reduced the down payment to 2.5 percent.

On the debt-to-service ratio, we went from 40 percent to 42 percent, which actually was making the program more accessible. Those are the things that we looked at. It is really coming up to being very open. I am not going to speak to a specific application, but it is household debt. Folks are coming in; they are putting in their submissions, and their household debt is making them ineligible.

It's difficult, because we want to see people in a position to be able to leverage this more accessible program, compared to going to a bank or financial institution, which can be rigorous. I think anyone here in the room could say that even going back to do any kind of remortgage or anything can be rigorous. We are trying to remove that, but at the same time, we

have to ensure that we're supporting folks to be set up to succeed and that we're not — because of their household, things are not getting approved, and they're taking on a burden that experts would say are over the risk that they should take on or that we should take on with public funds.

MLA Tredger: I believe that the Premier said that the eligible debt-to-service ratio is 42 percent. I am not sure if he means the gross or the total. I know that CMHC restricts debt-to-service ratios to 39 percent for gross and 44 percent for total, so if that is the total, it is actually higher than what the Yukon Housing Corporation is supporting. If it's the gross, it's still not actually improving the options very much for people who aren't eligible for a traditional mortgage, which is my understanding of what this program is intended to do.

Has the Premier's department looked at how to make this program more accessible to people so that more than one person is able to access it?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Within that program, I think that it is important to note that you have to look at the ratios in a different way. We're actually, you know — financial institutions are using 36 percent, CMHC is saying 39 percent, and we are saying 42 percent. It's more lenient, because we are saying that this is the percentage of your gross income that can go toward servicing debt, so we are more flexible.

What we are looking at — I'm not going to — and there are no announcements on the floor today — different ways to get people into the housing continuum. I think that it is really around how, if it's not going to be in this normal process of going out and doing an acquisition based on some debt instrument, how do we get people into having some equity?

I think, for us, we are looking at the housing trust — there were questions earlier. We are trying to unlock that ability for people to gain equity there, and there are some other things in which we want to continue to look at best practices.

On this one, at the end of the day, this is tough. I think that the question was appropriate. I will leave it to the experts at Yukon Housing and folks who we lean on to help us. When I take first glance at it, I would say that it is a tough one, because at the end of the day, it is either: Are you in a position to carry that level of debt or are you not, if you are going to acquire? I think, for us, how we play a role — maybe there is, you know — we want to be able to provide that debt instrument based on that calculation. That's not to say that there are not best practices and other solutions.

The answer would be: Are we looking at making that program more lenient? Not now. Are we looking at using the resources and tools that we have in the corporation to get people into levels of home ownership? Yes, we are certainly investigating that, and we are also completing our strategic plan at the board level, which will also give us a good sense of where the corporation should go and the roles that we should play in the housing continuum.

MLA Tredger: Yes, I know there are no easy answers when it comes to this. Like, we don't want people walking away from homes. I get that, but it is also so frustrating and unfair for people who are renting and paying more in rent every month than they would on a mortgage payment, but because

they can't get the down payment — because they can't support that debt ratio — they can't actually ever break into home ownership. So, they are never getting to save that money; they are never getting to build assets.

I mean, I guess there is a bigger question around if that is the way it should work. I just think that a program that only has one person accessing it — it really says to me that the program really needs to change for it to meet its mandate, which is helping people access home ownership. I look forward to hearing what the department comes up with around that, and I hope that we can discuss it again soon.

I want to follow up a little bit on a couple of things that were said in the spring. Actually, sorry, before I do that, I want to follow up on something that my colleague the Member for Porter Creek Centre asked. That was about eviction notices for tenants who have missed one payment, for whatever reason. I mean, we have been talking about this a long time. It has been happening for a long time that people will have one missed payment, whether it is because something happened with their banking or something happened that month, and then they immediately get eviction notices, which is just a really traumatic thing for people.

The Premier confirmed that's what happens: As soon as you miss a payment, you get an eviction notice or a letter that refers to eviction. I'm wondering if he would consider changing that policy to start with a phone call or a letter saying: We noticed you missed a payment; can you call us and talk about options? I know that he said that it's their policy to reach out to people. I hear a lot of stories of that happening — that it's just a letter and nothing else.

Would he consider that policy so, instead of sending a letter that refers to eviction, it could be a letter that refers to support and collaboration?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would just start by saying that if I said "one payment" — and maybe I did — what I was getting at is "one disruption". I'm reflecting to a conversation that happened between a client at one of our buildings last year, and I had a chance to be apprised of that dialogue with our client-support team. It happened over multiple months, so it wasn't just one month, but I will go back and see how we responded. I think we dig into ensuring that we have relationship-building and I think the first thing I'll say is I think the clients also have a responsibility as well. I think for clients who are Yukon Housing clients, the first thing is: Please, if you see a disruption coming, have that conversation — even if you reach out to us beforehand, that's important, because that will give us a sense of how to work on a payment plan or support you and for you not to have that anxiety.

That's something that happens and we are open to that. So, go down that route first. Even if it is the day before and whatever is happening, please reach out to us. I think what becomes difficult is when we don't have a dialogue and we are not aware of what is going on and then there are challenges. It is the same thing each year when we need to get people's NOAs. We get notices of assessment that we require. Months go on and we do send out notes after awhile saying: Look, we need this notice of assessment. I think that the process has

always been where you are trying over a series of months to get that information; I think that we have heard this.

I am not going to commit to a policy change today during Committee of the Whole for the supplementary budget, but what I would say is that I am sensitive to the question and I know that it is difficult if an individual is making best efforts or it has been a very short period of time and something has happened in their life and then, all of a sudden, this can compound it. I think that a lot of our clients have had extremely traumatic experiences in their life. I think that any sort of instability or sense of potential displacement is going to be a potential trigger in their life. It is just going to compound, potentially, whatever they are dealing with anyway, which is maybe the reason that they didn't have an opportunity to make that payment. I think it's a valid suggestion. It is a balance between direct language that we have to use collectively but also being empathetic to what the clients we serve are going through. All of a sudden, for some, it can probably really compound things and we don't want that to happen. It is always the last resort for us; we don't want to be in a position of evicting folks. We want folks to be leaving with a smile on their face and hopefully using another one of our programs to get in a better situation and an improved quality of life.

It is also important to note that it is not just about repayment or payment of rent. We also deal with noise, disturbance, and damage to property that we hear of. Sometimes, there is conflict between clients or other issues that do happen.

In my next bilateral meeting with our folks, I will just ask officials who are here with me that we get — I just want to see the sort of flow chart on what it looks like as we escalate our communication and also ensuring that there is an opportunity.

Again, I am saying that the onus is on the client to come back. But as I also touched on earlier today, we do have other forms of communication. Either it's face to face with our client services support folks or, in some cases, we are on the phone with individuals as well. Sometimes people get frustrated; let's be open. I get e-mails, and people say: I've called and nobody has gotten back to me on the subject. Or they say: I called and the phone was busy.

I think what we've been able to look at today is how we are in a position to think about the 2,500 pieces of work that our team has done in minor maintenance, the 65 contracts and the ongoing work, the 1,150 units, the 301 people on the wait-list — think about all of those different interactions and interfaces that we have, the activities we have put in place, as well as back-and-forth working with the 27 requests through the Department of Education, being able to fill those other 25 positions — the two people who are there plus all the other work — and our officials going back and forth all the time and the people who are right on the front lines having discussions all the time.

We think there is still lots of work. We have to get better, but sometimes, yes, people do get frustrated as well with the communication. I am just stating that so that people will also be sensitive toward the public servants who are working really

hard at the Yukon Housing Corporation to be supportive of those clients.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Porter Creek South that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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 5:27 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled October 31, 2023:

35-1-122

Annual Report 2022-2023 Yukon Public Service Labour Relations Board (Silver)

35-1-123

Annual Report 2022-2023 Yukon Teachers Labour Relations Board (Silver)

35-1-124

Government of Yukon Financial Report For the Period April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 (Silver)

35-1-125

Final Report of the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (October 31, 2023) (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 151

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 1, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	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
Wednesday, November 1, 2023 — 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: Yesterday, under the rubric “Tabling Returns and Documents”, the Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Minister of Community Services each tabled documents related to their portfolios. As far as this goes, this is an appropriate use for that rubric and is a common occurrence.

However, while the documents were each described by each minister as “a statement in my capacity as Minister of Tourism and Culture” and “a statement in my capacity as Minister of Community Services” respectively, the document titles were not as described. For the Minister of Tourism and Culture, the title of the document begins with the minister’s name and then says “Ministerial Statement”. The body of the statement began with the bullet point: “Thank you, Honourable Speaker.”

As for the document tabled by the Minister of Community Services, it is entitled “Ministerial Statement”, followed by the minister’s name. The body of the statement began with the bullet point: “Thank you, Honourable Speaker...”.

These are clearly ministerial statements that the two ministers did not receive the agreement of at least one other House Leader to deliver during the rubric “Ministerial Statement”. I would also note that the rubric “Ministerial Statement” is, in any case, limited to a maximum of one ministerial statement per day.

The Chair does not want to prohibit ministers from sharing information with the House. The Chair is also very aware that members cannot do indirectly that which they are prohibited from doing directly. Members have chosen to change the Standing Orders in this regard and I am going to enforce the rules.

I would ask that, if ministers wish to table information that they think is important to this House, it not be in the format of a ministerial statement speech that they would deliver during the rubric “Ministerial Statement”. It should be in another format so that the two are distinguishable, such as a report from a minister.

Any documents tabled in the form of a ministerial statement will not be held in the working records of the Assembly but will be considered to be for information only. Documents which are distinguishable will be held as working papers and assigned a filed document number. The two documents discussed here today will be considered “for information only” and will not be retained after the 2023 Fall Sitting.

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. Motion No. 812, notice of which was provided yesterday by the Member for Lake Laberge, was not placed on today’s Notice Paper as the motion is outdated.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, today we are going to be tributing the Canucks and they are here with us. I would like to ask all of us, please, to welcome Ray Park, Red Lewis, and Ed Isaak. We also have, from the Isaak family, Donna, Chris, and Tara. We have, from the Lewis family, Danny, Sunniva, Shaun, and Kaysa. We also have friends of the Canucks: Dave Brekke, Dodie Lewis, Judy Douglas, and Missy Follwell. From the MacBride Museum, which recently released *The Canucks — Over the Years* book, which we are going to table later today, we have the chair, Andy Williams, and we have Rika Matsunami Ferbey, Ali Nordahl, Abby Kohut, and Laker Cunning.

Could we welcome them all, please?

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Canucks

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Yukon’s beloved musical institution, the Canucks. Made up of Ray Park on piano, Red Lewis on drums, and Ed Isaak on bass, for over six decades the Canucks have been a bedrock of the Yukon’s music scene — a longevity that puts them in the same league as the Rolling Stones.

Like the Yukon itself, their repertoire is a mix of everything. Folk, blues, country, rock, jazz — you name it — they put a classic Canucks spin on it. Over the years, they have been the soundtrack for many raucous Yukon nights. I was at their recent book launch at MacBride and it was packed with folks dancing and smiling — a lot of women, too, I will just note.

I wonder if part of the reason they have been playing this long is to pay off their debts for all the wear and tear they have caused to the territory’s dance floors. Touring throughout Canada and the US and playing with musical luminaries like Waylon Jennings and Loretta Lynn, the Canucks have also been Yukon ambassadors, giving the outside world a little glimpse of the magic of the north.

Beyond the stage, they influenced countless aspiring musicians to tell their own stories and share the spirit of the Yukon through music. With their memorable collaborations alongside other Yukon recording artists, the Canucks are an

indelible through-line in Yukon musical output dating back to the 1960s.

A Canucks show has also come to represent the sense of community for which the Yukon is known. They have played countless special performances, often for charitable causes or to celebrate milestones in our history, bringing together fans of all generations.

With their performing days mostly behind them, their incredible career is immortalized through their numerous albums and the launch of their new book last month. I encourage Yukoners to seek out a copy of this wonderful collection of stories, memories, and photographs chronicling the captivating history of a band that carved its name into the rugged terrain of the territory and a few bar stools in between.

To Ed, Ray, and Red, on behalf of Yukoners, congratulations and sincere thanks for so very many good times and the melodies that you have woven into the fabric of our lives. From the Rainbow Room to Music@MacBride, the Canucks leave behind a legacy and a lot of happy feet.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Canucks for their incredible contribution to the Yukon over the six-plus decades or, as I noted at their book launch, half of the time that the Yukon has existed as a territory. We will forever remember how the north danced to their beat.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Canucks — Ed Isaak, Red Lewis, and Ray Park — Yukon treasures. Many of us grew up listening and dancing to this awesome group.

But to the start of their story — Vancouver, 1955 — Red Lewis, drummer, met Ray Park, accordion/keyboard player, both 17 and on top of the world, and decided to form a band. The Rocketoons was born and became well known around the Lower Mainland.

One evening, playing at the premier Vancouver Cave Supper Club, they were noticed and signed by an agent. A whirlwind tour began through the US. It was suggested that a Canadian name was needed, and what better than “the Canucks”?

One of their songs, with Red Lewis on vocals, *Never Before*, was the top song on *Your Hit Parade* in 1958, so check it out; it is so good. On their return to Canada, Ray met Ed Isaak and encouraged him to form a new band, and they kept the name “Canucks”. Red was still in Vegas, but his story was quickly going to change.

In 1963, they were invited up to a northern town called Whitehorse for a several-month gig. Red said: Sure, I will come and join you for one more.

Well, minus 42 and a true Yukon adventure hooked them all. Ed met Donna, Red met Dodie, and the families grew.

They played at the Whitehorse Inn Rainbow Room — matching suits, dance steps, and entertainment such as Yukoners had never seen before. They had found a home.

Through the years, the Canucks played and managed several drinking establishments in town and I know there is a

whole set of stories there. They continued to tour. At Yukon communities, bonspiels, and local dances, they were there. No rural community was too far or too cold to visit — Clinton Creek, Mayo, Elsa, Watson Lake. Weddings and social functions kept them very busy, let alone their charity work. They shared their stage with many musicians, especially their younger friend, Hank Karr. The jokes never stopped. Hank said he was the one who brought the age factor down when he was on the stage. They tease and they care for each other, and I think that’s the reason for their longevity. Learning latest tunes — and they all did vocals — performing, and juggling life. I would also like to thank the wives and families who shared them.

On October 12, at the McBride Museum, a book release — *The Canucks — Over the Years* — with special guest Hank Karr and Ed’s son Brandon Isaak — a talented blues artist in his own right — played and guests danced and sang along.

Thank you, Canucks, for all the joy you have given us through the years.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues for their tributes. I knew they were going to be fantastic. I have the great pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to tribute the legends themselves: the Canucks.

This is truly a Yukon band that all Yukoners love. I’ll note that our Canucks, founded in the 1950s, predate the other Canucks — a minor hockey team franchise — by at least 15 years.

So, they came into their own in a time of big flashy cars and matching suits and, like wine, they have only gotten better with age. Playing music, travelling, growing, and raising families together means that this trio shares a lifetime of stories. What I wouldn’t do to be a fly on the wall at their get-togethers and story-sharing.

For anyone wanting more colour, look up the article entitled “Rock ’N’ Roll, Caesar Salads, and a Missed Date with Royalty.” It is truly an excellent read.

There aren’t enough minutes in the day to tell this trio and their families about all the influence and memories that they have helped make for music lovers here and across the land. Instead, I’ll just say thank you for being Yukon’s soundtrack.

Applause

In recognition of Lung Cancer Awareness Month and Radon Action Month

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, that’s a tough act to follow, but I will try, as I rise today on behalf of the Liberal government to pay tribute to Lung Cancer Awareness Month and Radon Action Month.

November is Lung Cancer Awareness Month. According to Canadian cancer statistics, lung cancer is among the top four most commonly diagnosed cancers in Canada and is the leading cause of death from cancer for both men and women in Canada. This year, the Yukon government has partnered with the Yukon Lung Association to raise awareness on social media urging the public to take action on radon. Again, each November, governments and organizations across Canada urge citizens to

test their homes for radon gas and to take action to protect themselves if their home test results are high.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas that can collect in houses. It is colourless, odourless and can only be detected through testing. Long exposure to radon may cause lung cancer, and non-smokers exposed to high levels of radon over a lifetime have a one in 20 chance of developing lung cancer. This risk increases to one in three for people who smoke. Radon can be present anywhere and the Yukon has some of the highest naturally occurring levels of radon in Canada.

Testing for radon in your home is quite simple. Radon kits are easily available for a minimal cost at your local hardware store or can also be ordered online at takeactiononradon.ca. Kits purchased at the Whitehorse Home Hardware location are subsidized by the Yukon Lung Association. The Yukon Housing Corporation's home repair program offers funding for eligible homeowners to reduce radon levels. Information on that program can be found on yukon.ca by searching "home repair program".

Remember, the only way to know that there is radon or what the levels are in your home is to test for it. Radon levels can vary widely from one home to another and even in the same neighbourhood or area. All Yukon schools, childcare centres, and Yukon Housing Corporation housing units have been tested for radon, and if required, remediation was done. Being exposed to high levels of radon can have serious health impacts and an increased risk of developing lung cancer, which is even worse if you smoke.

We encourage any Yukoners who smoke and who want to quit to reach out to the Yukon government's QuitPath smoking cessation program. This program includes counselling and free nicotine replacement therapy. QuitPath is easily reached online or by phone.

Thank you to all Yukoners who work to help promote lung cancer awareness and radon action.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November as Lung Cancer Awareness Month.

According to Lung Cancer Canada, this type of cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed in Canada, accounting for approximately 13 percent of all new cancer cases.

In our country, the net five-year survival rate is only 19 percent, due in part to inadequate screening options leading to later diagnosis. With most cases being diagnosed at stage 3 or 4, the Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care currently recommends screening in high-risk individuals with a CT scan to attempt to catch the disease more often at an earlier, more treatable stage.

Radon Action Month is also observed in November. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer in non-smokers. This month is observed as an awareness campaign to help engage people on the importance of testing radon levels in their homes.

There is radon in every community of the Yukon. In Whitehorse, data from testing during the last 15 years or so has

shown a number of subdivisions have higher levels of radon, due in part to the geology of the area and local environmental conditions. Subdivisions around the Whitehorse Copper area have reported higher levels than other areas of Whitehorse on average.

The best time to test your home is over the three coldest months of winter when you are not opening windows. Buy a kit and follow the instructions carefully. If necessary, contact a certified professional to help reduce radon levels in your home.

Salamat po.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge Lung Cancer Awareness Month and Radon Action Month.

I will start by thanking the many people working to support those with lung cancer. From medical professionals to family to friends, we thank everyone who provides care and help and kindness to people at a very difficult time in their lives. Thank you also for those doing the preventive work, such as helping people avoid, manage, or treat nicotine addictions.

It's also Radon Action Month, and radon is a leading cause of lung cancer. Because it is colourless and odourless, we rely on testing kits to detect it in places like our basements. It's fairly easy to remediate the presence of radon but only if you know it's there. We join our colleagues in urging everyone to test their homes for radon. The kits are subsidized by the Yukon Lung Association and we thank the association for working to make them more accessible. Two years ago, I tabled a motion asking this government to make testing kits free for Yukoners and I repeat that request today. The personal, social, and financial costs of even one person developing lung cancer are far greater than the cost of prevention.

I will finish by offering our sympathy to all those who have been affected by lung cancer, whether directly or indirectly. I would like to take a moment to remember those we have lost to lung cancer. They are missed, they are mourned, and they are celebrated.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to table a copy of the book *The Canucks — Over the Years*, which is signed by the members of the Canucks. It will be available for members of this House to take a look.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Diesel energy generation costs**

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as we enter November and the coldest and darkest months of the year, Yukoners will recall the power outages that swept across the territory last winter. For the past several years, we have been critical of the Yukon Liberals' decision to rely heavily on rented diesel generators to address our peak demand for electricity.

According to the minister earlier this year, the Yukon will need up to 22 rented diesel generators this winter to keep the lights on. One of the many challenges with renting diesel generators is reliability. We have heard that all 22 rentals are not yet in place in either Whitehorse or Faro, and in the case of Mayo, the decision document for the YESAA process for the new units was only issued last week.

So, can the minister commit that the full fleet of rented diesels will be in place in those three communities this winter, and if so, when will they be in place?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I note that the member opposite started talking about outages. Of course, we had proposed to do a ministerial statement about Operation Nanook, which did a review and a test of that for this Assembly, but the opposition members declined to have that ministerial statement.

I will look into the question about timing of the diesel generators. I will remind Yukoners that — at the last look that I had — 92 percent of our electricity is from our hydroelectric facilities. I know that we have been increasing the output over the years — in recent years — so making them more efficient and getting more hydroelectric power so that we rely as little as possible on diesels, but we need to make sure that we have diesels and the LNG in place to ensure that we have a reliable system for Yukoners when it is cold outside.

I will endeavour to get the information about the timing of the diesels.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, last year, the Yukon Utilities Board was extremely critical of the Liberals' decision to rely on rented diesel generators. Here is what they said in October last year — and I quote: “YEC has not shown the rentals to be a least-cost solution on a short-term or long-term basis. Although these costs were accepted in the 2021 GRA, YEC will need to show the least cost thermal alternative of rentals versus permanent thermal at the time of its next GRA or risk finding that those diesel rental costs were imprudently incurred.”

So far, the Liberals have relied on year-by-year rentals. However, we have heard that the Liberal government is considering a long-term, multi-year rental of diesel generators to meet the gap in dependable capacity that has been created by the Liberals' failed energy strategy.

So, can the minister confirm if they are planning to rent diesels long term and, if so, for how long?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, that sounds like diligence. That sounds like the work that the utility will do to ensure whether it is better to do short-term rentals or long-term rentals. We will always, as an islanded grid, require thermal backup, which includes diesel and LNG, so that is important.

Our plan has always been to move off of fossil fuels. I know that the opposition party has stood in this Assembly and said that they support a dependence on fossil fuels. That is where costs are going up for Yukoners. That is why it is better for us to move off of fossil fuels, and we will continue to do that work.

In this House, the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation have stood and stated that the levelized cost of energy has been cheaper for rental diesels than permanent diesels, but I have asked them at all times to go back and review those numbers. I have said that in this House and I will continue to say it. We will do what is best for Yukoners to make sure that our system is clean, reliable, and affordable.

Mr. Kent: For the past several years, the Liberals have been telling Yukoners that we will need to rent diesel generators but only on a short-term basis. That was even what they told the YUB in 2021, but here is what the YUB said about that argument last year — and I will quote again: “Although the Board agreed with the rental of diesel-generation units on an urgent short-term basis for YEC's 2021 GRA, the evidence of YEC in this proceeding is that the diesel rentals are not a good solution and that the need for additional capacity is for more than the near term.”

We know from what the minister said this spring that we will be renting diesels well into the 2030s, and he has just told us that he is considering much longer term rental agreements.

At what point will the minister admit that renting diesel generators for more than a decade does not make sense, and when will he start considering a more permanent and more cost-effective option?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, I think that I have always said that we should look at these options. In fact, in my last response, although the member maybe didn't hear it, I said that the utility should always look at the cost-effectiveness of rental versus permanent, and that is just the prudent thing to do. That is diligence.

By the way, when the members opposite stand and talk about the diesel generators, I just want to say to Yukoners, first of all, that we have largely a renewable system with hydroelectricity — so important. Thank you to Yukoners in the past who invested in that direction — so important. We are in re-licensing mode right now with those.

Second of all, we are not connected to an Outside grid; therefore, we will need backup. Even when we become connected, it could be the connection itself that drops, so we will always need some backup somewhere.

Third of all, we have been bringing on new renewables all of the time through our independent power producer policy and energy purchase agreements with First Nations that are bringing on brand new renewables to the system. That is what we are focusing on.

The Yukon Party is focusing on the diesels because I think they are in favour of not dealing with climate change. I heard a great interview this morning with the director of the Energy branch and he talked about the importance of renewable electricity to our system.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on electricity rates

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we have been raising concerns about the failure of the Liberals' energy strategy and their plan to rely on rented diesel generators to meet Yukon's growing electricity demand for the foreseeable future. Earlier this year, the Yukon Energy Corporation filed its rate application to increase Yukoners' power rates by a total of 14.11 percent by August of next year. This was the first time that Yukoners got a glimpse of what the Liberal government's decision to rely on rented diesels is going to cost them.

In the GRA, the YEC discloses that the major rate-increase drivers include the diesel rental cost increases. Mr. Speaker, 21 percent of the rate increase is directly attributable to the Liberals' decision to rely on rented diesels.

Will the minister admit that his failed energy strategy is driving Yukoners' power rates up?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, Mr. Speaker; what I will admit is that the Yukon Party is interested only in moving toward fossil fuels. That's what I see from them.

First of all, they talked about what's happening with the rate application. They said that 20 percent is for diesels. It's not for rental diesels; it's for diesels. Second of all, that means that 80 percent of that rate application is not for that.

If you just look at our rates here for electricity, they are the lowest in Canada's north, across all of the territories. We're comparable to Alberta's rates, and we are investing in renewables. Here's an example: Haeckel Hill wind. Here's another example: the battery project. Here's another example: we have committed to supporting Atlin. Those are examples of where we are investing in electricity. In every one of our off-grid communities, we are supporting an energy project there through our independent power producer program.

Yes, we will have to go to rates from time to time. What the Yukon Party is doing is having us continue a dependency on fossil fuels, which is not a good choice for the future of Canada, the Yukon, or the world.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, he is absolutely wrong about the GRA. The GRA is absolutely clear that the increased number of rental units and higher rental prices being charged are one of the main factors driving the need for the rate hike.

According to the GRA, rates will increase by a total of 14.11 percent by August 1 of next year. Over 20 percent of that increase is directly attributable to the increased costs of rental diesels. The decision to rely so heavily on rented diesels was a political decision driven by the failure of the Liberal government's energy strategy.

Will the Liberal government finally acknowledge that their failed energy strategy is causing Yukoners' power rates to go up?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I was here in the Assembly with the members opposite when we brought in the Yukon Energy Corporation and the Yukon Development Corporation twice where they told us about the difference in cost between the two of them — that paying for a diesel plant

was 20 percent higher than paying for rental diesels. They heard that.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, it was the levelized cost of energy, Mr. Speaker. That is what I heard.

But I also stood up and said that we would continue to monitor those prices and continue to look at them so that we could get the best deal for Yukoners. We will work to make sure that our electricity in the territory is clean, reliable, and affordable. That's not to say that prices won't go up over time, but it is to say that we have the lowest prices for energy across the northern territories, comparable with the rates of Alberta.

Mr. Dixon: Well, Yukoners' rates are going up and they are going up because of the Liberals' decision to rent diesel generators. That is what the GRA makes absolutely clear.

The GRA that is before the Yukon Utilities Board right now is only for rates in 2023 and 2024. We know that the growth of peak electricity demand has been increasing far more quickly than any of the government's projections predicted. In all likelihood, the 22 diesel generators that we will need to rent this year won't be enough going forward. Without a doubt, the minister is going to have to add to his fleet of rented diesels. After all, the Liberal plan is to rely on rented diesels well into the 2030s.

How much more do power rates have to go up before the Liberals will admit that Yukoners can't afford their failed energy strategy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the first thing I want to remind members opposite and say to Yukoners is that 92 percent of our energy on the grid is coming from renewables. The biggest investment that we are making is in renewables. What we are doing is encouraging First Nation governments across the territory to invest in those renewable projects and then we will buy the power back from them. That is where our big investment is.

Yes, we do have to have diesels for backup for those times when it is too cold or for those times when there are outages. We do need backup; that is correct.

When we run those, we will use the best approach for whether to purchase or rent. It is about what the smart choice is for Yukoners. I have heard the utilities tell the members opposite that; I have heard the Yukon Utilities Board say that they will need to continue to show that analysis. I agree with that; we should continue to show that analysis, but it is not really where the question is. In fact, it wasn't a Liberal decision; it was a decision based on the dollars. That is what the decision was based on, and we will continue to do that prudently for Yukoners, but the part that is missing here is that the Yukon Party is looking to be dependent on fossil fuels; we are not.

Question re: Skagway marine services

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, when we asked the Premier if his ministers were asked to make cuts to their budgets to pay for the ore dock in Skagway, the Premier ducked the question and came back with political clichés, but maybe he forgot to tell the rest of his caucus to hold the line, or maybe some ministers didn't get the memo, because the Minister of

Highways and Public Works clearly confirmed that his department was asked to cut funds in this budget. During his supplementary budget speech, the minister said — and I quote: “... the Department of Highways and Public Works has identified several initiatives where funding can be reallocated in order to support the ore export opportunity.”

Will the Premier confirm that other departments — such as Yukon Housing, Community Services, and Health and Social Services, in addition to Highways and Public Works — were asked to cut their budgets to finance the Skagway ore dock?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, look, we have said over and over again — it is quite simple. We walk into a process of supplementary budget; we submit new requests. Other departments look at where they are on their particular projects; they look at the time frame and when they will be executed. If they don't believe that those projects are going to be done in the time frame that they previously thought, they will then be able to provide funds back into the process for the supplementary budget — quite simple.

We had a submission; we went forward with a couple of different asks — some of it was the collection agreement; on this one, it was the ore dock — which we believe are important. I still haven't heard. I know that we have spoken with industry, as well, and I would like to hear specifically from the Yukon Party leader who said that it is a bad project, although the entire industry said: Please do it.

We know where the NDP sit on this particular project. So, we will use the funds that are necessary to be used within the fiscal year — that is standard budgeting process.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, we could say that was a duck and weave.

So, the Premier is ready to spend \$44 million of taxpayers' money on the Skagway ore dock, but this government is the only government willing to chip in. The Government of Alaska isn't chipping in, the American government isn't paying a dime, and the Canadian government won't touch the project either.

The Municipality of Skagway is providing some project management but no capital for the project, even though Skagway stands to gain several permanent year-round jobs and maybe even the revenue that comes out of the dock.

Despite the Yukon Liberals' frequent talk about strategic partnerships, they appear not to have engaged with one of the key economic drivers in the Yukon, and that's Yukon First Nation development corporations. Did the Premier try to partner with any First Nation development corporations on the Skagway ore project, and if so, why weren't they interested?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, to date, what we have done is we have focused on making sure that we work with the municipality in Skagway. We believe that there is an opportunity for development corporations pending on what the solution is to actually move the concentrate. There possibly could be work that could be available on financing a conveyor. There could be work that is with the containers. There are a number of different options that could be used, but no, at this particular time, we did not look to ask for a debt instrument in the US from First Nation corporations. We have focused most

of our work with corporations on housing projects and energy projects over the last number of years.

Ms. White: Not only is the Premier willing to let the Yukon be the sole funder of this project, he has also made zero provisions to recoup Yukon's multi-million-dollar investment. The Premier likes to lecture us about economics, but Economics 101 would teach him that spending \$40 million for nothing in return is a bad deal.

The Premier told this House that Yukon generating any revenue from a new dock would expose the Yukon government to potential liability. However, they have no problem continuing to accept environmental and economic liability for abandoned mines. Yukoners deserve to know more about the Premier's legal advice when following that advice would mean that Yukon can't recoup any of the money that this government is willing to risk.

What work has been done so far to come up with an approach that would recoup Yukon's massive investment in the port of Skagway?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Well, I think it's an interesting economic lesson. I would say first that the exploration budget that we see on an annual basis — that \$150 million to \$200 million to \$225 million — the exploration that is done, outside of gold exploration, in the Yukon would be attributable to the fact that we have access to tidewater.

I would say that the many service sector industries that work in this sector and that do either expediting, selling supplies — all of those companies that are part of our economy — it is because we have access to tidewater.

I would say that the job that the Leader of the Third Party so fondly reflects on when the leader was working out on a mine site and talks about the experience of it — that was because we actually had access, I believe — I think — to tidewater — at least having a mining sector. So, all of these types of things, I believe, are because we have access to tidewater.

Now, quite simply, I think the question is: Do we build this or not? We have spoken with all levels of government; we have spoken with corporations within Alaska; we have spoken with the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Where we are left is to build it or not. We believe it is important to build it, and we believe it is key toward this industry going forward.

Question re: School busing

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, we have been asking about the cancellation of school buses several times during this current Sitting. Again today, two school buses in Whitehorse were cancelled, leaving parents scrambling to find alternative ways to get their children to class. Last week, we heard that the contractor has two drivers trained and ready to go, but they can't get the required test from Motor Vehicles until early December. I asked then, and the minister's response was — quote: “Much of it has been due to a shortage of bus drivers and we are working hard to assist and mitigate this issue.”

Why isn't the Yukon government fast-tracking drivers' tests for school bus drivers so that we can limit the disruption

for families who have been impacted by the constant disruptions of bus routes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, I hold up the work that the department has done to work with our contractor, Standard Bus, in terms of mitigating issues that arise when it comes to transporting children to and from school. It is a very important aspect of our education system to provide reliable transportation.

In terms of driver testing, testing delays continue to be around six weeks. The new driver examiner has been hired and trained since last session. Another examiner has left the territory temporarily to receive advanced training in driver examination and to improve the testing capacity. Additionally, Highways and Public Works is actively seeking another examiner to minimize delays.

They continue to expedite testing for commercial clients that identify as needing testing for work purposes, including tourism, bus driving, and emergency medical services, and, on a case-by-case basis, time slots become available through cancellations.

Question re: Rural emergency medical responder honoraria

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, in late 2007, EMS volunteers began receiving an honorarium of \$2.50 per hour for standby pay to increase retention of volunteers and avoid gaps in coverage. By 2016, this rate had increased to \$3.71 per hour but has not changed since then.

In light of the low EMS volunteer numbers in many rural Yukon communities, will this government consider increasing those people's honoraria?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak about the important work that is done here in the territory by our Emergency Medical Services. The opportunity to hold them up is one that I appreciate. The Yukon Emergency Medical Services staff and community responders are truly dedicated to providing Yukoners with timely and high-quality health care services across the territory. Increased pressures have resulted, of course, from the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers, and that continues to be mitigated through a variety of approaches that we use to reduce patient and staff impacts and to prioritize critical care, which almost always comes from the Yukon Emergency Medical Services.

We budgeted, in 2022-23, \$12.3 million for EMS, and this is a net-zero transfer between the Department of Community Services and the Department of Health and Social Services, as we have moved the responsibilities there.

I look forward to further questions. I agree that we should be looking at the amounts that are available for volunteers.

Mr. Hassard: This government's struggles to recruit and retain health care workers resulted in retention bonuses being paid to nurses and many health care staff. However, EMS volunteers have not seen any bonuses or increases to their standby honorarium since 2016. That's seven years, Mr. Speaker.

One rural EMS worker estimated that there are 50 less rural EMS volunteer members than 13 years ago, and 20 of those departures happened in the last couple of years. So, Mr. Speaker, what initiatives has the government taken to retain EMS volunteers, and again, will they please consider an increase to the standby honorarium?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I think we have seen another example today of good questions coming on behalf of Yukoners — so the Yukon Party says — and then they completely disregard or ignore the answers that are coming.

I did agree with the member opposite that this is something that we are looking into. The EMS coverage is supported by a number of community responders in each community. I want to take this opportunity to recognize them. I have a list of communities and how many community responders there are: Beaver Creek has seven community responders; Carcross has seven community responders and two recruits; Carmacks, as an example, has eight community responders; and Dawson City has six community responders, one recruit, and two full-time and four AOC employees. Every single one of them — I don't have time to go through the entire list — has the care and benefits of their position and their dedication to providing great care to Yukoners, and we thank them for that.

Mr. Hassard: So, a very simple question for the minister: When will we see these honoraria increased?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate that the Emergency Medical Services transfer to the Department of Health and Social Services has increased the stability and the availability of smooth services between other parts of the Department of Health and Social Services. EMS experiences shortages of community responders in all Yukon communities from time to time, but EMS continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all communities.

The coverage figures and the dedication of these workers is quite amazing. I appreciate that in the 2022-23 — 2024 — budget, we provided \$628,000 to support other equipment needed by these individuals. We will continue to review the costs and the honoraria that are available. I, too, agree that they need to be addressed.

Question re: Recycling program in Whitehorse

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, Raven ReCentre in Whitehorse announced that they would be ceasing the operation of their drop-in bins for recycling materials on December 31 of this year. When I asked about this last week, the minister told the Legislature that there is a committee made up of the Yukon government, City of Whitehorse, and Raven looking at potential solutions and that something would be in place — quote: "... in the coming months."

Can the minister tell us what stage those discussions are at? Can citizens in Whitehorse expect a blue bin program to be in place after Raven's drop-off closes on December 31? If not, what options will folks from Whitehorse have for their recycling?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to be able to stand this afternoon and talk about all the work we are

doing to improve the way we handle the waste that we generate in this society.

The member opposite just talked about the work we are doing on recycling. She is absolutely correct; we have struck a committee with the City of Whitehorse, Raven ReCentre, and the good folks at Community Services. We are working diligently on a solution to the recycling issue within Whitehorse, and the issue there is that Raven itself has decided that it would suspend operations of its public drop-off for recyclables as of December 31 unless they saw concrete action on the part of the City of Whitehorse to implement a blue bin system. We are working with those three partners — ourselves, the City of Whitehorse, and Raven — to come up with solutions for the city's recycling to make sure that we all recycle more. That's really the goal here: to make sure that the City of Whitehorse recycles more of the material that can be recycled in the city. It's a laudable goal and we are working very hard to make that happen.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, in September, CBC Yukon reported that the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government were in talks to develop a curbside recycling program for the capital city. Last week when I asked the minister about this, he told the Legislature that the Yukon government had received a letter from the City of Whitehorse about this issue.

Can the minister provide some clarity about what this program would look like? Who will operate it and who will pay for it? How much funding has the City of Whitehorse requested and how much has the minister committed to provide?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All very good questions, Mr. Speaker — and I am heartened to hear the members opposite so interested in recycling. It warms my soul to see them starting to embrace the good work that has to be done on the way we are dealing with waste in this territory.

It really is a turnaround because, in 2016, they were asked to improve waste in the territory and they didn't do it, but now they seem to be interested and I am so glad to hear that. We are working very, very hard. No spoilers, Mr. Speaker — we are currently working with the City of Whitehorse, we are working with Raven ReCentre, and we are working with other recycling agencies in the town — there is blue bin and there is P&M. We are working with them all to come up with a solution for recycling that will serve the territory better and the City of Whitehorse better, and we will make sure that we get more of our recyclables out of the landfill and into places where they can be used again.

Ms. McLeod: How much funding has the City of Whitehorse requested and how much has this minister committed to provide?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, again, I think that is great that the Member for Watson Lake is interested in this subject; I know that Yukoners are as well. Recycling is very, very important to the citizens of Whitehorse. I am happy to talk about it this afternoon.

We are working on citizens' behalf to come up with a solution for recycling in Whitehorse and, of course, across the territory, but right now, we are talking about Raven ReCentre and the work that they do at their public drop-off. It has been

announced that there is a deadline, at which time they will stop collecting recycling at their depot unless there is concrete work on a successor to that public drop-off. We are working with Raven, with the City of Whitehorse, and with YG to come up with a solution to that. I am not going to negotiate terms on the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

Just know, Mr. Speaker and citizens of Whitehorse, that we are doing the work to make sure that recycling continues for the public in Whitehorse.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice to call motion respecting committee report

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I give notice, pursuant to Standing Order 13(3), that Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 8, the motion for concurrence in the *Final Report of the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*, presented to the House on October 31, 2023, shall be called as government designated business.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 32: *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 32, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 32, entitled *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to speak again today on the important amendments proposed in Bill No. 32, or the *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023)*. This legislation will provide enhanced protection for victim privacy and safety by protecting information that is shared in confidence with service providers at the Victim Services branch of the Department of Justice. The provisions that protect victim records are narrow in scope and only pertain to access requests made under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Access requests will continue to be received by the Victim Services branch, and existing legislation will continue to apply to any request that is outside the scope of these changes.

By limiting access to victims' records and information contained in those records, victims who are seeking support have greater assurance that they can safely and confidentially access the services that they need. The protection of privacy and confidentiality is essential for the Victim Services branch to foster the trust required to serve victims of crime.

It is also important that the public is assured that the Government of Yukon continues to improve processes to better serve the needs of clients who require assistance.

It is worth noting today that these changes will not impact existing legislation with respect to the collection of information and the responsibility of service providers to protect that information from a privacy breach. The Department of Justice continues to enhance the supports for victims of crime and is committed to improving processes to better serve the public. These changes are one more step in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the questions that we had about this bill in Committee of the Whole and the opportunity to provide those answers and more clarity to Yukoners and to the members opposite. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this today. I look forward to support from the members opposite so that this bill can pass.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, in rising to speak to this as the Official Opposition critic for Justice, I would note that we do support this legislation, as I indicated previously and as my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition indicated when he asked questions yesterday while I was doing media, but I just want to thank officials for their work on this.

I would note that this is a narrow amendment related to the protection of personal privacy intended to ensure the safety of someone who contacts Victim Services. The *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* does speak to protection of personal privacy, and there is no situation where that is more important than when a disclosure of information by government could reasonably be expected to create a possible risk to someone's physical safety.

We do support this narrow amendment. While we will watch to see how it is implemented to ensure that it doesn't lose its sense of balance in that implementation, we do agree with the intent of it and agree that it is necessary to make changes in this area.

With that, I will thank officials for their work on this and for the briefing on it, and we will be supporting passage of this legislation.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, this bill is so important to improving the safety and privacy of victims of crime. The Yukon NDP is pleased to see that this government has considered the situations of victims, especially victims of domestic violence, and is addressing gaps in the existing legislation that were impacting their safety.

I thank the minister for the time she spent answering my questions yesterday and the officials who were here to provide support. I would like to ask further that the protection and privacy rights of witnesses of crimes be considered in future work, either through amendments to this bill or other appropriate legislation.

We will be supporting this bill.

Mahsi'.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I take the opportunity to thank the officials who have worked on this matter coming forward. We have a new drafter. This is her first bill. She was here with us yesterday, is pleased to see it proceeding, and was happy to help support me in answering the questions. I'm happy to recognize that work today, as well as others who worked with her. I would also like to thank the members opposite for their indication of support. I appreciate this opportunity.

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 32 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 32 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to the bill which has passed this House.

Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

Speaker: Madam Commissioner, the Assembly has, at its present session, passed a bill to which, in the name and on behalf of the Assembly, I respectfully request your assent.

Clerk: *Act to amend the Victims of Crime Act (2023).*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bill as enumerated by the Clerk.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order. Please be seated.

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

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 2, Executive Council Office, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Executive Council Office — *continued*

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I just want to again welcome the officials into the House — our Deputy Minister, Justin Ferbey, and Assistant Deputy Minister Kate Durand. Thank you to the department for the preparation of materials, and thanks to the folks for putting stuff together. I think that probably some of the work that we committed to is in progress on legislative returns. With that, I will hand it over for questions.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for his opening remarks. I will jump right in with questions.

We understand that a number of appointments to the YESA board are coming due this weekend, so unless something happens between now and Monday, YESAB will find itself in the position where it won't have quorum. Can the minister comment about the appointments to the YESA board right now and whether or not steps are being taken to ensure that

appointments are renewed or altered so that YESAB has quorum next week?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This has been a topic for us in all conversations with Minister Vandal at the federal level, who has the responsibility for this. The last discussions directly with him were when he was in town a couple of weeks back, but also, our officials have continued. I will just say for the record that we understand here at the territorial level the importance of the federal government getting their appointments processed efficiently. The work has been done by the Executive Council Office and submissions, I believe, are in place. We have been made aware of that, but we are in a position where we are waiting on the federal government.

I think that there was an analysis done not too long ago on appointments across Canada but with responsibility to the federal government and actually pertaining to northern Canada. There seems to be a great need right now for the federal government to ensure that they get their appointments in place.

I know that we have had officials reach out and have flagged the fact that it is imperative that these appointments are in place in order for this tripartite environmental assessment structure to work appropriately. So, I will bring back to the House if we have any information over the next number of days, but right now, we are still waiting. We have voiced our significant concerns and have identified the fact that there is expiry of a number of positions but also the fact that there are other boards that don't fall under Minister Vandal, and we are also waiting to see appointments there as well.

Mr. Dixon: What would it mean for projects that are currently before YESAB if, on Monday all of a sudden, YESAB doesn't have a quorum? Is there a stall? Is the Yukon government aware of proponents who are currently before YESAB who have expressed this concern, as well, and what steps can the government take to mitigate the concerns that they have on this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I can share is that the officials, as early as today, have been in touch — from the Executive Council Office — with federal officials here in Whitehorse, outside of the YESAB executive team — not appointed members, but the leadership within their administration.

What we know for next week is that we would be in a holding pattern, because they would not have quorum, and that has been voiced to the federal minister and our displeasure that we could be put in that position.

What we know is that the appointments, as pertaining to the federal officials, is that they are in front of the minister. We will be continuing to dialogue, as we have been, to communicate the fact that this is a very significant challenge and that it needs to be rectified. That's what we know at this particular time.

If there is any further information on operational challenges next week, we will bring it back, but again, I want to know if we're going to see these appointments done over the next number of days before we get into the hypothetical for next week.

As we know right now — and we'll get more clarity, which I've requested, just from executive decisions versus decisions

at the DO level. I want to know how that can affect operations next week.

Mr. Dixon: That was actually my next question, so I'll just ask again to be sure I'm clear. Does this impact projects that are at the DO level as well?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: In discussion here, my belief is that work would happen, but I again want to give accurate and clear information back to the House. I will endeavour to get that information and get it back to the House to ensure that it's not just a portion of the activity at the executive level that is being affected but also what's happening at our DO-level offices.

Mr. Dixon: Could the Premier provide the Legislature with the correspondence between him and Minister Vandal about this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will endeavour to see what we have from the Executive Council Office. In many cases, it was done, as well, at the — our chief of staff has been reaching out at the political level, and I have — in numerous meetings, this has been a priority in our discussions. In many cases, it would have been something on an agenda where I would have had discussion with Minister Vandal throughout this summer and into the fall.

We will endeavour to see what correspondence that we have and to see if it is available for tabling.

Mr. Dixon: I'll conclude on this subject line. I'll simply note that, as far as I can tell, come Monday, YESAB will be down to two members out of seven, and that's obviously deeply concerning to all of us, especially to proponents who have projects before YESAB right now. I do encourage the Premier to convey, in the strongest possible terms, to Canada our concerns about this.

I will move on to a separate issue. I would like to ask the Premier for an update on the Taku River Tlingit land transfer that was discussed throughout the last year. Obviously, the primary source of information that Yukoners have had on this has come from the public bulletins that the Taku River Tlingit First Nation released to the public.

In those documents, we have seen the claims that the Yukon government has been in negotiations with the Taku River Tlingit for what they describe as the largest land transfer in Yukon's history. We understand that the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation are in discussions about this, but we would like to ask the Premier for an update. What is the status of what the Taku River Tlingit call the largest land transfer in Yukon's history?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The process right now is actually on hold from our work. The Carcross/Tagish First Nation and the Taku River Tlingit have requested a bilateral discussion — a consultation between both First Nations — before any more work is done through our department. We think that's a good thing. Of course, that would have been a consultation that we would be undertaking before there was any disposition of land.

At this particular time, the two nations are meeting together. Between the Teslin Tlingit Council, the Taku River Tlingit, and Carcross/Tagish — Dakh-Ka — it's basically the trilateral discussions that happen between those nations. Two

of the nations have requested that there's time between them to speak on this subject.

We are waiting now to see what that bilateral consultation leads to, and then we can re-engage and see what the findings are.

At this particular time, we're holding to see, and both nations have requested that and seem to be looking at this as the priority for next steps.

Mr. Dixon: To many of those who own third-party interests in the affected area, this was certainly a large surprise over the last year to see that these discussions were ongoing. During the negotiations of land claims in Yukon and under the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, there was a recognized and understood process for dealing with third-party interests in land claims. This process seems to be much different from that.

Can the Premier address the concerns that have been raised about those who own private property or have third-party interests in the affected area — including those who use publicly accessible trail networks?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I have received correspondence directly from at least one of the private landholders in this particular case, and it was pertaining to access to trails. I think that is what has been flagged to me. I think this is unique in the fact that there have been some challenges, I believe, with the relationship between Taku River Tlingit and the Yukon government. I know that the member opposite well knows sort of some of the more challenging parts of this discussion — really, around some of the work that was done, I believe, around the start of the sort of challenges with the relationship around a proposed campground. There have also been conversations around mining interests, and the Taku River Tlingit, as a transboundary nation, had some concerns, and that was really about early exploration staking. Then, of course, there was a legal challenge that, I believe, came from some of the work as well.

This conversation is really about some of the interests by the nation, and of course, it really has to do — again, when we talk about private landowners, which I believe the question was really focused on — as I remember from the correspondence, and I would have to go back to see what I got from private landowners — was really around trail access.

Again, the Yukon government, Madam Chair, as you know, is committed to advancing reconciliation with all First Nations, including the Taku River Tlingit. We are advancing bilateral discussions with the Taku River Tlingit on a number of matters, including the land interests in the Yukon. These discussions, again, do not involve the Government of Canada, although the Yukon government is engaging with the federal government and the Taku River Tlingit on other matters, and that would be a shared interest in things such as energy projects.

As part of our bilateral discussions with the Taku River Tlingit, we are considering a land transfer, which we have talked about a lot in the House, and a government-to-government agreement that would address other matters of mutual interest.

These discussions, as stated by the member opposite, are not treaty or self-government agreement negotiations, but

rather, they are intended to address the decision of the Supreme Court of Yukon in the litigation brought by the First Nation against the Yukon government in 2014.

That is the proposed campground — when the member opposite was Minister of Environment, so he knows the file well — and so we are trying to have negotiations based on that Supreme Court decision in 2014. The potential land transfer relates to an 11.5-square-kilometre area known as the Aashú Lands. It is located 120 kilometres from Whitehorse, off the Atlin Road, within the Taku River Tlingit First Nation's asserted traditional territory and Carcross/Tagish First Nation traditional territory, which leads to that request for the nations to sit together and try to work through some of the expectations that they both have, and, of course, it will give us better clarity and, I think, will lead to significant consultation between them before there is any land looking to be transferred.

So, to be clear, the decision from the Supreme Court is that the case does not require the Yukon government to transfer the land — so I will say that is not it — but the transfer is being contemplated as a means of ensuring that the Yukon government can abide by the court's direction.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear, the court at no point ever directed Yukon government to enter into these negotiations with TRTFN; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would have to go back to see if the interpretation is that we were — as the question stated was: Did they direct us to have conversations? — I would have to go back to see if there was a direction for conversations or for dialogue.

What I am stating is that the option of the land transfer was not a directive out of the court decision, although that particular action — as we understand it or as I understand it, with the help of our technical experts and our legal expert — would meet the requirements of the decision of the court action.

Mr. Dixon: Yes, indeed, we are very familiar with the court decision and what the court has said about this. That is why we were surprised when the Premier noted that these discussions were resultant from that court case, given the fact that the court was silent on whether or not a massive land transfer should be conducted with the Taku River Tlingit First Nation.

However, I will move on. Yesterday, the Carcross/Tagish First Nation made a public statement about a range of issues. They made it very clear that they had some concerns with a number of the projects that are occurring in its traditional territories. I will quote briefly from the public statement dated October 31, yesterday: "C/TFN has in good faith attempted to constructively respond to these development pressures in a measured way which represents the constitutional rights of C/TFN and at the same time responds to the numerous filing requests for projects, such as..."

I won't list the projects that they list, as it is a lengthy list, but it concludes with: "... the possibility of resolving asserted s.35 rights of other Indigenous groups within C/TFN's Traditional Territory through both the transboundary provisions of the Final Agreement but also outside of those provisions. The claimed overlapping rights, titles and interests

of other Indigenous Nations and the limited resources of C/TFN makes our good faith efforts fall short of meeting the constitutional safeguards imposed on C/TFN to protect our rights, titles, and interests."

The statement goes on to say — and I will quote again: "Therefore, C/TFN will not continue to participate and agree to projects within the transboundary areas of our traditional territory until there is a definitive solution by way of agreed transboundary delineations and clear and agreed upon mitigation of impacts."

It's clear that the Carcross/Tagish First Nation is apparently dissatisfied with the state of the discussions, so can the Premier respond to the concerns that have been raised by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation and whether or not the proposal that they have had to delineate the transboundary area in some way is being contemplated by the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am waiting to get more information from Aboriginal Relations, because I want to understand if it's pertaining to some of the conversations that have happened with the Taku River Tlingit or if it is to do with some of the conversations that are happening through the BC treaty table, which also includes multiple other self-governing First Nations and some of those transboundary issues.

There are a number of items that have come up. Some of it is the assertion that we've seen from nations that have their core traditional territory in British Columbia — if I can use that term. Also, there is that overlap. There have been some challenging discussions concerning things such as the opportunity to build transmission and areas where both, in some cases, Carcross/Tagish and another nation are at the table.

All I can tell Yukoners today is that our work over the last number of years has been about going in and working in good faith, honouring the Crown, and going to do the work that we need to do with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Whether that was the early conversations where there were concerns around spot land applications or where there were concerns around some of the work that needed to be done on land planning — all of those things are things that we have made best efforts to support.

I think that today I want to get a better understanding, and I also want to understand if there has been any correspondence from their lands department to Energy, Mines and Resources before speaking specifically to the prerogative here around the section 35 comments in their letter.

Mr. Dixon: I think the public statement is pretty notable given the discussion that we have had as recently as today and continue to have about Yukon's energy future. The list of projects cited by the Carcross/Tagish First Nation in their public statement includes the Atlin hydro project, the ATCO transmission line upgrade, the Whitehorse Rapids generating station re-licensing, the proposed BC Hydro interconnect, and the proposed Moon Lake hydro storage as well as the proposed Southern Lakes enhanced storage project.

All of those are obviously key components of the government's energy strategy. The statement by the CTFN concludes — quote: "This is required first and foremost, otherwise these projects and the relationships will be

challenged at every stage of review, and ultimately will be challenged through the courts, and this is not in the best interests of any party nor our preferred outcome.”

It seems quite clear that the CTFN intends to resist all of these projects that are coming before them in their traditional territory. Unless their concerns are addressed, each and every one of those projects is jeopardized — at least the timelines of those projects are jeopardized.

Can the Premier comment on how he intends to respond to that statement?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that what is important — and the approach on this — is to have a very clear understanding of what the expectations are at the table in detail from the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. It would be difficult today to talk about exactly how I would respond until I have a clear understanding of scope. We know that there are a number of projects that are important to the Yukon but are also important to the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, also important to the Taku River Tlingit, also important to the work that is being done and important to all Yukoners, and also important to the work that we focused on when it comes to *Our Clean Future*, which was signed off by all nations here in the Yukon.

What we believe to be good opportunities and what we believe to be good partnerships are all key items that we want to continue to talk about.

I just want to make sure — before I talk about the response from Executive Council Office or from my office on this particular topic — that I have a very clear understanding of what things in particular they are looking for within the relationship. As well, there are other things that are ongoing. The re-licensing of Whitehorse dam and some of those conversations are moving at a different pace than some of the longer term outlooked renewable projects.

I know there has also been discussion that has happened between the Taku River Tlingit and Carcross/Tagish First Nation, which I believe to be positive on a couple of other projects. We will be looking to get a review on that and then I'll have an opportunity to give a more substantial answer to the approach between the Yukon government and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation on this question.

Mr. Dixon: The Carcross/Tagish First Nation conveyed this through a public statement posted yesterday and dated yesterday. Did this statement come as a surprise to the Premier? Did he have discourse or correspondence with the CTFN of a similar nature to this prior to yesterday?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would state that there has been an ongoing dialogue over the last number of years with Carcross/Tagish First Nation on a number of areas of priority for them, and there are multiple levels of government. There has been a long conversation that has happened with the Yukon Energy Corporation directly, from a technical level, and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I would say that, within those discussions, there have been positive discussions, but I think that you would also say that there has been a difference of opinion, especially when you think about some of the projects that have been in place and also support. There is a dialogue that happens between the Executive Council Office, primarily

led by Aboriginal Relations. That has been around the reconciliation piece that focuses, as well, on re-licensing.

There have also been discussions directly with the Yukon Development Corporation on potential projects and work that is underway. There was a legal challenge, when I was Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, around a particular land area. I think that some of the legal pieces have looked at different ways to reconcile that matter, so I would say that they would be potentially positive in tone.

There has been a lot of dialogue between ministers; there is a lot of dialogue between partners, and I can say that, from leader to leader, it has been very positive — my discussions either with the Chief of Carcross/Tagish First Nation or, in the last couple meetings, with the deputy chief, who has been taking a lead in some of the public conversations and the bilateral dialogues that I have had with the Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

Mr. Dixon: Just so I am clear, the Premier said that his dialogue at the leader-to-leader level has been very positive. His statement seems less so. Can the minister just explain? Did this come as a surprise, or has the CTFN been raising these concerns previously? It seems inconsistent between what the Premier just said — that he has been having positive conversations — and his public statement that seems much to the contrary to that. Can the Premier explain that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that, in this world, there are never any surprises. I think that it is a situation where, from leader to leader, you can have a very positive relationship, I think, when there are particular elements of negotiation. Sometimes they are highlighted publicly; sometimes the technical teams will use one or two ways to communicate their position on something.

When I get the further briefing, what I want to take a look at is what role the land management board is playing, which, of course, would be populated by clan representation and would be a bit outside of some of the executive branch of Carcross/Tagish — although, in this particular case, it is also some of the work that has been done by other areas.

So, no, I am not surprised; I am never surprised. I think that there are always vigorous conversations. Leaders, whether at the municipal level or at the First Nation level, are always doing their best to represent the interest of their constituents. What I have quickly learned is that sometimes, publicly, relationships can look to be quite strained, but then actually, as you move forward and work together, you get to a very good place of common ground.

I think that the key to this is that, whether it is the dialogue here that we are having today in Committee of the Whole or public dialogue, the important thing is to always be respectful, understand that people are always doing the best for their constituents, and not to take a quick and sudden reaction to a press release or to a letter but to understand that you should dig in and understand exactly the details of that and then reach out with all of the information and continue to have an appropriate, respectful dialogue so that you can avert some of the challenges that can come if you take a different avenue in your approach.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the Premier for those answers and cede the floor to my colleague.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I am happy to be here in this conversation. I actually want to ask questions about the ore dock and the fact that it is intergovernmental relations, I would guess, between Yukon and Skagway, Alaska. I just have some questions.

It is interesting, because one would suggest that the timeline to access — or knowing that the lease running out isn't new, so what I want to know is: When did work begin on the government's side to find alternatives or a solution to seeking long-term access to tidewater?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will widen the scope today for a bit on this one. It's not actually something that has been handled through Executive Council Office. It is actually something that has been worked on through Economic Development. It hasn't really been anything that our intergovernmental folks have worked on, but even from a standpoint of cross-border work, there has probably been a tiny bit of support. Anyway, we will crack the door open.

Concerning our relations, what I will say is that the Yukon and the United States — particularly Alaska — share many common interests and challenges. Of course, the future of Yukon and Alaska are linked. Our interests in many topics, including robust transportation infrastructure and access to tidewater, serve both our jurisdictions, as investment and geopolitical focus remains in the north. We regularly engage with our American and Alaskan counterparts as part of our long-standing positive relations. I know that, just in the short term, we have had conversations with our new Consul General Jim DeHart and as well with Governor Dunleavy in September.

What I can share is that the conversation around the access to tidewater and the Skagway ore terminal — I could look to Economic Development, but I would say that it has been a significant part of discussions between the borough the ambassador — so, before taking on this role, in my role as — but also previously with officials who represent the federal US government's interests; AIDEA, which is the Crown corporation owned by Alaska; officials at AIDEA; the Lieutenant Governor of Alaska; the Canadian minister in charge of intergovernmental — so, Ng, Leblanc, Minister Joly, Minister Champagne — and it has been flagged at the Prime Minister's Office.

So, I guess if we are getting into a discussion around: Has the Yukon government taken — gone down and spoken with all significant and connected stakeholders on this discussion? Yes, we have. I am going to say that the dialogue goes back to probably 2017, 2018. I could go back to Economic Development — or I will be back with Economic Development in the House, and I can definitely answer the question at that time, but this has been years of conversation in different iterations.

Both the Chamber of Mines and the producers' group, as well as industry organizations, also were in dialogue. At one point, there was even a discussion focused around Haines and if there was an opportunity in Haines, Alaska, to do this work. So, yes, there has been substantial conversation over a long

period of time with many different individuals to look at models for funding, looking at partnership — a number of different things.

I think that even going down with previous — at the time, our previous premier and deputy ministers and me — to a meeting in Skagway that was hosted by mayor and council — we did that particular meeting with a number of individuals from — representing mining companies, as well, from the Yukon.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that.

I will ask for confirmation: So, opposition has no control over which departments come forward for debate at any point in time, and so, if there is an assurance that, in the next 22 days, Economic Development will come back up and having not just the deputy minister, who is both ECO — I am prepared to ask questions again with Economic Development but understanding, of course, that opposition has no control over departments that come back up. And so, if the minister is happy to give me the assurance right now on the floor that Economic Development will be back, I am happy to wait to ask questions for that debate.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to get in trouble with the principal secretary and chief of staff, probably, but I would say yes, for all intents and purposes, I want to come back with Economic Development. I am more than happy — more than happy to say: Look, Question Period is a good time to go back and forth on our positions, but I'm more than happy to have a very detailed discussion on this topic.

I caught myself at the very end today when I also talked to the point about trucking. You'll see in Hansard tomorrow where the comment was "I believe so". It was really around the fact that, when I was talking about the Wolverine mine and the fact that — I actually went back and looked at an article from 2010 that quotes Premier Fentie, and he talks about how he was getting pressured at that time to ensure that the actual Wolverine ore was shipped to Skagway instead — the reason was because it was twice the trucking costs.

I think the other thing you can think about that is substantial — and timing to get ore to Asia to smelter. Inevitably, they made that decision to take the more expensive, I guess, route or they had maybe some sort of financial model that worked for them, but they were trucking long, long distances. Although, at that time, Governor Parnell spoke to the fact and was pressuring the Yukon government for the Skagway ore dock to be used for Wolverine.

Anyway, we can talk more about that during the Economic Development discussions. But yeah, I think it's important. I can commit. I will get in trouble again with my team for doing that on the floor, but I do want to come back and talk about Economic Development. I think that will be important.

I'll pass it back to go into other questions for Executive Council Office outside of that.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for those assertions that Economic Development will be called back. I'm actually — questions in Question Period — it's not answer period. There is no ability to have a conversation, and ultimately, I

would say that I don't know that I would use Wolverine as an example or a glowing light of a successful mining company, even based on my experience on the ground.

I actually don't have further questions for ECO, but I will look forward to the conversation with Economic Development.

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

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

Ms. White: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 2, Executive Council Office, cleared or carried, as required.

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

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

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$2,148,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$2,148,000 agreed to

Executive Council Office agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Health and Social Services

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you to the officials who are just joining me here today to speak about the first supplementary budget for 2023-24 for the Department of Health and Social Services. I would like to welcome the department officials here with me today. I am joined by deputy ministers Tiffany Boyd and Ed van Randen

and the ADM of Corporate Services, Paul Payne. Thank you for being here.

I would also like to thank them and their entire teams for developing this supplementary budget to support the health and well-being of Yukoners. I am very pleased to provide this important update on the steps that we are taking to enhance our health and social care system and respond to the issues and priorities of Yukoners. I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous work by everyone at the Department of Health and Social Services, from Continuing Care, Insured Health Services, Social Supports, Family and Children's Services, the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services, our nurses, our care providers, our social workers, our EMS teams, our custodial teams, policy and communications, Finance, HR, IT analysts — I want to thank each and every one of them for everything that they do to support Yukoners. Each day, our efforts are ensuring that Yukoners have access to essential services and programs.

The Department of Health and Social Services first supplementary budget reflects the important day-to-day efforts of our team across the Yukon. This supplementary budget includes important funding in our response to the challenges presented by a growing demand for health care services and to the substance use health emergency. Since releasing the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* on August 23, 2023, this supplementary budget represents a significant step toward implementing the 43 recommendations in the strategy, along with our partners.

Designed as a living document, this strategy provides us with a road map for responding to the substance use health emergency for years to come. This work will take time and cannot be done by one government or one organization alone. It will include developing targeted programming and supports based on the unique needs and cultural contexts of communities. This supplementary budget also provides funding to ensure that our legislated programs are appropriately funded to meet current levels of demand and to strengthen our health care system.

Even as we work to respond to the substance use health emergency and the global pressures on our health care system and staffing, we are moving forward with a clear vision to ensure that Yukoners have access to a person-centred and sustainable health and social care system. As we advance this important work, I would once again like to thank everyone across the health and social care system for all that they do to support Yukoners each day. It's really about how Yukoners interact with those face-to-face services — those front-line services — and the support that they receive each day in doing so.

The Department of Health and Social Services first supplementary operation and maintenance budget for 2023-24 is \$565.1 million. This represents an increase of 10.3 percent over the 2023-24 mains. The number of FTEs within the department is 1,584.2 FTEs for the 2023-24 fiscal year. This includes an increase of 10.8 FTEs over the 2023-24 main estimates. We're also presenting a revised capital estimate of

\$15.78 million, which is a decrease of \$157,000 compared to the 2023-24 main estimates.

Changes in this supplementary budget are connected to the collective agreement increases and adjustments to meet the funding needs of our legislative programs. Increases are also connected to our work to begin implementing the recommendations in the substance use health emergency strategy and to meet the identified funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

The increase of \$52.8 million in operation and maintenance funding will support the department to meet growing costs associated with the delivery of health and social care and ensure that the needs of Yukoners are met.

I'm pleased to speak about some of these important highlights. There is an increase of \$17.5 million across the department for negotiated collective agreement increases for the 2023-24 fiscal year. We are providing an additional \$1.26 million within the Department of Health and Social Services to begin implementing some initial actions in the substance use health emergency strategy. This work will continue to be done in collaboration with Yukon First Nations, other governments, and other community partners.

While this living document will serve as a guide in the years ahead as we respond to the substance use health emergency, this increase in the first supplementary estimates will allow us to begin implementing 14 of the strategy's 43 initiatives. Through this additional funding, we will work to expand access to services, build awareness, and collaborate with Yukon First Nations and communities to develop unique culturally specific programming. We're also providing an additional \$645,000 for the supervised consumption site to support Blood Ties Four Directions to expand the hours of operation at the site to seven days per week.

This important facility, which recently marked its second anniversary, continues to provide life-saving services to Yukoners. As of September 2023, the supervised consumption site has been visited 6,312 times, and 47 overdoses have been successfully attended to since opening in September 2021.

After a difficult wildfire season across Canada, I would like to thank the incredible efforts of Yukoners, local organizations, and the department's emergency support services team. This team quickly responded to the needs of evacuees from across the territory and the north in response to wildfires. That is a responsibility of emergency support services, which is located within the Department of Health and Social Services.

This supplementary estimate includes an increase of \$1.203 million to address unanticipated costs associated with supporting evacuees to access food, accommodation, and other supports — all free of charge to them. This supplementary estimate also includes additional funding to ensure that our legislative programs meet the needs of Yukoners. There is an increase of \$230,000 for the pioneer utility grant and a \$200,000 increase for the Yukon seniors income supplement to meet anticipated uptake during the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Our government is also responding to growth within Insured Health Services in areas such as hospital and physician

claims and the delivery of pharmaceutical programs. As our population grows past the age of 65 and the Yukon's population rises — we heard about that yesterday, I think breaching the 45,000-person mark — and the costs of accessing health care increase with inflation — like everything has here in Canada and truly across the world — we are providing additional funding to meet growing costs for insured health services. We are providing an additional \$9.85 million for Insured Health Services in this supplementary budget. This includes an increase of \$2 million for rising costs to deliver our pharmacare programs, as well as \$6 million for costs associated with out-of-territory hospital claims.

With rising growth in physician claims, this \$9.85-million increase also includes \$1.85 million for physician claims.

With respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, since the 2017-18 fiscal year, our government has increased the Yukon hospital services O&M budget by 32.64 percent. We are pleased to continue our partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to advance our shared priorities and ensure that Yukoners have access to the services and the programs that they require.

In the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, we are providing an increase of \$17.11 million for Yukon hospital services. This increase will support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to unanticipated costs incurred as a result of the global shortage of health care providers and growth in the use of agency nurses, as well as growth in the population of the Yukon and inflationary costs. This is done to ensure access to care for Yukoners. This increase will also support the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet growth in costs and the use of hospital and surgical services.

I would like to thank, once again, everyone at the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation and all of our health and social care system partners for the work that they do each and every day to support Yukoners.

While we continue to face challenges, we are also working together to meet those challenges, to implement new programs, and to deliver important services across the Yukon Territory. The first supplementary estimates for 2022-23 reflect our government's commitment to the continued support of our health and social care system in the interest of its success.

From implementing initiatives in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*, to ensuring that our legislative programs meet uptake levels, to meeting the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, we are all taking important steps and advancing work that will impact Yukoners each day.

I look forward to answering questions about this first supplementary estimate for the Department of Health and Social Services. I thank you for the opportunity to review this 2023-24 supplementary budget for the department.

Mr. Cathers: I would also like to welcome the officials here today. It should come as no surprise to the minister that my first question is about cost pressures at Yukon hospitals and the chronic underfunding of hospitals by the current government. I would remind the minister as well that, in rising, she cited numbers from a previous budget year, which I believe

she would find is actually prior to the emergency department opening. We have had this conversation as recently as the Spring Sitting when I reminded the minister that pointing to previous years before the addition of the new emergency department that has significant O&M implications on other programs does not paint an accurate picture.

What does provide an accurate picture, Deputy Chair, is what we have heard from the CEO and chair of the Hospital Corporation. Last week, the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation told attendees at the board of trustees public meeting that, for the last fiscal year, expenses grew much more than revenues. He noted that, excluding a pension adjustment, expenses for the year grew by 10.7 percent. In contrast, revenues grew by just 2.5 percent. The minister attended that meeting, as did I, and she asked him to repeat that information, which suggested that she may not have been aware of it, despite the fact that she should have been. So, I know that she did hear those numbers from the CEO.

The hospital's report and audited financial statements for the last fiscal year show that they had yet another year where expenses exceeded revenues by millions of dollars. Again, Deputy Chair, this is according to the hospital's own report, which the minister herself has tabled here in this Assembly. The total expenses, as shown on page 7 of Yukon Hospital Corporation's 2022-23 year-end review, were \$114 million. Total revenues, on the other hand, were just \$112 million. This follows two recent years of major funding shortfalls for our hospitals where hospital expenses exceeded revenues for the fiscal year by millions of dollars. In both of those recent years, hospital expenses were higher than revenues by about \$4 million.

Yukon Hospital Corporation's year-end review for 2020-21 shows financial highlights, as of March 31, 2021, and indicates that, for that fiscal year, total revenue was \$99.6 million, while total expenses were \$103.6 million. For the year prior to that, Yukon Hospital Corporation's own report shows that, for that fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, they had \$92.6 million in total revenue and \$96.5 million in expenses — three years of multi-million-dollar shortfalls as shown by Yukon Hospital Corporation's own reports. Again, the financial statements that those reports are based on are audited by the Auditor General and the minister herself has tabled those reports, so she should be aware of the contents.

This April, under questioning from me about the fact that the hospitals are budgeted to receive about \$10 million less in O&M funding than the CEO told us they needed for the previous fiscal year, the minister finally did admit that some of what the hospital had requested for this year had not actually been approved by Management Board yet. This current situation and lack of funding is placing enormous pressures on our hospitals, which is affecting Yukoners across the territory.

Again, I will refer to what the hospital chair and CEO have said publicly. Last week, the chair and CEO did an interview with CBC Radio. The CEO told CBC that there are — quote: "... significant pressures that we're seeing in the hospital and it's due to a number of factors." He then listed factors including health human resources costs, inflation, rising costs, supply

chain issues, demographic changes, and a significant growing population and aging population.

The hospital CEO then told CBC — quote: "... these in particular are causing increased demand for services that we provide and are far exceeding what we anticipated." Again, the latter part of what he said was very significant. He said that they were far exceeding what they had anticipated.

The chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation then told CBC a bit about the budgeting process and said this — again, I quote: "We were not expecting what we have seen in the totality of it, particularly our largest expenditure, which is health human resources, particularly nursing."

We know that this supplementary budget does contain part of the core funding that Yukon hospitals had requested many months ago for the current fiscal year and we are relieved to see that. The additional amount that is in here on top of the \$10-million obvious shortfall that I mentioned in the spring seems to directly reflect the rate of inflation. In this case, I'm basing it on the minister's own comments in the spring when she told this House that the inflation rate was 6.9 percent. What we don't know is how, if at all, the current government is responding to the higher than expected cost pressures that the chair and CEO both told CBC about. Again, it is important to note that they were talking about cost pressures that they are facing in the current fiscal year.

Both of them made it clear that those cost growths were beyond what they had anticipated. In fact, the hospital CEO specifically said that they are — and I quote: "... far exceeding what we anticipated..."

My question for the minister is this: How much money have Yukon hospitals asked for to cover costs in the current fiscal year that are not included in the supplementary budget?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to start by quoting some information from a notification that was sent out from the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation about this very topic to his staff and to provide this information, as I understand it, not only to the staff but ultimately to everyone who is working at the hospital, because this is an important topic and everyone is feeling the pressure of not only the budgetary constraints or the changes to the needs of Yukoners and the increased — as the members opposite said themselves — the increase to the population, increase in inflation, aging population, the health human resources challenges that are felt across the world, and how they are impacting the operations here in the territory.

The CEO said — and I quote: "YHC is in ongoing conversations with government about supporting core operations and responding to new pressures. We have been clear about the pressures and what's needed to address them. These discussions have been productive and we've been successful in addressing many of the financial pressures. Our core operation funding has increased year-over-year and our budget reflects these increases. However, the fact remains that growth in service demands, inflationary pressures and human resource constraints continue to far exceed our financial capacity. It is essential to communicate to your teams that funding has increased (it has not been cut), and while this is a step in the right direction, financial pressures have not gone

away. In fact, they continue to grow substantially. The expectation is that this will require continued effort by our leaders and teams.”

The notification memo to staff at the hospital and officials at the hospital goes on and I won't quote any more from it.

This will be seen and should be seen as supporting some of what the member opposite has said in relation to the pressures at the hospital. That is a fact. We are well aware of that. There is \$17.1-plus million in this supplementary budget to provide to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for their operations.

The hospital is funded by the Yukon government solely by virtue of core funding agreements and additional transfer payment agreements for other services and programs. Unfortunately, the member opposite often forgets the additional transfer payment agreements for other services and programs.

There is no dispute that there are significant pressures primarily organized in the categories of inflation, health human resources, and the growth in our population and aging population here in the territory. I don't think there is any dispute with respect to that.

The assistant deputy minister responsible for the finances with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation meets weekly with the Yukon Hospital Corporation financial team. The deputy ministers and the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation meet every two weeks, and the financial team and senior management of the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation meet every month. There is every opportunity for us to work together, which is what we are doing, which is what the CEO has told his senior staff. We will continue to meet — initially in the main budgets for a particular year — the core funding requirements for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and additional requests that they need as those requirements come to light in the run of a year.

I am very happy to be able to talk to Yukoners about this. I am very happy that this information goes on the record, but I am noting that I have explained how the Yukon Hospital Corporation is funded, year over year, on many, many occasions — happy to do so as much as I have to.

The Government of Yukon continues to fully meet the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and year over year, we have provided funding through core and additional transfer payment agreements commensurate with the total identified needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Throughout the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 fiscal years, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to funding requests identified during the main and supplementary budget exercises. This, Deputy Chair, is how it is done. Members opposite might have a better way to do it. The Yukon Hospital Corporation and our Department of Health and Social Services are working together to meet the needs of the Hospital Corporation.

We recognize that there are unprecedented times; we certainly recognize that these are unprecedented times. I am not sure that the members opposite do. But as we emerge from the acute stage of the COVID-19 response, we face inflationary

pressures and address a worldwide health human resources crisis. We maintain an ongoing cooperative and collaborative relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as we respond to new or emerging pressures to assess funding needs. We remember every day that we are spending Yukon taxpayers' money.

During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we budgeted \$93.64 million for the Yukon hospital services O&M as well as \$12.2 million in capital expenditures, for a combined total of \$105.84 million. As part of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, which we are now discussing, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify additional funding needs.

The first supplementary estimates for 2023-24 include an increase of \$17.11 million, which is here in this supplementary budget — the increased response to the growth in the hospital and surgical services costs, higher costs associated with responding to the health human resources crisis and an increased use of agency nurses, as well as for the maintenance capital, which is intended to maintain facilities and replace equipment. This increase also includes funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation employee pension program to address payments that are required based on the 2022 actuarial report.

I appreciate the opportunity to address this and I'm sure I will have a chance to continue to provide information.

Mr. Cathers: I would note again that the minister likes to use talking points suggesting wonderful collaboration, but we continue to see — when the audited financial statements of the Hospital Corporation — audited by the Auditor General of Canada — and the hospital's own year in review shows a multi-million-dollar hole in the hospital budget at the end of the year with expenses exceeding revenues by millions of dollars. That is a far more reliable picture of the situation than the minister's talking points written by her speech writer. Talking points don't pay the bills.

The \$2.3 million that the minister mentioned — part of the money that she referred to as an increase for the hospital services — is directly due to pension solvency, as the minister acknowledged and as is shown in the handout provided to us by officials. That money, right off the start, is not going to O&M cost pressures; that is simply ensuring that the government meets its legal benefits to employees of the Hospital Corporation.

Three out of the last four years, the hospital, as shown in its own annual report, has finished the year with expenses exceeding revenues by millions of dollars.

In comparison to the growth of government, I would note that the numbers tabled by this government in the Fall Sitting, as shown in their fiscal and economic update on page 5, note that the government's — and I quote: “Gross Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenditures are up \$132.7 million to \$1.59 billion, reflecting a 9.1 percent increase from Budget 2023-24.”

Government itself has general growth — grew just since the spring by 9.1 percent in expenses. The growth in health care, here and across the country, is typically always higher

than the average growth of government without exception, to the best of my knowledge, Deputy Chair.

The forced growth in out-of-territory hospital claims that we see in the handout from the government identifies \$6 million in forced growth related to out-of-territory hospital claims. Again, that's \$6 million more than they thought that they would need in the spring.

There's a larger portion of hospital services here in the territory. While government itself has grown — its expenses have grown 9.1 percent since the spring, and we see those cost pressures comparatively in out-of-territory hospital claims — we know that there are issues at hand.

The minister herself just confirmed that in quoting an e-mail from the CEO of the Hospital Corporation. I don't have a copy of that, but as I recorded her comments while she was speaking, I believe she quoted it as saying that there were ongoing conversations about core funding and emerging pressures.

So, it is clear from the hospital CEO's recent message to senior managers of the department, which the minister herself quoted, that they have asked for more money that isn't in the supplementary budget to meet cost pressures.

Again, I will ask the question that I asked previously that the minister skirted around. How much money have Yukon hospitals asked for to cover costs in the current fiscal year that is not included in the supplementary budget? There is obviously a funding request out there. What is the value of that funding request?

Since the minister, when she got up last time, just used her time without answering the question, I will add another question. We have received e-mails from patients saying that their doctor has told them that their surgery was either cancelled or not being scheduled due to cuts by the government and reallocation of funding that is being used in Health and Social Services instead of in departments. One of my colleagues just shared with me another e-mail as I came in from a constituent who had reached out after being told that by their physician.

My question for government is — again, we haven't heard that directly from the hospital itself, but we have now heard from multiple Yukoners who have told us that their doctors have told them that services are being cut and surgeries are not being scheduled due to the government reallocating resources to be used in the Department of Health and Social Services instead of at the hospital. Is that accurate, and if the minister believes that it is not accurate, can she explain why multiple Yukon physicians are telling their patients this?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: If I wasn't clear in the first question I stood to answer, we are working, on an ongoing basis — weekly, biweekly, and monthly — with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to determine what their financial constraints are and what their financial issues are and to respond to those. This supplementary budget has more than \$17 million in it to address those.

We meet their funding pressures. I have said this in this Legislature many, many times. We are in the process, with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, of evolving how core funding and additional TPAs will be provided to the Yukon Hospital

Corporation so that we can accurately meet what they assess to be their needs.

As we heard from the CEO and the board chair recently in local media and as the member opposite has spoken about, they didn't anticipate certain costs that were then on their desks. As a result of that, we have set up a system where we are speaking with them so that any of those unanticipated costs can come to their attention and ultimately come to our attention so that we can respond to them. We meet their needs and have done so year over year since 2017 when we came to government and took the responsibilities for this.

I won't wander into why certain doctors might have said certain things. I understood initially that the member opposite said that there was one person, but then all of a sudden, there was more than one person. You would need to speak to them about that and their misunderstanding of how hospital funding exists and is supported by this government.

In fact, I will turn briefly to the issue of surgeries and OR capacity. The Yukon Hospital Corporation continues to plan for the future of surgical services at Whitehorse General Hospital. They don't occur in any significance in the community hospitals. The Yukon Hospital Corporation resources and funding support up to 3,200 surgeries per year, including planned and unplanned surgeries. At the end of the 2022-23 fiscal year, 3,841 surgeries were completed. During the first quarter — which is all we can report on at the moment — of 2023-24, a total of 1,141 surgeries were completed. Between February 13 and March 31, 2023, Whitehorse General Hospital did temporarily reduce the number of scheduled elective surgeries due to staffing shortages, and these surgeries were rescheduled.

We continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address the widespread pressures associated with the local, national, and global health human resources issues. Whitehorse General Hospital currently has 58 inpatient beds. Of these, 17 are designated for surgical care.

With respect to orthopaedic surgeries, the Yukon is currently supported by two resident orthopaedic surgeons, with additional coverage provided by locums. The first resident orthopaedic surgeon was introduced here in 2017, a program we are very proud to support. The second resident orthopaedic surgeon was introduced in 2019, and back in 2017-18, a total of 28 joint replacement surgeries were completed in-territory, so they are scheduled joint replacements for the orthopaedic team, although of course, the orthopaedic team also supports unplanned surgeries on a regular basis if they are needed to assist Yukoners.

I have a number of other stats that I am happy to provide, but I do want to take this opportunity to support the surgical services, orthopaedic and otherwise — general surgeons here in the territory. We hear nothing but amazing accolades for the work that they do. I know that they go above and beyond what their normal tasks are with respect to providing surgical services to Yukoners on a regular basis. There are emergency surgeries; there are people who come into the hospital in very bad shape and lives are saved by our surgical teams and by the work that they do together. The scheduling of surgeries is

incredibly important for Yukoners, particularly if, for whatever reason, they need to be changed. I know, from personal and other experience, that the doctors who work on our surgical teams and their teams do everything possible to make sure that Yukoners, if they need to be rescheduled, are rescheduled in a way that is best supported by the teams that we have.

I can unequivocally say — which isn't very often that I would go there in this Legislative Assembly — that the idea — and I will classify it as an idea rather than a set of facts, because I don't have the facts — put forward by the member opposite that the Yukon Department of Health and Social Services is diverting funds that were allocated to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for services, surgical or otherwise, is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. Cathers: Another area related to the hospital finances include that, in a previous fiscal year, this government — for a reason that I could never fathom — chose, instead of providing cash to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make whole the pension solvency requirements — as, in fact, the minister is doing in this budget here today and as begun under previous ministers, starting with me — the practice of the government was to provide cash to the hospital to allow it to meet the requirements of the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Instruments, but for some reason, the Liberals chose to not provide hospital funding but instead to loan them funding at just under a four-percent increase, for over \$3 million.

Now they are being charged interest on this every year. I asked, at the public meeting of the board of trustees, if that loan was still in place, and it was confirmed that it was. The financial statements that have been audited by the Auditor General and tabled show that amount both on page 25 and on an earlier page that I seem to have lost for the moment. The amount of that loan is over \$3 million. The interest is 3.95 percent. This jumped out at me, especially in contrast to the Premier's plan to give \$44 million to the municipality of Skagway without receiving interest payments on it or any other revenue in the future.

Since that \$3-million loan is still on the books and since it relates to a pension solvency requirement that isn't about to go away, will the minister commit to simply forgiving that loan to the Hospital Corporation and stopping the practice of charging them almost a four-percent increase on that multi-million-dollar loan?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The pension solvency issue continues to be a challenge for the Yukon government with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Yukon University, which requires a similar payment to the federal government, as we continue to work with the federal government to work out alternatives to this responsibility. We will continue to do that. The loan which is noted with respect to paying the pension solvency requirements to the federal government last year was done by way of a loan to manage cashflow. It is the responsibility of the Yukon Hospital Corporation at this time, despite the fact that our government is working as a whole to resolve this responsibility. As a result, the determination of a loan option was made in conjunction with the Yukon Hospital Corporation as a way to manage cashflow. The loan is with the Canadian Imperial Bank of

Commerce. I believe it is correct that the interest is charged, at the moment, at 3.9 percent. The loan is still in place.

The Department of Health and Social Services provides funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation for the purposes of paying the loan payments and the interest payments at this time. As I have noted, we work with them every week, biweekly, and monthly to look at the financial responsibilities of the Yukon Hospital Corporation and to meet them, on behalf of the government. At this point, as we work toward the implementation of a health authority, we expect that the issues of any outstanding loans will be resolved through that process.

Mr. Cathers: It is just hard to understand why this Liberal government is prepared to give millions of dollars to a municipality in Alaska for a facility where there is no certainty that it will ever actually be used — and there is a question about the suitability of the facility — while they charge our hospitals almost four percent interest on a loan related simply to keeping up the government's legal obligations to employees of the Hospital Corporation for pension solvency.

I will move on to other areas here; I do have a long list of questions. I want to start by talking about the closures of health centres that have impacted this territory. Since May, Pelly Crossing, Destruction Bay, Mayo, Teslin, Beaver Creek, and Ross River health centres have been closed or had services reduced for weeks at a time, in some cases. Additionally, there have been warnings about long wait times at the Dawson City hospital for certain procedures.

Again, the concern here is, of course, that this is having a serious effect on Yukon communities. We have seen a lack of attention by this government repeatedly, especially to rural Yukon. I would remind the minister that a written question that I submitted to her way back in March about physician services coverage in rural communities and which of those communities have coverage and which don't and how that it is provided — she still hasn't bothered to respond to that question. Again, this is emblematic and symptomatic of this Liberal government's lack of attention to rural Yukon.

When we see a situation, by the minister's own admission, where nursing vacancies in rural Yukon hit almost 50 percent, it is very concerning. The question is: What has the government done specifically to respond to this crisis, and what are they going to do to prevent this from happening again and creating a situation where our communities don't have the local health services that they depend on?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the opportunity to address this question in this budget debate. I have answered it several times during Question Period, and unfortunately, it continues to be an issue for the member opposite, as it should be, frankly. These are serious concerns with respect to nursing shortages, which is the reason, ultimately — either a shortage with respect to staff at a particular health centre or, more importantly perhaps, sometimes the opportunity to give nursing staff a much-needed break from their responsibilities in communities — remembering — and I know that Yukoners know this — but remembering that nurses who work in Yukon communities certainly have a vast array of responsibilities.

They are often community nurses, of course — RNs and others — they are a confidante; they are emergency responders; they are members of the community, perhaps in a way like no other. Their responsibilities and what they do in health centres across this territory has to ultimately be respected, and as a result, we have taken very serious attempts to make sure that their mental health and physical health is being looked after. Sometimes, unfortunately, that has resulted in nurses being away from their position and, as a result, some health centre reductions in services.

Almost invariably when there are those reductions in services, there are EMS services available in the community; there are perhaps administrative staff keeping the health centre open; there are itinerant doctors assigned to every community in the territory. On occasion, those appointments continue. I am not sure what the description is — you know, it is easy to throw around a health centre closure, which is almost always not the case. Reduction in services — absolutely, there have been some; absolutely, we never want that to be the case, but the realities of the current health human resources situation in the world means that is sometimes what happens. There are emergency services available; there is 811, which is a nurses line direct to an RN who can provide advice and help over the phone. The federal government is soon launching a phone line that will be across the country for mental health services available when someone may be in crisis or just have a question about something. There is a national response to how this reduction in services is being addressed.

What I can say is that none of this is satisfactory to any of us at the Department of Health and Social Services, but I think we are also mindful of the fact that the Yukon Territory has fared quite well with some of the responses, and that is what is being asked about. Nurses' bonuses have been brought in by this government to address recruitment and retention of nurses in Community Health. That is working. We have reduced the vacancy rate significantly.

It is as low as we want it to be yet? Absolutely not. Are we working to make sure that there are additional nurses available to be registered here in the territory? Absolutely. Are we working with other jurisdictions in Canada, looking at best practices and how we can partner with them to determine how nurses can be registered through other provinces or territories and ultimately then registered here in the territory? Absolutely. Are we looking at internationally educated health professionals? Absolutely.

All of this is being coordinated by a health human resources committee that is second to none.

The Government of Yukon has recognized the seriousness of these shortages. In response, we have established a Health Human Resources Steering Committee. It's jointly led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, because nursing shortages and the impact of that affects both of these organizations.

The committee is using an intersectoral approach to create a Yukon health human resources strategy. We look forward to introducing that very soon, as I've said previously in the Legislature.

What I also want to note is that the Health Human Resources Steering Committee is comprised of decision-makers of every kind in the territory who deal with human resources and health issues. There are representatives from numerous Government of Yukon departments, as I've said: the Hospital Corporation, Yukon University, the Yukon Medical Council, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Employees' Union, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, and First Nation representatives. We have constituted a steering committee here that is the decision-makers and those who have ideas to provide better service on front lines to Yukoners. The committee is looking at all aspects of health human resources, including retention, recruitment, planning, and learning and innovation. They're also working to help coordinate, support, and influence health human resources work that is underway in their respective organizations so that it aligns with the committee's recommendations and priorities.

The work of this committee aligns with the ongoing collaborative efforts of the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments. They are all supported by the recent federal investments which identify the health human resources crisis as a shared priority across the country.

I appreciate that some of the members opposite might be interested in categorizing this as some sort of Yukon-government failure. The truth is that we are working very hard and being successful at meeting these challenges.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Deputy Chair, the problem is that the minister ignored calls for years, as did her predecessor, to develop a health human resources strategy to respond to the emerging pressures. They turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to what they were being asked and what they were being told about this until we were at the situation where the crisis in nursing in the Yukon — in rural nursing — had reached a rate whereby the minister's own admission they had an almost 50-percent vacancy rate. It is interesting that the minister disputed the claim that health care centres were closed, but again, it is not the first time that she has done that, but we are relying on the postings that were shared on Facebook primarily by those health care centres and by the minister's own department about closures and gaps in services.

So, we can debate terminology all day, but the bottom line is that Yukoners in rural communities saw a situation where they were not able to access necessary health services in their community, and this followed the government — for years, frankly — ignoring calls to develop a health human resources strategy. I would note, as well, that I am concerned that the minister has — she has noted that they are now working on a health human resources strategy. I am pleased by that.

What I am concerned about is that, again, there seems to be a lack of urgency on the part of the government that took years to actually heed that call from us and from health professionals. This is the same government and the same minister who, after declaring a substance use health emergency, took 20 months to develop its basic strategy for responding to an emergency that it declared.

So, for Yukoners who don't have a doctor or are seeing their nursing station in their community closed and are seeing

their ability to access necessary health care directly impacted as a result of this — again, we will continue to urge the government to develop a sense of urgency to actually take action, not just talk about action.

I want to talk about the impact of those closures and reduced services at health centres in rural communities on EMS coverage. We have seen increasing gaps in EMS coverage across the territory. My colleague the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin noted earlier today during Question Period what he has heard from volunteer EMS responders about the decline in the number who are providing services and a concern that some of that relates to the fact that standby pay and honoraria have not been increased in at least seven years.

I would remind the minister that I actually raised that issue with her at the beginning of April — almost seven months ago. The minister said she would look into it, but what we are seeing on the ground in these communities — again, Deputy Chair, I remind you, we are seeing an increasing series of gaps in local EMS coverage that have been unprecedented until this Liberal government was in power. Those communities need action, and the amount of money we are talking about that would be required to provide a significant increase to EMS volunteer standby pay and honoraria would comparatively — the amount of money that the government spent on the Premier's failed trip to India could have much better been spent on increasing standby pay and honoraria for EMS volunteers across the territory. That might have had a direct impact on improving EMS coverage instead of simply being taxpayers' money wasted on a junket.

We know that the minister has repeatedly said throughout the summer that, where there were gaps in health services in rural Yukon, EMS was stepping in to cover it. We know, as well, that local EMS coverage has been very strained and has had large gaps in it, and when that is the case, they deploy paramedics from Whitehorse in response to calls.

The question is this: What has the impact of that been on EMS in the Whitehorse area, as well as on the capacity to provide medevacs? We have heard about delays in calls being responded to in rural Yukon, we have heard about a growing number of delays in calls being responded to in the Whitehorse area, and we have heard that this pattern of deploying EMS paramedics from Whitehorse to rural communities has also directly impacted the government's ability to do medevacs in some situations.

So, can the minister tell us what that impact has been? We are looking for numbers, not simply rhetoric.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In 2023-24, we budgeted \$12.3 million for EMS. This is a net-zero transfer between the Department of Community Services — as I had the opportunity to say earlier today — and Health and Social Services to have more efficient work between EMS and the health care partners that they work with on a regular basis for smoother transfers and services where EMS and community health services work together to serve Yukoners better. There are 87.3 FTEs and 98 community responders providing EMS across the territory. Their current operations include ambulance services, ground operations, the paramedic specialists clinic at 405 Alexander,

and the paramedic response unit — are fully staffed here in Whitehorse.

I note that, in the question — I hesitate to say that it's difficult to hear the member opposite, because then I usually get a response that I am just trying to ignore it and I have been accused of ignoring a bunch of things already.

Today, the truth is that it is difficult to hear the member opposite. I understood the question — and some part of the question — to be with respect to EMS experiencing shortages and, for some reason, the paramedic response unit of EMS — the people who go to communities to provide additional service coverage when there may be reductions in coverage — was something that the member opposite didn't think was valuable, but clearly, EMS does. The opportunity to work and to cover shortages in communities and for community responders and EMS workers in all Yukon communities from time to time is critically important. EMS continues to recruit and increase the number of responders in Whitehorse and in all communities.

In 2022, EMS in Yukon communities had full coverage 68 percent of the time, while EMS in Dawson City had full coverage 86 percent of the time, and Watson Lake had full coverage approximately 95 percent of the time or higher. I could provide other statistics, if appropriate or necessary, going forward.

We are working with the Yukon Medical Association — actually, I will come back to that in a moment.

I will note that, with respect to air ambulance responses that were unavailable — I think there was questioning about that. In 2022, there was one occasion when an air ambulance response was unavailable due to the service available in the community, and in 2023 to date, there has been no such occasion.

We are working with the Yukon Medical Association on an inter-hospital and inter-community EMS transfer protocol and program to ultimately increase the efficiency within the system as to how EMS and hospitals work together and how they can respond better. I note that EMS recently increased the monetary compensation to four hours of non-operational pay per month to encourage community responder attendance and support biweekly training nights. Community responders are reimbursed \$19.08 per hour to attend training and have access to additional funding to attend training programs outside of their home area. This includes an additional offset for meals, incidentals, tuition, books, and accommodation. Community responders receive honoraria pay for the commitment to EMS provided for on-call services, training, and all operational deployment. We are currently exploring opportunities to expand the honoraria for community responders, which I again had the opportunity to say during Question Period today. I expect that the members opposite will understand that this is a positive commitment going forward.

In addition to this funding, community responders receive a retention bonus of \$1,000 upon completion of 250 hours of on-call duties, and EMS provides \$110,000 to the volunteer ambulance society to provide funding for additional education opportunities, awards, recognition, and community engagement.

I will end the answer to this question with one exception, and that is to again express the heartfelt thanks of Yukoners with respect to EMS workers and the services they provide to Yukoners. From personal and other experience — and certainly experience as the minister — I've had a number of fantastic opportunities to work and to recognize the excellent work of Yukon EMS folks. They are amazing members of our community. They meet Yukoners when they are simply not at their best, to be quite frank, and they save lives every day, they provide service to Yukoners when they are in a very stressful situation, and they do so with kindness, compassion, and dedication to their profession. As such, we should recognize them, we should care for them appropriately, and we should thank them for their service to Yukoners.

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 before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 15, Department of Health and Social Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Cathers: When the minister responded to my last question, unfortunately, she didn't provide an answer to what I had asked about the numbers related to the coverage gaps in EMS, as well as the number of times that paramedics from Whitehorse were deployed to provide local service in rural communities.

The minister then went on to talk about how much she appreciates what EMS staff and volunteers do. As the minister knows very well — though she seemed to be trying to imply otherwise — my colleagues and I very much appreciate what our EMS staff and volunteers do across the territory, but the problem that I was highlighting is that they are not getting enough support in communities.

As my colleague pointed out earlier today and I pointed out to the minister in April, the standby pay for EMS volunteers, who provide the majority of the coverage in rural Yukon communities, has not been significantly increased in many years. Meanwhile, the cost of everything has gone up. I asked the minister to look at standby pay and honoraria in the spring. She indicated that she would, yet here we are, about seven months later, and there is no sign of action.

My point is, Deputy Chair, that when you have an EMS coverage crisis in rural Yukon communities coinciding with a rural nursing crisis affecting most of those same communities, action is needed. Waiting seven months with no sign of action to increase support for EMS volunteers is not acceptable.

I hope the minister will follow through on her commitment today and actually do something about this issue.

I will also note that the minister seemed to be trying to imply that, as far as EMS management was concerned, deploying from Whitehorse was perfectly fine and there were

no issues with it. Again, what I'm pointing to is that we know the issues that creates for response time in Yukon communities, particularly with urgent responses, which include strokes and heart attacks or responses to a serious motor vehicle incident or other trauma-type injury. There can be a situation where waiting an hour for a response means the difference between life and death of a patient. We have fortunately not been in that situation — despite the growing EMS coverage gaps in Yukon communities — where that seems to have happened in a Yukon community.

The reason I am so emphatic on this issue is that I believe it is simply a matter of time, with growing EMS coverage gaps in Yukon communities, before we have a situation where a delayed response means the difference between life and death, and then we will be talking about what to do in the wake of a coroner's review of the situation. That is something that should be avoided.

I only make that point in the interest of trying to create a sense of urgency on the part of the minister for actually increasing standby pay and honoraria for EMS volunteers across the territory, as well as working with the Volunteer Ambulance Services Society and supervisors to strengthen government support for those volunteers, as well as local training opportunities, to get more volunteers in those communities.

What happens when the deployment from Whitehorse occurs — as I mentioned, the response can be delayed — it also impacts EMS coverage in Whitehorse and the surrounding area. As members may recall, the Leader of the Third Party — previously in this House, I believe it was in the Spring Sitting — asked questions about the number of code red situations when an ambulance is actually not available for response due to a 911 call. This is a serious situation, and it is only a matter of time before we end up with a worse problem than we have had so far, so action is actually needed by the minister. Yukoners shouldn't have to wait another seven months in this area.

Speaking of waiting, Deputy Chair, the minister again, after years of the Yukon Party and health professionals pushing for a new health human resources strategy — in March, the government began the development of a new health human resources strategy, which, although belated, we do appreciate that they finally acted on it. It's now almost eight months since that work began. We have heard that we might hear something tangible soon, but our question is — we're looking for outcomes from this; we're looking for actions even if it's early actions that are followed by later actions that are agreed to by those involved. In a situation where we have a crisis and a shortage of nurses, we have thousands of Yukoners who don't have a family doctor, growing gaps in EMS coverage in rural Yukon, and an unprecedented series of health centres either closing or reducing services in rural communities, the time for action is now. Actually, the time for action should have been a while ago, but all that can be done right now is for the minister to treat this with the sense of urgency it deserves and show us actions as a result of this work.

Since the minister seems to have been making a habit of using her full time in responses, I am going to throw in some other questions just in the interest of maximizing our time.

Deputy Chair, earlier this year, we have asked questions about steps that have been taken by other jurisdictions to fast-track allowing internationally trained doctors and nurses to practise in their jurisdiction in an expedited manner. Again, the approach that has been used by a number of provinces is a shortlist model, which — well, to emphasize again, we have always said that government should consult with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Medical Council, and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association to understand their views and make sure that it is being dealt with in a responsible manner.

The question is whether they are looking at a shortlist approach. The Premier signed an MOU with Nova Scotia regarding collaboration, but we have yet to see any outcome. So, can the minister tell us: Are they going to shortlist and fast-track, allowing doctors and nurses from other countries with a high standard, such as the United States, to practise here in an expedited manner, and if so, which countries?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I'm being criticized for using the time that I have available, but I take very seriously the opportunity to speak to Yukoners and to provide as much thorough information as I can. I have also been accused of making implications when I spoke about my pride in our staff and our service providers for Yukoners. I'm sure the member opposite doesn't need to worry about implications. I say plainly what I need to say. If I have something to say about a topic, I will plainly say so, being mindful of the fact that Yukoners are the ultimate constituents and the people who are looking for this information.

We are working with the Nova Scotia government. The lead-up to the question was about some details about an MOU. I think that it is important, and I plainly know that Yukoners will know that lots of work is happening in the background. We don't just sign an MOU with Nova Scotia and then wander away, never to be dealing with them. The officials at the Department of Health and Social Services work diligently and constantly to move forward our health care services, to improve them for Yukoners, and to continue to evolve and transform our Yukon health care system, pursuant to the recommendations of *Putting People First*.

We are working with the Nova Scotia government, currently, on issues around recruitment, with a focus on rural and underrepresented communities. I will just hit some of the topics with respect to the work that is happening with the Nova Scotia government at the officials level and others: retention of health care workforce, inclusion, equity and reconciliation, and cultural safety, which is something that the Yukon brings to the table, in their background and knowledge. We are working on ethical international recruitment and the impact that will have in bringing folks to Canada and the foreign credentialing program — which we are learning about from Nova Scotia. We are working with them on training and academic partnerships to support the workforce expansion. Another topic is labour mobility, the health workforce data and the collection thereof,

and our responsibilities with the Government of Canada. We are working with them on understanding new models of care and improvement there and the health system transformation — those are the list of 10 topics, I think I have noted, that are currently on the table in our work with the government officials from Nova Scotia.

With respect to the work being done on internationally educated health care providers, it was committed to continuing to explore this initiative, and we are confident that, in the future, we will see a return on the investment and the work that has been done. During the recent trip to India, for instance, representatives met with officials from the Government of Kerala and with NORKA, which is a government emigration agency, with nursing regulators, hospitals, and nursing schools particularly designed for that purpose.

More work will need to be done with prospective partners in India and here in the Yukon before we see any nurses directly recruited, but this work continues. We want to ensure that internationally educated health professionals are well-supported and integrated into our communities, our health care system, and our facilities in order to ensure their personal success and to ensure that Yukoners receive the high-quality care they deserve and expect.

The standard of education of many of our internationally educated professionals is stellar, and Canadians will fare well when we are able to have them become part of our health care system. Our efforts in India, for example, are part of our medium- and long-term approaches to respond to the health human resources crisis. This is not an immediate fix and work is ongoing so that it can be a medium- or long-term approach.

In the coming weeks, we will be releasing the health human resources strategy, as I noted earlier, which will outline an intersectoral approach to addressing these challenges. The India trip is just one element of what will be a multi-faceted approach. Internationally educated professionals have historically played an important role in the delivery of health care in Canada, and we recognize that best leveraging their expertise is a challenge being addressed by all governments across Canada. I have indicated previously, with the opportunity to address the Legislature in response to a question, that this is a top priority on ministers of health and social services' agendas across the country and I expect it will continue to be so. The concept of health human resources issues is the top priority, I would say, at the moment for health care and health and social services ministers. A major part of that is how we can respond to internationally educated health professionals and welcome them here in Canada to our systems.

Mr. Cathers: Again, what my concern is — and the minister referenced the MOU with Nova Scotia. What we're not seeing is any evidence of action by the government.

I would point out in contrast specific examples. Nova Scotia, which they signed the MOU with, is already allowing US board-certified doctors and surgeons to practise in Nova Scotia. They have done that. Indications are that it is working. This is something that this government could consider as an early action — allowing doctors from the US and perhaps the

UK to practise in the Yukon as long as they are in good standing.

Similarly, Nova Scotia has expedited the process for nurses from a short list of countries. Alberta, for example — and I will quote from a CBC article from back in May entitled “Alberta flooded with applications from international nurses as requirements ease”, dated May 1. At that time, that article indicates that, as of May 1, the Alberta college had issued 672 permits since the launch for internationally educated nurses, as it says in the article. These are examples of things that are being done and have been done for months by provinces, but we see no evidence of real action by the government to actually fast-track the recognition of credentials of doctors and nurses from jurisdictions such as the US, United Kingdom, and perhaps others.

I will look forward to seeing more from this. I am sure I am not going to get more information from the minister on that specific topic today.

I would like to move on to a couple of other specific areas that relate to hospital physician coverage after January 1. We understand that there are issues related to that and some uncertainty. Can the minister explain what the situation is? Our understanding is that currently no physicians have confirmed that they will providing those services after the beginning of January. I understand that there has been a request made related to different financial remunerations. I am not asking the minister to negotiate in public on this, but I would appreciate it if she can explain the situation and what is being done to address it. Again, as I have said to media, what we would like to see is all of the involved parties working together to come up with a reasonable solution that provides consistent coverage going forward.

I would also ask the minister if she could provide information, either now or when she next rises, about several wait times that had I asked her about previously as well as the issue of wait times generally if she has other specific information at her fingertips.

Could the minister provide us with an update on what the current wait times are for cardiac care, for ophthalmology and cataract surgery, for non-urgent MRI, for mammography, for joint replacement surgery, and for audiologist services? Those are all issues that I asked the minister about in the spring. Those are all specific areas where we know that the wait times have been too long. I may not have asked the minister about mammography in the spring, but I did ask her about the others, and that has been brought to my attention as well.

Since I expect that it will take a moment for officials to get that specific information for the minister, I will move on to the issue of contracts for physicians, including specialists. We understand that, under the most recent memorandum of understanding signed with the YMA, the government had agreed to provide the option for doctors and specialists to either practise through fee-for-service or through contract. We know that there have been some frustrations from specialists related to that and concerns that some feel that there has not been equal treatment between those on fee-for-service and certain contracts. I know that the department has been contacted by at

least one of those specialists who has reached out to us and has provided us with a comparison to someone else with similar credentials who is receiving a different arrangement than they are.

Could the minister please explain what they are doing or where they are not following through on their commitment to the YMA around that flexibility and equity between the fee-for-service model and the contract model?

Last but not least, I would just ask the minister about the issue of addictions treatment and what is being done in that area. Could the minister indicate — we know that there is some funding allocated in the budget related to this area. We have heard — and the government’s own reports have confirmed — that there has been a lack of action around expanding addictions treatment and that vulnerable people, including those accessing services at the shelter, have been turned away from addictions treatment. Can the minister tell us what, if anything, has actually been done to increase treatment spaces and expand availability now? Have there been any new spaces created, and if not, when will those spaces be created?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: There are a number of questions there. I don’t anticipate being able to answer all of them in the remaining time today, but I will do my very best.

The first question is about some — I want to say “rumours”. But I’m happy to have the opportunity to clear up what is happening with respect to our partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and inpatient care. In partnership with the Hospital Corporation and the hospitalist physicians, who are also known as “doctor of the day”, the Government of Yukon has been working to support a request to formalize the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Over the last several years, inpatient care has been provided by family physicians who support their own patients and a doctor-of-the-day model or a doctor-of-the-day assigned doctor to provide inpatient care to patients who do not have their own health care provider with hospital privileges.

The doctor-of-the-day program in Whitehorse General Hospital has been in place since 2008. The model of care was developed at a time when growing demand for inpatient services necessitated a shift to that model.

In 2020, one physician undertook a trial of a hospitalist type of model at Whitehorse General Hospital. It has evolved since then into a three-person model, and they support inpatient care, as well as additional family doctors who have now either handed over the care of their patients or they are reducing their availability to do that. The three-person model, currently known as the “doctor of the day” — or some people call it the “hospitalist model” — at Whitehorse General Hospital — we are now working to have that program go forward on a permanent basis. It is shifting in some ways. The changing nature of the ways in which physicians practise and increasing complex needs in health care have necessitated a shift in how inpatient care is provided, and we are supportive of that shift. We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to achieve that.

An expression of interest will be sent out very soon that will seek physicians, both inside and outside of the Yukon, to

fully resource the hospitalist program, and they will be employed full time as hospitalists. I can also indicate that a hospitalist model is something that exists in almost every jurisdiction in Canada and certainly in hospitals everywhere. I don't have the numbers on exactly how many, but I daresay and know that they operate in British Columbia hospitals.

We remain committed to working with physicians, the Yukon Medical Association, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that this new model of inpatient care is properly resourced and able to continue to provide stable and high quality inpatient care to Yukoners.

I don't want to delve into the rumour, but I understand it to be said that, as of January, there would not be Yukon or, more likely, Whitehorse family physicians providing care to their own patients. Ideally, that is what is expected. We certainly hope that we can staff this model and have the expression of interest go out very quickly for the purposes of having the hospitalist program up and running. It is the responsibility of Whitehorse General Hospital, and we are working closely with them, as we have this program become more permanent and provide the inpatient care that is needed.

The next question was about wait times, and I am happy to provide numbers. I am not sure if we have numbers that are more up-to-date than those that were provided in the spring, but I certainly am happy to provide what I can about those. I just want to make sure that I have them. Cardiology — so far, in 2023, a total of 439 individuals received services through the program of having visiting cardiologists, who provide six visits a year, and two visiting pediatric cardiologists, who offer two visits per year. Wait times and wait-lists fluctuate based on the frequency of the visits. In 2022, a total of 1,531 services were supported through the program.

Ophthalmology — in 2019, we implemented a two-year plan to successfully reduce the wait times for cataract assessments. The plan was extended to support managing wait times. We are working toward meeting our target of completing cataract surgery within six months and also assessments within four months and then, if surgery is appropriate, that being done within six months. At this time, surgeries are being completed within 12 months — the target being six. Between 2019 and 2020, a combined total of 870 cataract surgeries were completed, and during 2021-22, there were only 450, so we are completing more and more, to the benefit of Yukoners.

I think that I was asked also about — I was going to say — orthopaedics. I don't have that on my list. I think that there is an MRI, pediatricians — and I know that there is an MRI note that I can find with respect to those numbers. I think that I had it earlier, but I don't want to guess at that.

I can move on — yes, I knew I had a page. Thank you very much, deputy minister. Yukon hospitals follow national guidelines and triaging MRI referrals to ensure those with the highest need are supported first. As of June 30, 2023, a total of 614 MRIs were completed during the 2023-24 fiscal year; in 2022-23, a total of 3,198 MRIs were completed. They are categorized into urgent, semi-urgent, and non-urgent. Non-urgent MRI cases aim to be supported as close to 90 days as possible and are close to meeting this target. As of June 30,

2023, most non-urgent were being completed within 122 days. Urgent cases are supported within seven days and are being completed within this target. Semi-urgent cases aim to be supported as close to 30 days as possible and are being completed within this target.

Mr. Cathers: I look forward to hearing more information about the response there.

Just recognizing that our time is drawing short here this afternoon, I am going to touch on several other areas. If the minister could provide an update on the surgical services area — that is something that was brought forward as a priority by the Yukon Medical Association to all three political parties during the last territorial election.

If the minister could provide us with an update on vacancies in home care, as well as rural services. We have heard directly from people who live in rural communities who are qualified to work for home care and would like to provide service in those communities but have found a situation where — despite their attempts to suggest to the government that they make jobs available to provide services in those communities where there actually are clients in need — they have only been offered jobs in Whitehorse. I would ask the minister if she could again comment on the home-care vacancy rate and the rural services issue.

As well, I would ask the minister about how many patients are currently registered on the government's program to find a doctor, how many doctors are registered with it, and what the most recent estimate is of Yukoners who do not have a family doctor — what is the total estimate of the number of Yukoners who do not have a family doctor right now?

I also want to remind the minister of letters that she hasn't responded to from my colleagues and me. I reminded the minister of the written question from the spring that remains outstanding. I sent the minister another letter entitled "Emergency Medical Services dispatch and response issues highlighted by an accident". I will not get into the contents of it. I would urge the minister, in responding, to be respectful of the personal privacy of the person involved. The response issues that I identified in that letter included two 911 calls which were reportedly not responded to by EMS and EMS not having the proper equipment to respond in wilderness areas accessible by trail near Whitehorse.

I would also remind the minister that other correspondence that remains outstanding includes a letter I wrote to her earlier in the summer on behalf of a constituent regarding care of a parent at Whistle Bend Place and family concerns. I would urge the minister to respond to those as well as to other letters that I may not be aware of that the minister has not responded to. There are people who are affected at the heart of the letters and the questions which I mentioned, and they are looking for answers from the minister. I would encourage her to provide a thoughtful response to those issues.

Last but not least, as the time draws to a close here this afternoon, I would ask the minister to provide an update on the Constellation Health Centre. We know that there were concerns in the Yukon Medical Association regarding the way that the government approached it and the lack of working with them

on developing a reasonable model. We understand that the government has had challenges finding a doctor to work there and it is currently a 0.2-physician position. We would like the minister to indicate what their plans are regarding that going forward.

Finally, if she could provide an update on the status of the walk-in clinic that she had initially indicated that she thought would be open last spring — in 2022, to be specific. We know that it is referenced in the CASA with the NDP, but we have yet to hear clear indications of what the government is doing to develop a realistic plan for operating that facility.

With that, I will hand it back to the minister in case she has some answers to the questions I asked here.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am mindful of the time, so I will only take the opportunity to say two things. We have hired a physician to work at the Constellation Health Centre. I look forward to more information being provided on that.

I can also say that I am quite confident that I have responded in some way to every piece of correspondence that I have ever received since I was given the honour of this position in 2016. I'm not sure why the members opposite are laughing. It is very important to me that I respond to individuals, to caseworks, to people who have taken the time to write to me in my responsibilities and provide them with the information that I can, and I do. I understand that there are two outstanding caseworks from the member opposite. I will endeavour to look into those. I appreciate his encouragement that I would answer all my correspondence, but I do.

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: Deputy Chair, I move that the Speaker do now resume the Chair.

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-2024*, 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

The House adjourned at 5:29 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 152

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 2, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 2, 2023 — 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

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, please join me in welcoming Annette King, the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate, to the gallery.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any further visitors for introduction?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleagues in the House to welcome three guests who are here with us today for our Yukoner Appreciation Week tribute. Also, all will be hosting a business after hours tonight at Decora in their location in Hillcrest.

With that, I would like to recognize well-known business leader Anne Lewis, with her key team member Bonnie Dixon and key team member Olivia Thompson. Please welcome them to the House today.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleagues to help welcome our visitors today here for our tribute to the MADD Red Ribbon Campaign. We have Sergeant Greg Holmberg of M Division, district advisor NCO. We have Natasha Dunmall, the NCO of M Division traffic services, and we have Constable Devon Slade.

From the MADD Whitehorse chapter, we have Jacquelyn Van Marck, the president. We have Carlos Sanchez-Aguirre. We have Daniela Ruf. We have Abigail Martinson, Layla Loughry, and Cory McEachran.

Thank you all for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukoner Appreciation Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Yukoner Appreciation Week.

Yukoner Appreciation Week is an annual event hosted by the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce that features local businesses and organizations offering customers and clients discounts, prizes, and fun activities.

This year's event will be taking place from November 2 to 4, and this is an excellent time for locals to celebrate the

Yukon's businesses while benefiting from great deals and possibly winning prizes.

The event this year in Whitehorse includes a business showcase at the Old Fire Hall featuring all sorts of Yukon businesses and a sip 'n shop event for a relaxing shopping experience. These opening events are followed by a Saturday evening local-eats event featuring some of downtown Whitehorse's finest dining.

This year's celebration also includes a new digital passport contest and three days of rotating deals and shopping incentives from participating Yukon businesses.

Yukoner Appreciation Week is often seen as a beginning of the holiday season, and it provides a great opportunity to get your gift shopping done while reconnecting with the community.

Every November, there are new businesses to discover and familiar shops with unexplored additions. It is truly an excellent time to check up on all of your favourite establishments.

I invite all Yukoners to take advantage of this occasion and to show their support for these participating businesses and to make efforts to shop local in your community. This year's Yukoner Appreciation Week events aim higher than ever to highlight our territory's business community.

It is always important to show support for our local businesses wherever you call home in the Yukon. When we support these establishments, those funds circulate through our local economy and have a far greater impact on our community vitality than dollars spent elsewhere. We have so many fantastic business owners here in the Yukon.

I am happy to see many of them participating in Yukoner Appreciation Week. Yukoners prioritize shopping local and this event is all about those businesses giving back to the community while promoting their services. So, whether you are in Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Dawson City, Watson Lake, or any other community, please get out and shop local this week.

In closing, I want to thank the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. Thank you for the breakfast this morning — the event was well-attended and I appreciated the chance to be there with them — and, once again, for coordinating these festivities and getting all of these businesses together and for all their contributions to our communities.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce Yukoner Appreciation Week. There is so much to say about all the businesses participating this year that I wish I had time to expound on them all, because they are all worthy. Kudos to the businesses that are taking part in this event to not only showcase their business but to give old customers — and entice new customers to become aware of all that our community has to offer, not to mention the possible discounts and deals.

A few weeks ago, during my Small Business Week tribute, I mentioned this week coming up in November, and here we are. November 2 to 4 — you have an opportunity to explore, sip 'n shop, dine out, and don't forget the passport contest. This

year, the contest has gone digital — two prizes. The first prize is one Air North ticket to BC or Alberta and the other is \$500 worth of gift cards from local businesses, so get out there and get entered into that draw. This morning from 7:00 to 11:00, there was a kickoff breakfast catered by Kit's Kitchen at MacBride Museum. I had the pleasure of picking up a to-go sandwich before hitting the office. It was delicious — thank you.

Having just done a tribute to the Canucks yesterday in this Chamber, I was able to buy their newly released book while at the museum, so my shopping has started. Tomorrow, Friday, November 3, there is a business showcase and the sip 'n shop event, culminating on Saturday, November 4 with the local-eats event. Get out and touch base with the participating businesses, buy local, and say thank you for opening their doors and supporting our community.

We appreciate all the sponsorship, donations, and sharing that businesses give when asked to support various charities and events. Thank you to all the sponsors, partners, and their staff for making this a special time each year, and a special thanks to the chamber for organizing and to the volunteers who give so much of their time. I, for one, hope to visit with many as I get out and about during the next few days.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Yukoner Appreciation Week and the local businesses that make our territory so vibrant. Local businesses support the Yukon. These industrious folks support events, sports teams, fundraisers, and performances. They sponsor community activities all year-round and they never stop showing up for us when we need them. They support Yukoners, and Yukoners support them.

I remember the days when flying south was a shock to your wallet and when everything was cheaper away, but that hasn't been the case for years now, as committed local business owners have worked hard to bring those costs down. Many places will price-match southern vendors and it has made the Yukon a much more affordable place to live.

The Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce has gone the extra mile to make this year's Yukoner Appreciation Week extra special, from today's breakfast at the MacBride Museum to the popular passport program that is now digital and easier than ever to access. From A to Y, from handmade jewellery to kimchi, sparkled mittens to potted plants, books to bicycles, this year's event promises to be the best local event ever. I went through the list for this year and there are a whopping 88 participating businesses registered on the Yukoner Appreciation Week app. There are draw prizes, discounts, free gifts with purchases, buy-one-get-one deals, entire stores on sale, free admissions, and even games with prizes, and you won't find better deals to finish or, in my case, maybe start your Christmas shopping.

These next days are an incredible opportunity to get out there and explore all of our local businesses. It is important to remember that local businesses enhance our community all year-round. They connect and support us socially and enhance

wealth and employment by circulating dollars many times between businesses and individuals. Local businesses create more impact by recirculating money into the Yukon economy. So, every chance you get, shop local before looking south, not just this week but all year long.

We are excited to get out there and enjoy the specials this week, and we encourage all Yukoners to do the same.

Applause

In recognition of the MADD Project Red Ribbon campaign

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize the launch of the Mothers Against Drunk Driving, also known as MADD, annual awareness campaign Project Red Ribbon, which occurs tomorrow.

MADD Whitehorse is a dedicated group whose mission is to raise awareness, to help shift our social mindset, and ultimately, to end impaired driving. The impacts of impaired driving are devastating and ripple far beyond those who are directly involved in a collision. Entire families, including my own, and entire communities are affected when we lose someone in this senseless and completely preventable manner.

I thank the Whitehorse chapter of MADD for their continued work on this extremely important issue. We are very grateful to have their active presence here in the Yukon.

As it does each year, Project Red Ribbon launches just before the always fast-approaching holiday season, and MADD Canada's Project Red Ribbon continues to be a vital campaign to raise driver and passenger awareness during this very busy time of year. While the holiday season is a time to celebrate, we must remember the impacts of the decisions that we make when we get behind the wheel and remind ourselves that it is never worth it to drive while impaired. When you drink, do not drive.

The red ribbon that we wear and tie on vehicles, keychains, briefcases, bags, or backpacks is a wonderful symbol to remind us of the commitment that we must make to drive sober. It is a commitment to each other. It is also a powerful tribute to the thousands of victims killed or injured each year in drug- and alcohol-related crashes. We must continue to stand together to remember and honour the victims and the survivors of impaired driving. We are all responsible for doing our part in keeping Yukon roads safe, and MADD's Red Ribbon campaign reminds us all that the deaths and the injuries that are a result of impairment-related crashes are not only needless but are completely preventable.

Every year, I wear my red ribbon with pride to demonstrate my commitment to safe and sober driving. I encourage everyone to wear this symbolic ribbon to make a commitment to safe and sober driving either by being a designated driver, planning ahead for a ride, or calling 911 to report impaired drivers.

It saddens me to say that the Yukon has still the third highest rate of impaired driving across Canada, making it a serious public safety concern for us all. Driving across the territory, I am always saddened to see the tributes and the roadside memorials throughout our communities. These are

tough reminders for us all and they continue to give a voice to the many who have been traumatized by impaired driving.

I would like to thank everyone who has supported and continues to support MADD Whitehorse not only for increasing public awareness through the Project Red Ribbon campaign but also for giving families, friends, victims, and survivors affected by this awful crime a public voice. I wish MADD Yukon and the Whitehorse chapter all the best and much success in this year's campaign.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Whitehorse chapter of MADD Canada as they launch their 2023 Project Red Ribbon campaign. Every year across Canada, drivers take the pledge to remain sober behind the wheel. MADD, together with the RCMP and volunteers, distribute red ribbons for drivers to display on their vehicles as a symbol and a reminder of their duty to drive safely and responsibly, free of impairment.

We have had a long and beautiful fall season, but as winter approaches, we do need to remember that road hazards increase with the season. It is important that we do everything we can to keep our roads and highways safe for all. Holiday festivities are about to begin, and I would like to remind Yukoners to make responsible decisions for their safety and that of others. Take a cab, take turns being the designated driver, and be there for your kids in case they need a ride. Make sure that they know you are only a phone call away and to never get in a vehicle with someone who has been drinking.

Again, thank you to our Whitehorse chapter of MADD Canada, to all the volunteers and organizations taking part in this year's campaign, and to the RCMP, which helps to keep our roads safe year-round. Most importantly, thank you to all of those who take the pledge to drive sober and responsibly.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP to pay tribute to Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their Red Ribbon campaign. The MADD campaign's work contributes greatly to bringing increased awareness and education for safe and sober driving. MADD also encourages all people to look out for one another and to ensure that there are plans for a safe and sober ride home.

Each year, we are able to witness the many volunteers, service providers, first responders, and First Nation leaders in numerous locations throughout Whitehorse interacting with drivers to bring more awareness to impaired driving on our roadways while also ensuring that folks are not under the influence of any substances when driving. Impaired driving impacts many across our territory. It has taken the lives of Yukoners far too soon, causing insurmountable grief for so many families and communities left behind.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving and their Red Ribbon campaign also remind us, as drivers, of the privilege we have to own a valid driver's licence and to think about the many opportunities and responsibilities we have to ensure that we are responsible drivers not only for ourselves and our families but

also for the broader community. It is through the work of MADD's many volunteers that we continue to learn about the issues of impaired driving in our territory and the ongoing work that needs to be done to prevent impaired driving.

We would like to thank the many people who volunteer with Yukon's Mothers Against Drunk Driving who have led the fight to keep our roads safe, support the victims of impaired driving, and work so hard toward no more deaths or injuries resulting from impaired driving for the time and dedication that they bring.

Thank you for all your work to keep Yukoners safe.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 24 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act*, the annual report of the Child and Youth Advocate.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have a letter dated November 2 from Opportunities Yukon.

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

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

THAT this House congratulates long-time Cross Country Yukon coach Alain Masson on his upcoming induction to the Canadian Ski Hall of Fame.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to expedite appointments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board in order to avoid loss of quorum for the board.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to condemn all forms of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to respond to the request for an increase in program funding from the board of directors of Opportunities Yukon.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**Whitehorse Emergency Shelter**

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to provide an update on the Government of Yukon's efforts to work with community partners to ensure a safe and welcoming environment for everyone in downtown Whitehorse. Since Connective and the Council of Yukon First Nations took over operation of 405 Alexander, they have served over 100,000 meals, hosted nearly 16,000 stays, distributed 11,500 harm-reduction items, and, most importantly, averted 40 overdoses. Together, the Minister of Health and Social Services and I have been working with Connective, Council of Yukon First Nations, and other partners to implement recommendations, improve outcomes for 405 Alexander clients, and work with the community to chart the way forward to enhance health, safety, and security in Whitehorse's downtown core.

Our government committed to increasing an oversight and outreach presence in downtown Whitehorse to ensure that residents and businesses feel safe and supported. Starting yesterday, November 4, Sirius Security began patrolling the area from Black Street to Strickland Street between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue. Patrols will operate Sunday to Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. and Friday and Saturday from 7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. During these patrol tours, Sirius staff will observe and report on incidents and act as a visible deterrent against loitering, vandalism, and drug use.

Patrol guards will be encouraged to interact with individuals during their tours in a friendly manner but not in an enforcement capacity. In addressing any situations involving individuals, patrol guards will respond with non-violent interventions informed by the company's social safety mandate and specialized non-violent conflict resolution training. Where these interventions are not successful in defusing situations, the RCMP may be called for support where warranted.

We informed businesses in the area yesterday of this new security opportunity and I am pleased that the opposition provided our government the opportunity to speak to all Yukoners about this today in the Legislative Assembly. This will be an initial two-month pilot project with costs covered by the Government of Yukon.

This is in addition to our partnership with Council of Yukon First Nations, which is launching a mobile downtown outreach initiative. Staffed by Yukon First Nation outreach workers and operated by Council of Yukon First Nations, the mobile downtown outreach initiative will operate similar to Winnipeg's Bear Clan Patrol, meeting individuals where and when they need them. I am proud that our government was able to contribute approximately \$300,000 to fund this project through to March 31, 2024.

We are currently exploring the possibility of using the old cafeteria in the Yukon Legislative Assembly building as one of hopefully many opportunities in our community to have a warm space to access food and services. Building tenants, including both opposition parties, will be consulted on this option and we look forward to your support. Our government feels that it is important to lead by example and create opportunities within

our community to provide safe, accessible locations where people can access services with dignity.

I want to close by reminding all Yukoners that 405 Alexander provides essential life-saving services for members of our community. I am heartened to see the collaboration that is taking place between CYFN, the RCMP, Connective, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the Government of Yukon. I want to thank all parties involved for their efforts in making our community one that is safe, supportive, and welcoming to all.

I look forward to hearing the constructive ideas and suggestions from Yukoners and from members of the opposition in response to this ministerial statement.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by emphasizing that the current situation at the shelter at 405 Alexander needs major changes, and the operating model needs to change.

Steps taken in the last few weeks are a start, but much more action is needed. Serious problems near the shelter began in 2019, when government made a political decision to take over operation and made big changes to the policies and operating model. Area residents and businesses have been experiencing negative impacts for years as a result.

Reports done for government show that the shelter is actually causing harm to many of the vulnerable clients it is supposed to be helping. Two reports released by government, by House of Wolf & Associates and Vink Consulting, show that the operation of the shelter is failing vulnerable people, as well as people and businesses near it.

Here are a few notable excerpts: Vink report: "... 38% of guests interviewed reported that their substance use has increased as a result of accessing the Shelter." "One quarter (25%) of guests interviewed believe the Shelter has had a negative impact on their health and safety crises."

The House of Wolf & Associates report notes: "... many people engage in substance use – within, and surrounding, the facility. Those attempting to reduce or control their consumption of drugs or alcohol face an uphill battle..." and "Indigenous women and girls experience increased vulnerability to gender-based violence due to specific barriers to safety..." and "While there are high rates of violence at 405 Alexander St, the gendered violence experienced by women is particularly distressing."

Lack of access to addictions treatment is also a serious, ongoing problem. Close to half of shelter clients interviewed "... indicated that they had attempted to access substance use treatment (primarily detox), but were turned away due to bed space and staffing constraints."

This government, 21 months after declaring a substance use health emergency, has done little, if anything, to increase addictions treatment. More addictions treatment options and spaces are needed. Recently, the Premier took over the shelter file from the Minister of Health and Social Services. Since then, there have been some signs that government may finally be treating this issue seriously, but as he acknowledged, it also shouldn't have taken him this long to step in.

As for specific actions, we are pleased to hear that security patrols will increase, but private security staff will likely not have the training or equipment to deal with some situations they will encounter. We urge government to also increase funding for the RCMP, including more resources to target illegal drug dealers who are harming people in communities.

With regard to the location suggested for food services, we hope the government will also be consulting with its employees and the Yukon Employees' Union about the concept and any concerns that they may have.

We are pleased to hear that government will be doing a mobile outreach pilot project with CYFN. It is clear that decentralization of some services is needed, as the reports show that the current mix of clients and services isn't working. The Premier previously told this House that everything was working well inside the shelter and today claimed that it is providing essential and life-saving services. It was notable that the Premier failed to mention that the coroner has launched an inquest into the death of four people at the shelter. We know that the families of those people are looking for answers, and that inquest may come to different conclusions than he has about how well the shelter is or is not working.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, while we are relieved to see some action being taken, much more action is still needed to help vulnerable people, including providing more access to addictions treatment, as well as to improve community safety.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I will start by telling a cautionary tale about quick fixes that do more harm than good. Shortly after the announcement of Alpine Bakery's closure, the benches in front of the emergency shelter were removed, citing concerns about disruptive gatherings. That was a month ago, and people haven't stopped gathering; they have just moved, primarily about half a block away to where there are some parking lot dividers that they can sit on, which is even closer to homes and without any proximity to the staff at the emergency shelter. This has actually made these gatherings more disruptive to the people trying to sleep in their homes and even less visible to the staff who could intervene or call for help if someone was being harmed.

Back at the shelter, clients now have nowhere to sit when they go outside. It is pretty heartbreaking to watch people with mobility issues sitting on the cement sidewalk to have a cigarette because their benches have been taken away.

With that in mind, let's turn to the current proposed solutions. We are excited to hear about CYFN's involvement in providing a culturally safe presence downtown. We have lots of questions: How will the service be different from the outreach van currently operated by Blood Ties and Kwanlin Dün First Nation? Why was a second outreach van service added rather than expanding the current one?

The Premier said that they can provide referrals to Meals on Wheels and to the RCMP. Why provide referrals to Meals instead of just providing meals, and what is a referral to the RCMP? Is it just calling them to carry out enforcement?

Next, I would like to talk about the hiring of Sirius Security Services. Here is a quote from the House of Wolf report on the

safety of the area surrounding the shelter, which was commissioned by this government — quote: "The use of traditional western security guards will be unlikely to achieve the intended goals of CYFN, Connective, and the community at large in providing accessible, visible, and culturally appropriate interventions to marginalized people."

So, why has the Premier decided to disregard this recommendation of the report that he commissioned? What will he do to mitigate these concerns? The Premier referred to Sirius Security's social safety mandate. I have read their website, and I can't find reference to that mandate. Could he share it with us? I saw that they do train their staff in non-violent conflict resolution, and I would like to know more about that. Who provides that training? How in depth is it? Does it align with the Crisis Prevention Institute of Canada's training? I would also like to know if their staff will be trained in supporting vulnerable and marginalized people. What about training in cultural competency? What about training in trauma-informed practice? If not, we are deeply concerned about the potential harm to people who have already endured lifetimes of trauma, intergenerational trauma, and marginalization.

Turning to the meal programs, we do support the efforts to decentralize shelter services through actions such as providing food at other locations. We think that this would be a great use of the cafeteria in the Legislature, assuming that trust can be built with the people who need this service to help them feel comfortable in this space. Our suggestion is that it be a blended program that offers meals for sale to those who can afford them, such as YG staff, and meals for free to people who can't afford them. This is similar to the model that used to be in place in the cafeteria at Bridges and Options for Independence. This would be a lovely way to use the space and create an integrated, welcoming community.

Finally, we have seen the news that a coroner's inquest has been called into the deaths at the shelter, as we have called for many times. We hope that this will help prevent more deaths and help to bring closure for families. Our thoughts are with the grieving families, friends, and communities who have been affected by these losses. We hope that the government will work to make sure that these families are supported during this difficult time.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Colonialism, intergenerational trauma, the substance use health emergency, the national housing shortage, and the impacts of global inflation are bigger than all of us, but again, we all have a role to play in helping our fellow citizens. We must not forget that clients of 405 Alexander are family members, friends, community members, and loved ones. I do appreciate the words of support from the Member for Lake Laberge, and I do also appreciate some of the recommendations from the Member for Whitehorse Centre. I do believe that this is an issue that should rise above partisan politics, and I appreciate today that there were some critical comments, and I think that's more than fair, but I also do think that there were some good concepts as well.

I think it's also important to be very transparent and say — look, it was heartbreaking to hear from Walter and Silvia that

their situation has been made too difficult for them to continue operating their beloved bakery and that they would be pausing operations for the next few months as they decide what to do. Again, we've heard from many, many Yukoners on this. We know that there is going to be a sense of community that will be felt — that will be lost, and this week, it is important to note what they have contributed and, hopefully, that they will be reopening in the future.

In addition to the actions that I mentioned earlier, government is working with partners to create better outcomes for everyone in our community, and these include expanding the number of locations where community outreach workers are available, shifting the hours of the supervised consumption site to be more accessible when people need the facility, and removing privacy benches along Alexander, which was encouraging gathering and making work more challenging for EMS and RCMP.

It is a complex conversation. On one hand, we want individuals who are entering that facility to use services and to feel comfortable doing so, and sometimes, where congregations were out front, that did not happen. We are very live to the fact that traditional western security would not work, from the report, and that is why that western security model is not being used directly there at the centre, and that is why we are using a non-traditional approach, which is the partnership the Member for Whitehorse Centre questioned with CYFN. So, ensuring that we have individuals who understand the community, who can support the community, working in that area but yet the businesses feeling comfortable and supported with a more traditional model away from the centre.

We are continuing to support clients in finding permanent housing by providing assistance in navigating the Yukon Housing Corporation's intake process. We are continuing to work with community partners to further decentralize services, where appropriate, and to launch a managed alcohol program for those who need it. It is also important to note that, last year, when we talked — over the years, we were up into 525 to 530 on our housing wait-list. That is now down to just a little over 300 at the same time. So, we are helping folks.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we know that the work is not done. I appreciate that there are some positive comments and some good ideas, which we will take into consideration, and some recommendations on consultation here with the cafeteria and for giving us an opportunity to share this information with Yukoners today.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Atlin hydro expansion project

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, one of the projects that the Liberals have banked our energy future on is the Atlin hydro project. One year ago today, on November 2, 2022, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told the Legislature that the Atlin hydro project was on track to come online in 2024. Then, earlier this year, on April 18, the minister told the Legislature that it was anticipated to be online in 2025.

So, what is the latest timeline for this project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite knows as well that there is a funding shortfall. The Atlin project has been led by the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership. There is ongoing work that they are doing in planning and preparation, but there is a funding shortfall. What needs to happen is to see that funding gap closed in order for that project to move ahead, so the timelines are dependent on when that funding gap is closed or if it is.

We have worked in support of the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation in conversations with the federal government, the British Columbia government, and us in looking to close that funding gap.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, there was a funding gap last year as well, but the minister was quite definitive with the timeline, as he was earlier this year.

Speaking to the media yesterday, the minister shared that the funding gap for the Atlin hydro project is about \$60 million, which is, of course, a significant shortfall. But during one of his many trips outside of the territory this year, the Premier visited Ottawa in May and met with several federal Cabinet ministers. Following his trip, the Premier claimed that he had secured — in his words — a “strong commitment” on the Atlin hydro project. The Premier said — quote: “Atlin was one of the bigger ones that we were focused on...”

Can the Premier tell us how much of that funding gap has been filled with the so-called “strong commitment” that he secured from the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, when I talked to the media yesterday, I said that we were continuing to work on closing that funding gap. I said that it had been \$60 million, and I said that I would turn back to the Development Corporation, the Energy Corporation, and Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership to ascertain what that funding gap is. We do continue to look. I will read back through my comments here in the Assembly. I think I have always talked about that funding gap and I've talked about what kind of timeline we would need once that funding gap is closed, but I have always said that we may not have it.

I also said to the media yesterday that, with respect to Yukon Energy, I have asked them to do planning if there is an Atlin hydro project moving ahead, and I have asked them to do planning if there is not, because we cannot be sure about Atlin and whether it moves ahead. But what we are sure about is that we want to continue to invest in renewable energy projects to serve the Yukon as the territory grows.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, what I am hearing now from the minister is that the funding gap may be higher than \$60 million — possibly substantially higher — and that he is looking into it. It doesn't sound like a very strong commitment that the Premier was able to secure from the federal government. It sounds like this project is yet again in limbo and possibly in jeopardy altogether.

Yesterday in his comments to the media, the minister left the door open to the Yukon government contributing more money to this project. So far, they have committed \$50 million.

How much more in taxpayer dollars is the Yukon government willing to put into this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, there are a few other items that I think we should touch on. First, what was announced in last year's budget by the federal government was a new mechanism whereby shareholders in renewable energy projects would have the potential of a 15percent rebate on their investment. What we had been asking — and part of the discussion in the springtime — was: How would that mechanism work for the Taku River Tlingit and for Tlingit Homeland Energy?

Part of what has happened is that there have been direct conversations between Natural Resources Canada and the proponent on that subject and they are trying to see how that mechanism could play into the business model, and then that would give us a sense of what the capital request would be. It could be less, depending on if a partner comes in, or it could be, as the minister said, in that range. That is a key piece.

We have asked and we continue to see support. I actually had a discussion today at 12:30 with Minister Wilkinson, who is the lead on the file, on a number of subjects — of course, voicing our concern around the announcement last week, ensuring that there are good mechanisms in place for programs here, but also ensuring that Atlin stays as a priority.

Also, last Friday, I had an opportunity to meet with Minister Cullen — of course, Atlin is his riding — with the BC government and Premier Eby, focusing again on the fact that we want to see their commitment stay, and they have voiced that their financial commitment is absolutely going to stay.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on electricity rates

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources confirmed what we have been saying for years. He said — quote: “We will always, as an islanded grid, require thermal backup, which includes diesel and LNG...” — “always” being the operative word there, Mr. Speaker — and we absolutely agree. We will always need reliable, dependable backup.

My question is simple: If we will always require thermal backup, then why does it make sense to rent that backup instead of owning it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, there is a difference between a backup and capacity top-up. So, if what we're doing around capacity is covering off short-term needs or shorter term needs, then we might not always want that diesel there. For example, once the battery system comes online, we think it will displace four diesel generators. You wouldn't want to build a plant with those four diesel generators and then build the battery plant and then be stuck with those four diesel generators not working.

There is a difference between backup — and I have said that we will always need backup here. I don't think that I have ever not said that we need backup, and the most likely backup is thermal, which is LNG and/or diesel, but when it comes to the capacity, we may need some temporary diesels. They are the quickest to get.

By the way, we are 92-percent renewable on the grid this year and that is accounting for all of the growth. The Yukon is growing super fast — we heard the new stats that are out — and we are also moving all of the energy across onto electric, and meanwhile, we continue to supply over 90-percent renewables despite that growth.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, forever is not temporary.

Earlier this year, the minister provided the figures of how much has been spent on rented diesel generators. Since the Liberals made the decision to cancel the construction of a new thermal plant in 2018, they have spent more than \$26 million on rentals, according to the minister. But this year, for the first time, Yukoners are going to get to see the results of those decisions on their power rates. According to the rate application currently before the Utilities Board, diesel rental cost increases are a major rate increase driver. In fact, YEC's application attributes more than 20 percent of the total rate increase to the rental cost increases. Yesterday, the minister incorrectly stated that this wasn't true, so I hope that he has had a chance to finally go ahead and read that GRA.

Will the minister now admit that the Liberal decision to rent diesel generators forever is directly causing an increase in Yukoners' power rates?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No intention to rent diesel generators forever — we will need backup over the long term. But in terms of the capacity difference, then we may choose short term as better. What the energy utility does is look at the levelized cost of capacity, and they have been in here and acted as witnesses and have said to the members opposite that it is 20 percent more expensive to build the plant than to do the diesel gensets as rentals. But the members opposite don't want to listen to that.

When it comes to the general rate application, there are a whole bunch of things that are in there: Whitehorse interconnection project, the Riverside substation, transmission line replacement, Aishihik five-year licence renewal, demand-side management programs, independent power producer purchases of electricity — yes, there are rental diesels in there and also the infrastructure for those rental diesels. There are a whole bunch of things that are in there, including inflation, the growth of our whole energy system, and the upgrade of the system overall, so there are a lot of things in front of us.

By the way, the members opposite said yesterday that there is a 14-percent increase. What we are saying is that the bill increase for Yukoners will be six percent.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the GRA is clear that the power rate increase will be 14.11 percent.

I am glad to see that the minister has read the GRA now and can correct his incorrect statements from yesterday.

To be fair to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, though, this didn't start under his watch; it started under the Premier's. Back when the Liberals scrapped the plan for a new thermal plant, the Premier said it was good news. In reference to the plan to rent diesels, he said — quote: “We believe it's a good investment.” Well, the new Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has now told us that we will be relying on

thermal backup forever and that the \$26 million that we have spent so far is just the beginning.

My question for the Premier is: Does he still think that renting diesel generators forever is a good investment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, this is what I can say to Yukoners. When the Yukon Energy Corporation went out and asked Yukoners what they wanted to see — did they want to see a renewable energy future or a massive diesel plant? Overwhelmingly, the people we represent in this House said: Don't build a diesel plant. First of all, you can call it political, but Yukoners said that they don't want this. Actually, I remember receiving a letter from the Member for Lake Laberge saying: Don't build this plant. So, again, we flip-flop all over.

In the 2021 election, I sat next to the Leader of the Official Opposition, and the response from that leader was: I'm going to do your entire renewable plan and I'm going to build a diesel plant.

What would that have done to the rates? That would be an interesting cost to every Yukoner right now. Luckily, we didn't have to deal with that. We are not doing an entire renewable plan and building a new diesel plant. We are using the money and funds that we have that can offset the costs to Yukoners by building renewables on Haeckel Hill, in Beaver Creek, in Destruction Bay, and throughout the Yukon — something that the members opposite could not figure out how to unlock. The ire always comes up, but they could not figure it out. They could not get IPP in place and they couldn't get renewable projects built. We did it. That's what Yukoners wanted and that's what we will do.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, access to a family doctor continues to be a major challenge for health care in the Yukon. As recently as today, we heard from someone who has been on the wait-list for four years now. Right now, people without a primary care provider are forced to go to the emergency department even for something as simple as a prescription renewal. Others avoid the emergency department until health problems become so severe that they require emergency treatment or admission to the hospital. When someone doesn't have access to primary care, it's a cancer diagnosis that can be missed until it's too late, it's a knee surgery that could have been avoided for another 10 years, it's diabetes that could have been prevented or better managed — it's all the things that impact Yukoners' well-being.

How many people are still on the wait-list for a family doctor or a primary care provider?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. I do have a figure here, which I will find and provide. Too many is the short answer, in my view and in the view of the officials who are working with the Yukon Medical Association and the committee with respect to dealing with the health human resources crisis, which is the greatest crisis facing the health care system in the world, frankly. Since COVID, we have been impacted by people changing their plans for a career, we have had retirements, and we have had

individuals change opportunities. However, in the Yukon, we have managed to maintain a strong, healthy physician roster.

I am extremely proud of the work that we are doing with the Yukon Medical Association. I look forward to attending their annual general meeting tomorrow. I can also indicate that we have itinerant physicians who are assigned and visit every community outside of Whitehorse. The number that I have recollected is a little over 3,500 people.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP is proud to have negotiated the opening of a walk-in clinic through the confidence and supply agreement. That agreement requires this government to open the walk-in clinic by January 2024. This is a critical option for Yukoners without a family doctor. It's giving them hope that they will be able to see a doctor soon, without having to spend hours in the emergency department.

How many health professionals have confirmed that they will be participating in the walk-in clinic in January? Specifically, how many doctors, nurses, and other health professionals will be available to see walk-in patients?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the walk-in clinic that will be stood up for Yukoners to assist in their primary health care — either individuals who don't have a primary health care provider assigned to them or who need to see a medical professional outside of their normal course of attending their own doctor's office, if that's necessary — and the impact that it will have on the emergency medical services at the Whitehorse General Hospital are all aspects of a walk-in medical clinic that will be of benefit to Yukoners. We look forward to providing that as soon as possible.

I think the member opposite will know that the expression of interest for individuals to staff the Whitehorse walk-in clinic has not yet been released, so I don't have an answer to the question that she has asked here today. I can indicate that we are working with the Yukon Medical Association to design such a clinic, including with three individual physicians who are guiding the necessity for what that clinic needs to look like and how it will operate to serve Yukoners.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the *Canadian Family Physician* journal reported that a fee-for-service payment model is a deterrent for doctors to set up their practice. Even locums — fly-in/fly-out doctors — are avoiding the Yukon because of this system. It's another barrier to ending the shortage, and this is something that is under the control of this government. Fee-for-service is complex and it takes hours of a doctor's time to fill in the paperwork. Many new doctors want to work in family medicine but don't specifically because of fee-for-service. What payment model will the walk-in clinic follow, and how is this government making sure that this model is attractive for family doctors?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to answer the last part of that question first. We are designing a walk-in clinic with the benefits and expertise of family doctors here in the territory and the Yukon Medical Association — all of whom are very mindful of the options that are available.

The necessity for the expertise and the kind of work that is provided at walk-in clinics, the patient issues that will come before them, the necessity for the need for support staff and

physical location and physical design — all of these things are incredibly important to the success of a walk-in clinic, going forward. That is why we are working with them.

The member opposite may not have heard an answer I gave yesterday during debate, which was that we are meeting monthly with the Yukon Medical Association. Our officials work very closely with them, and this is one of the items, of course, on the agenda every time, and we look forward to meeting the goals put forward by this committee and having that operation serve Yukoners.

Question re: Health care CASA commitments

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Minister of Health and Social Services. Last year, I tabled a motion calling for the creation of a refundable tax credit for fertility treatment and surrogacy expenses. At the time, the minister said that a tax credit was not a good idea but that she would ask officials to look into it.

Can the minister tell us what work has been done to create a refundable tax credit for fertility and surrogacy expenses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much — exactly what I have said in the past here in the Legislature, with respect to the issues of providing families in the Yukon who are having difficulties with fertility medical issues the support that they need going forward is, in fact, being done. Investigations and research into what the options are across Canada — how those might apply here in the territory, how they can best serve Yukoners, whether or not a program of a tax refund or whether or not — which only really truly benefits people who make enough money in order to qualify for a tax refund, which is what my previous comments were related to, and I still support that.

The Minister of Finance and I have our officials working on this. We have met about it several times, and we look forward to providing a program that supports Yukoners — all Yukoners — who might have fertility issues and be able to support them with benefits that will financially make issues of fertility more affordable.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I would also note that the creation of a refundable tax credit was a commitment in the health care section of CASA. Another commitment in that section was to consider hemodialysis services — in particular, the commitment was to look at the NWT model.

Can the minister tell us what work has been done on this commitment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, that is clearly a new question. I will, of course, entertain it, if I can do it that way. Whether or not that is a new question is for the Clerk and Speaker to determine.

Nonetheless, I guess it is a health question, so we are in the ballpark — maybe.

Yeah, I do have an answer. I do. I have an answer, Mr. Speaker.

The hemodialysis working group has been set up — the details of the research and the investigation with respect to what system exists in the Northwest Territories — and broader research is actually being done with respect to that, also, which

is what is being done in other small jurisdictions in Canada to provide these kinds of services to Yukoners.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, another commitment in the health care section of CASA was to make funding available to Yukoners to seek out-of-territory treatment when Government of Yukon services are at capacity. We have heard that current detox services are often at capacity and that some people have been turned away.

How much additional funding has the minister provided for out-of-territory detox treatment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am really happy to hear all of these questions loosely related to CASA, because it's clear that the Yukon Party also made a commitment to be supportive of CASA, so they are clearly also supportive of all of these programs. I look forward to seeing their support in votes for our budget, because that is exactly how these programs are funded.

The information with respect to this program is necessary going forward. The opportunities for Yukoners to benefit with respect to not only the hemodialysis program but also the other CASA programs — we've committed to that. That work is being done.

I look forward to further questions, if necessary, on how we are doing that work. When that work is available for public announcement, we look forward to doing so — perhaps in a ministerial statement.

Question re: Watson Lake continuing care services

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the community of Watson Lake has been pushing for a new long-term continuing care facility for years. Despite this, the Liberal government has refused to respond to this request. In fact, the minister did not even come to the public meeting that was held to discuss it. Instead, in November of last year, the minister announced that they would convert existing beds in the hospital into long-term care beds. At the time, the minister said that they would open very soon; however, it has been a year now, and it seems that these beds are still not open.

Can the minister explain why, a year after making the announcement, the long-term care beds she promised in Watson Lake still aren't open?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I did look forward to us providing the care beds in Watson Lake. Mr. Speaker, as you and other members of the Yukon public may recall, that commitment was made. Then we began to do the work with respect to floating this idea with the Town of Watson Lake, and we were told that this was not what they wanted us to pursue. As a result, we are continuing to do the work that is necessary with the community for the purpose of doing that.

The other thing I should note is that we have been working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to integrate two long-term care beds — that was the original plan in Watson Lake — but we have been advised that, through community engagement, that was not an option that was of interest to the Town of Watson Lake. Feedback and concerns were brought forward, and we are continuing to do the work necessary to do so.

I look forward to answering a few more questions with respect to this, if they are on topic. I would be happy to do that. What I do note is that long-term care is a commitment here in the territory, and it is serving Yukoners very well. I will take the opportunity next time.

Ms. McLeod: Well, the question begs to be asked why the minister did not consult before she made an announcement.

In November of last year, the minister did a press release announcing that there would be 4.5 full-time-equivalent LPNs providing 24-hour support, seven days a week, at the two long-term care beds in Watson Lake. That has not happened. Neither of those beds opened.

Can the minister tell my community when the long-term continuing care services that she promised last year will be available?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I should go back, because I think it is important that Yukoners have all of the information and that sometimes — oh, regularly — they don't get that in these kinds of questions.

I was invited, on less than 24 hours' notice, to attend the public meeting that the member opposite is mentioning in Watson Lake. It is quite true that I was unavailable to do that; I look forward to doing one in the future.

The opening of two long-term care beds in Watson Lake, as was anticipated as part of the Yukon hospital and the Watson Lake hospital facility, is on hold as we seek to best understand the local needs and values that will inform planning delivery of future programming. The commitment by our government is making all communities across the Yukon support aging in place as best we can, based on the community feedback. In Watson Lake, it was presented as one of the options. Certainly, I don't think that anyone expected that it would not be the chosen path by the community. As a result, this project is still being investigated.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, of course, this has been a consistent problem with this government. They are quick to make announcements and quick to issue press releases, but then they are slow to act and actually deliver. Why would the minister announce the opening of long-term continuing care services in my community when there was no clear timeline on when those services would be available?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to sit with the citizens of Watson Lake, and what I can reflect on are some key points that they shared with me. The first was that, under the Yukon Party government, a number of individuals — seniors from the community — were actually taken on a plane and flown to Haines Junction so that they could see what the Yukon Party was building in Haines Junction and then promised — promised by my friends across the way — that they would get the same thing, which they never got. So, what is the timeline on that? I think we are about a decade out on that.

Secondly, there was no consultation and Whistle Bend was built. When there was a chance to build more in Watson Lake, while the Yukon Party was in government, that didn't get done.

So, I sat and asked those individuals, very good supporters and friends of the member opposite: Why didn't you ever have

that opportunity? Why weren't you listened to? Why, for that decade and a half, were things not delivered? Their hands were thrown up into the air.

Look, we know very clearly that there was an expectation that was built over a decade. Think about that — being brought on a plane to Haines Junction and told: This is what we will build for you. It was never built. The member opposite is not respecting the fact that we want to see those beds in place. There is another vision that the town has. We will work with the town, but we will work to deliver and not just build hopes and let them collapse, like we saw under the previous government.

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

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Community Services — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and we welcome both Matt and John back, and we will get into it.

As I was saying on October 23, there is a lot to unpack in my colleagues' opposition to our ongoing investment in rural Yukon and improvements to waste management in the territory.

These improvements are part of our efforts to deliver on the commitments in the Yukon's nation-leading *Our Clean Future* plan: to reduce society's garbage production and greenhouse gas emissions, to meet our targets laid out in the nation-leading plan, which we have, in partnership with the members opposite, set at 45 percent by 2030.

Further, I would remind the members that the landfill improvements were requested by Yukoners and Yukon municipalities. They wanted us to introduce a price on garbage to reduce the amount we produce. They sought better management of our landfills. They sought investment in our communities to ensure that their landfills are controlled and supervised and that those contracts or wages stay in the communities, making them more prosperous. They wanted unsupervised transfer stations closed in favour of supervised regional landfills. We are fortunately seeing lots of support from municipalities in delivering those long-sought and necessary improvements. I believe that it is good news.

The member opposite has publicly said that it's not good news at all. In fact, she has publicly called the initiative "dumb", a remark not lost on those who have promoted and worked to achieve these improvements for more than a decade.

At this point, it bears noting that the members opposite endorsed a climate emergency. The term "emergency" elevates a matter and makes it a priority that we must tackle right away above all other considerations. Time and again, the Third Party has been a drag on action. We wanted to get the Better Buildings program underway immediately and we were forced to pause that important work to ensure that municipalities first received an increased service fee. I was painfully disappointed that negotiating a service fee came before a decisive action to get Yukoners low-interest loans to make their homes more energy efficient.

I felt worse when inflation started to rise and action to help Yukoners heat their homes more cheaply had been delayed by so long for such a reason. I felt worse when interest rates rose and a great deal turned less so, hurting all Yukoners but low-income folks most of all.

Now we want to improve landfills, better managing them to, among other things, reduce the production of greenhouse gases such as methane. The NDP are intent on stopping our investment in rural Yukon's landfills to continue an untenable management practice of having unsupervised sites across the Yukon where waste oils, construction waste, old gas and diesel engines, transmissions, and expired propane canisters can be unconscionably dumped without challenge — where people can dump garbage and avoid tipping fees, consciously subverting the polluter-pay principle. How do you square that with our climate emergency?

I understand that a change of a decades-old waste practice is difficult. I know that changing behaviour is hard, that it comes with a cost, that such change can be inconvenient and hard to reckon with, and that people subjected to that change will bristle and don't want it. I get it, but in a climate emergency, we're asking all members of society to contribute to part of the solution. Do I take this action lightly? No, absolutely not. First of all, if we are making people pay for a

service like garbage disposal, we can't have places where it's free. That undermines the whole system; it just doesn't work.

Second — and perhaps more importantly — we have declared that climate emergency, and that makes cutting pollution for the sake of the climate more important than anything else — more important, certainly, than retaining a few unsupervised sites. At such times, everyone must make efforts to address the issue at hand, which is protecting our environment and taking action against climate change. These are goals laid out in our nation-leading plan to deal with the emergency — in this case, *Our Clean Future*. If you don't prioritize this, can you call it an emergency? I don't think you can.

Make no mistake, Madam Chair — we are seeking, through investments in rural Yukon, improved landfill management to reduce pollution and garbage and to help curb greenhouse gas emissions. This is one small measure toward helping us reach the target of a 45-percent reduction by 2030. As I have noted, in the confidence and supply agreement, the NDP insisted on a 45-percent target, and as difficult as that target is, we agreed, and we know that, to hit that target, we have to take extraordinary steps. Every smidge of progress matters, and this is one of those tiny steps.

Ms. White: It appears that the minister has more notes in his speech, and if he would like to finish it, I am happy to allow him to go on and then I'll ask my questions when he is done.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for that. Now that we are taking steps to meet the target requested, the NDP appear to be working against efforts to get there.

When we left off, the member opposite had just read remarks from a letter critical of me into the record. I get it. That's fine, but the member did not read the whole letter.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on a point of order.

Ms. White: As a point of order, that was misrepresenting — I'm not sure, but Standing Order 19 — I did actually read the entire letter into the record.

Chair: The Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I am sure that the Minister of Community Services will explain what he means about not reading the entire letter. I think you just have to give him the chance to do that.

Chair's ruling

Chair: I believe this is a dispute between members.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There were a number of reasons for the letter — five of them that we could count.

The first one was that the closure of unsupervised sites poses an undue hardship on residents and businesses. Well, first of all, businesses should not be using the sites; they are for

residents. Businesses should be contracting commercial garbage collection and building that service into the cost of their businesses, as most Yukon businesses already do.

Some businesses are using them, which is fundamentally unfair to businesses that are properly paying for garbage-disposal services. As for residents, we are committed to working with them — and have been all along — to make the transition easier. We have a commitment to do so under the confidence and supply agreement. I take that commitment that we made seriously, which is why we are holding a workshop with residents in a couple of weeks on this very issue to come up with workable solutions to make the transition to this new model easier for residents.

Ultimately, the goal will be that residents in places across the territory will bring their garbage to communities where they already buy groceries or buy gas or get other services and will get rid of their garbage at a regional landfill station that is served with a supervisor and is properly controlled in those regions. This, again, is what was asked for by municipalities.

Second is that the greenhouse gas emissions will be increased. No, we don't believe that this is correct. Residents living around the transfer stations already have to commute for gas and groceries where regional landfills will be located.

Third — the letter raised the issue of harmful wildlife interactions. Techniques to store garbage in rural Yukon are well-established among residents in areas where there are no unsupervised transfer stations. Community Services is working with residents of affected communities to find ways to limit this possible problem.

Fourth — will trash be increased in places it shouldn't be? Already, waste oils and other harmful garbage are being dumped where it shouldn't at the unsupervised transfer stations. Even in as late as October, we have evidence of a lot of garbage being dumped at places like Braeburn and Pelly Crossing, which is actually going to become a regional landfill that will be supervised and well-managed. But we are seeing, in the unsupervised state, waste oils being dumped there. We have seen transmissions, fuel tanks, and garbage from commercial operations being dumped there where nobody can see where it is happening or see who is doing it. This is the exact problem that we are trying to solve.

Trash is already increasing in places that it shouldn't be — at the transfer stations. In other areas where we have regional landfills in place, we haven't seen an increase in illegal dumping. There are always going to be scofflaws — but a whole ton of this? We are not seeing it. We have also increased fines to deal with those who would actually sully our pristine territory.

The fifth issue that was addressed in the letter is that fire danger will increase as residents burn garbage. There is no evidence to suggest this in other areas of the territory.

For now, I will end my comments there and go on to other questions, but I wanted to address those issues here today.

Ms. White: In the minister's last two statements, he didn't actually respond to the one thing that he committed to on the last day, on October 23. Just before he moved to report progress, he said — and I quote: "As far as the hundred-odd

signatures, I will have more to say about that at a future time." So, I was wondering if the minister could tell me what he was going to say about the 119 folks who signed the letter that I did read in its entirety into the record?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, Madam Chair, I will have more to say on that at a future time.

Ms. White: Can the minister elaborate on when — at a future time — he would like to talk about the 119 people who signed that letter?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Not at this time, Madam Chair.

Ms. White: Well, I guess I look forward to when the minister would like to talk about the 119 folks who did sign that letter about this closure of the Silver City transfer station.

The interesting thing is that there were actually lots of different sentiments at the meeting in Silver City that I attended, and I wanted to know if the minister had any feedback from some of the suggestions or some of the comments that folks made.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Right now, as I have said earlier this afternoon, we are in the process of holding a workshop with residents of Silver City. It was scheduled previously, but at residents' request, we actually delayed it. We are going to have experts there to work with the residents. That is a process that is going on. I look forward to hearing what comes out of that meeting — the workshop that we have with residents. I am not going to get in the way of that meeting and anticipate what suggestions or solutions may be proposed at that meeting.

Ms. White: I appreciate that the minister is not going to get in the way of the next meeting, but there were certainly some challenges with comments he made in the media prior to the last one.

One of the things that residents said that I think is really important — the minister continues to say that folks who access those rural transfer stations don't want to pay, which is actually untrue. They have said multiple times that they are happy to pay, but they don't think that it makes sense to have to pay every time they go. They have suggested things like putting it on their property taxes. Does the minister have any thoughts on that?

I have correspondence — I am sure that the minister has seen it — from folks in Johnsons Crossing saying that they have no problem paying. I have information from others who say that it is not an issue of paying, it is an issue of access. Does the minister have any thoughts about that? So, it is not an issue of free; it is an issue of proximity.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said earlier in my remarks this afternoon, the whole principle behind this is a polluter-pay principle, so you pay for the garbage you have. So, when you come to a landfill, you are actually hit with not even the full cost but a portion of the cost of the garbage you produce. I think that is an important principle as part of this project. It is certainly important to the municipalities that were part of the backbone of designing it. So, that is really the principle under which this program will go ahead.

As for the comments from previous meetings, there will be a "what we heard" document put together. It hasn't come together yet, and I haven't seen it, but once I see that, I will

certainly have a lot more idea about what was said at those meetings from the residents, and we will have more to say on that.

Ms. White: I guess the reason why I am asking if the minister was aware of comments that were made at these meetings is that it seems unfair to say that people in rural Yukon who access transfer stations aren't willing to pay for their trash when they have said very clearly at those meetings that they are willing to pay for their trash. Does the minister think it's fair, as a reflection, to say that this is why people are upset that their transfer stations are closing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To begin with, as I said, this is a transition. This is a new model. It's a new way of doing business. It's a model based on standards and on controls that will help improve — help our management of all the garbage — the tremendous piles of garbage that we create as a society in this territory. So, as part of that, there is a user-pay model. I cannot say that I have explicitly said that everybody in rural Yukon is averse to paying for it. I don't think that is the case. I think there is generally a shift here, though, to a different model that will be, in some cases, less convenient for people living in some rural Yukon areas.

The operating standards that we are working under promote consistency across the solid-waste facilities, in terms of services offered to the public, as well as consistency in the operation and maintenance of solid-waste facilities. Regional agreements require the implementation of best practices at each regional facility. Those practices include controlled access, like gates, and operating hours that are consistent, attendants, and fees for waste disposal and removal of organics from the waste stream, which is key to us controlling the amount of greenhouse gases coming from our landfills. These practices reduce environmental risk. They extend the life of our landfills, which are very expensive to both commission and decommission, and they reduce the costs associated with liabilities — the insurance, the cost that municipalities incur in running these things and will have to book going forward.

The user-pay systems assign waste costs to individuals creating the waste — be it a business, a not-for-profit, or an individual. These systems include stewardship programs, such as the beverage container regulation and the designated material regulation, the implementation of tipping fees, and implementation of an extended producer responsibility. This is all part of the whole system that we are creating here through this shift in investment and improvement to our regional waste landfills.

So, the reality is that communities — very small communities — just do not have the base needed to support a regional landfill; they don't have the critical mass, and the places where the regional landfills are going are communities that can support these initiatives. If we continue to retain an area within 50 or 60 kilometres of a regional landfill where you can do it for free, people will drive that distance to get around the fee. That is just human nature. We have seen it in around Whitehorse; we see it other places, and that is why municipalities have asked for this, because they really do not want to see any unsupervised, uncontrolled waste going to their

regional landfill, where oils or PCB-laced materials or whatever they are cost municipalities an awful lot to send down to Alberta to dispose of. Municipalities do not want to incur that cost from people who are not even residents. It is an un-needed cost, and it is one of the reasons why this system was proposed by the Association of Yukon Communities.

Ms. White: I have pointed out that people have said — and I have attended, at this point in time, approximately nine or so hours of consultation meetings on transfer stations — electronically, in-person, and others — and at every one of those meetings, people have said that they are willing to pay. So, that is the first thing. The second thing that they have said is: Put up a gate; go ahead and put up a gate. And they have said: Make sure that there is a gate and that only residents who are supposed to have access to the facility have access to the facility. So, give us a key, and we'll get there.

The response has been: That is not fair to Whitehorse. So, can the minister help me understand how, in these transfer stations that are not off the highway, that are not visible, that are being used by community members — can the minister help me understand why, if there was a gate, having keys with community members would not be fair to Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What I will say this afternoon is that this is a live conversation with residents in these areas. We have a workshop at Silver City in a couple of weeks. I'm not going to predict any of the solutions that may come from these meetings, but my officials are working, as directed by me, under the confidence and supply agreement, to continue working with and talking to communities. They are doing that, and I await to see what the results of these talks are.

Ms. White: Although I appreciate that answer from the minister, he continues to say that people in rural Yukon have said that they aren't interested in paying — which is untrue. I've pointed that out — they have said that. They have suggested gates. The minister can't tell me why that's unfair for Whitehorse. The other thing that's quite interesting is that they said that they would be very happy to separate — so much so that, in Silver City, they have asked for recycling experts as well as a composting expert to go out.

So, now we know, in rural Yukon, that rural Yukoners are willing to separate their waste. They are willing to pay for the privilege of disposing their waste. They have said that they agree to gates. They have even gone as far as saying that they would volunteer, if it was required, to keep the transfer station open so that they could unlock the gate on certain days. Does the minister see any movement there, that there is a possibility of working with communities to keep these facilities or similar facilities and similar services available for rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I have said this afternoon, this is a live conversation, and I'm not going to get ahead of it.

Ms. White: Then to confirm that, if this is a live conversation, does that mean that the minister won't do media interviews on this prior to those meetings in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Far be it for me to predict what the media is going to ask me and when.

Ms. White: Well, I am hopeful so that it is easier for the officials when they go out.

So, the minister was just talking about Better Buildings, which I think is interesting, so I'm just going to go back a little bit in time. In order for the program to work, do municipalities have to sign on to be part of the Better Buildings program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, as a matter of fact, municipalities have signed on and would have had to sign on for the Better Buildings program. The unincorporated Yukoners — those who are not in communities — could have had the benefit of this program immediately, as soon as the program was built, but we had to delay that to deal with municipalities, which was the decision that we took. As I said, I found it painful.

Ms. White: What I found painful during that time was the fact that the minister actually hadn't gone out to have conversations with municipalities or municipal mayors and councils. The reason I say this is that I believe that amounts are now — and the minister confirmed this for me on October 23 when we were here — is that now Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson City are able, when they put this program out, to get \$500 a year to administer the program. Smaller municipalities get \$200 a year to administer the program.

Can the minister remind me what the initial number was that he brought forward? What was he proposing that municipalities be able to collect in order to run that program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yeah, I mean — we are where we are, but the member opposite is taken in the Wayback Machine, so we will do that. What happened in this House — in this Chamber — was that we had a piece of legislation that we had brought forward and were looking to pass to get the authority to build the program and deal with municipalities. We were asked to hit pause to get the deal in with municipalities in an uncertain time before we had the legislation passed, which paused the entire project. We weren't able to build the project until we had the legislative authority to do so, and that was delayed for several months — a whole season — that could have been used to build the project and bring the municipalities online. That is the delay I am talking about; that is what happened.

I am — I was disheartened at that delay because it really did deprive people — it pushed our program back and, in the end, we have seen higher inflation and higher interest rates, and that would have saved some Yukoners quite a bit of money had we been able to implement this program faster during a climate emergency. That is what I am saying, Madam Chair.

Ms. White: What I found disheartening in that entire process was the lack of the minister's ability to work with municipalities to find a path forward. The unfortunate truth is that telling a municipality that you are going to collect \$500 for 15 years of running a program, which works out to \$33 and some change a year —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Ms. White: Per year.

It was not initially per year.

The Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is speaking off mic.

I have asked for clarification. Actually, I will sit down and maybe the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources can let the

Minister of Community Services know what the initial program amount was going to be per year for municipalities.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It sounds like we were both disappointed.

The bottom line, Madam Chair, is that we had the delay; the costs are what the costs are; the uptake on the program is what the uptake is. The reality is that we have a number of municipalities that have come on board the program. I was able to work with municipalities and we got them on the program. They are getting paid the stipend that they asked for. We are going to review that stipend after three years to make sure that it is meeting the needs and is actually doing what it is intended to do. All in all, the program is launched; we have municipalities on there; I have had support from municipalities; we got letters of support for the work that we did.

That is where we are at today. As I have said a couple of times, my regret is that it was delayed so long.

Ms. White: I am happy to go to the Wayback Machine, because I think it's important.

My regret would have been, at the time, having to vote against a piece of legislation that I do support because of the minister's unwillingness to work with others. It's okay. We got it through and now municipalities have signed on, which I think is important.

I am going to ask for more information around the Better Buildings program. Can the minister let me know how many applications to date have been made?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Since the program launched on October 25, the Energy branch has received 55 applications from clients wishing to participate.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

Out of those 55 applications, how many have been approved so far?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have 49 projects approved, but work has not yet started. We have two completed and five in progress.

Ms. White: Can the minister let me know what the total dollar value is of those successful applications?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The total committed finances for the Better Buildings program is \$292,000, and we paid out \$111,000.

Ms. White: Out of the applications that have been submitted but not approved, what is the expected dollar value of those applications?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We don't have that number now and we won't have it for a while. We have 49 projects approved where the value of the work has not yet been determined. They are up to \$50,000 per project per individual, so that gives you an idea, but we have no idea what work the applicants are going to do or how much they are going to pay for that work and how much it is going to cost them until they actually get the contractor hired and all those bills start to come in.

Ms. White: Have any applications been rejected, and if so, why?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All applications forwarded to Property Assessment Taxation from Energy, Mines and Resources have been approved on our end. I have no insight

into EMR. You might want to talk to them when they are up on their feet next.

Ms. White: As this is an incredibly important program for the minister, I just thought that I would ask both departments. Luckily enough, they are both up on the floor today.

As I was actually perusing — one could say the Wayback Machine — there is an interesting article with the Yukon Ombudsman calling waste transfer station consultations “an unfairness”. So, when the minister asserts that it has been fair across the territory, it turns out that, in a March 4 reply from the Ombudsman to a complainant about the closure of waste transfer stations, the Office of the Ombudsman wrote that the four communities of Keno City, Destruction Bay, Silver City, and Johnsons Crossing did not have — and I’m quoting: “... ‘an avenue available to present their views’ to a government committee that was looking at waste management, and that it was an ‘unfairness.’” It’s interesting. I hadn’t planned on going there, but I think it’s worth it.

Now, including the fact that, in March 2022, the Ombudsman said that those communities hadn’t been consulted, can the minister remind me again how AYC was the consultation body for unincorporated rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member opposite summarizing a news story from 18 months ago. I was quoted in that story as well. I said that I had heard from residents. I had heard from residents because I had met with them — including the sole individual who had talked to the Ombudsman. I was trying to ascertain whether the Ombudsman had issued any official findings. I will look into that matter and, if it’s relevant, at some point, comment on it in the future. At this time, I don’t have that information at my fingertips, nor whether the Ombudsman actually reached out to the Department of Community Services to see what sort of consultations had been done with residents.

I do know that my colleague has been up and down to many of these communities on several different occasions with several different officials from the Department of Community Services who were working on this file with the Association of Yukon Communities. I don’t think that was ever reflected in the comments by the Ombudsman, but I haven’t been able to ascertain whether they actually asked us for any feedback before issuing that statement to wherever it went.

Ms. White: Just because the minister opened the door about his quotes in that news article — I am happy to read them out. The minister said — and I quote: “‘I have been to those communities many times,’ he said. ‘I have heard the concerns. I have heard what people are worried about and concerned about, and I have committed to working with them.’” I don’t know if those communities feel that way right now, but I appreciate that this is what the minister said.

He also went on to say: “‘And so we are creating landfills that are controlled with gates and scales and have power that are protected from bears, and from people just dumping their waste with no oversight,’ he said. ‘We’re improving community waste management and protecting the environment. And municipalities asked us to do this.’”

It’s interesting because I spent a fair amount of time looking at garbage, it turns out. I spent the first four years of my job talking about bathrooms and the last many more — eight — talking about waste. The interesting thing with the transfer facilities is that they do have electric fences around them and cattle guards. It’s interesting because I had a conversation with a conservation officer in Haines Junction who had worked his entire career out in that area and was the one who actually set up that initial transfer station. He said that, prior to having the electric fences and the cattle guards, they had regular human-bear conflicts that had to be resolved, unfortunately, with euthanizing bears, and he said that actually, once the transfer stations happened, it really cut those numbers down.

So, it’s interesting that one of the things that the minister is talking about — electric fences — is actually one of the things that those transfer stations have now. I know that the folks in Johnsons Crossing have sent letters with suggestions, including looking at the Toad River facility. Has the minister had a chance to compare what they do out in Toad River to what could be done here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for her thoughts, and I will note that managed waste options for individuals in, for example, Silver City are one of the things that we’ll discuss at the workshop coming forward, which is part of the consultations and the work that the Department of Community Services and I have done in the 18 months since the article that she is referring to.

Ms. White: I actually quoted the minister from the article, and then I moved on, and I asked specifically about Toad River and the folks in Johnsons Crossing, who have suggested that as something to look at. Has the minister looked into the facility at Toad River?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No, I have not.

Ms. White: Has the minister looked elsewhere in small, rural communities or unincorporated communities in Canada for solutions to the problem we’re facing?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Marsh Lake, Tagish, Mount Lorne, Deep Creek, Pelly Crossing — there are lots of unincorporated communities, all of which have managed waste facilities and are represented by the Association of Yukon Communities. I will say that the work that was done earlier by my colleague did look at best practices, and as a matter of fact, that is what I referenced earlier this afternoon when I was talking about operating standards — best practices across the country. So, yes, we have looked at those things. That is what we are doing here in the territory: bringing best practices that are seen across the country here to the territory.

This is a difficult transition; I understand that. That is why we are working with residents, one-on-one with the good folks at Community Services, trying to bring about the necessary changes that will protect our environment, cut our greenhouse gas initiatives, and make sure that the climate emergency is front and centre in our efforts on this file.

Ms. White: Can the minister help me understand how one truck picking up waste at a transfer station and driving it

to, like, the proper facility is more greenhouse gas emissions than everyone who would have to drive themselves to dispose of their waste?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My good colleague just reminded me that Pelly, which I included in the list, is not an Association of Yukon Communities-represented municipality or community, so I will correct the record this afternoon and ask the House to please accept my apologies for that.

As far as the question about how three people driving their garbage to a managed waste-management facility is better than one truck, well, that one truck won't be going, and the people who are taking their garbage to that municipality — if they all drive their garbage there specifically to do a garbage run, I guess that there is a cost to that. If they work their garbage delivery in with the other time they spend in that community getting groceries, seeing a doctor, or doing other services, then that is actually a savings. There is a lot that goes into this, but generally, we are asking people to take their own garbage in the most efficient way to a regional landfill that is managed, has supervision, and is run in a way that sorts the garbage into its proper component parts — garbage, organics, and recycling. That in itself helps the planet, both in preventing deleterious substances from coming in without any scrutiny whatsoever, but also, the better management of our organics in the landfill helps to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. That is one of the ways that we are hoping this helps dramatically in our efforts to meet our targets.

Ms. White: I actually am just looking for a bit more clarification from the minister. I think that there are a lot of assumptions that people will drive into town every week. I have friends who live in Beaver Creek, and they come into Whitehorse only once a month because it is so far. So, I think that the assumption that people in rural Yukon come to Whitehorse regularly is maybe not representative of everyone.

So, again, I'm just trying to figure out — as an example, right now, how often does the contractor — just, again, as an example — how often does the contractor, per month, pick up the waste at the transfer facility at Silver City?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: One point of clarification: Beaver Creek and Old Crow are part of phase 3 of the regionalization plan that we are looking at, and so, we will be looking for solutions in both of those communities. They are special cases, which is why they are part of the third phase of this project. Right now, we are in phase 2, and there is a regional landfill between Destruction Bay and Burwash that is managed — a managed landfill — and would be the closest landfill to Beaver Creek, but as I said, there is a plan to deal with Beaver Creek and Old Crow in phase 3.

As far as Silver City, how often the truck goes to Silver City, we are looking into that, but I will say that it varies, because the volume of garbage being left at Silver City during eight months of the year is almost non-existent, and yet we are still paying for that. The truck is still going out there to pick up bins that are empty. So, that is really what it is: This truck is going and coming back empty, which isn't a good use of resources either, and it is costing us to do that. So, that is another wrinkle in this whole discussion.

There are people in Mary Lake and Rock Creek, people along the highway or elsewhere in the Yukon, without transfer stations, so they do not have the same service that some people — the three to 13 people at Silver City — do. As I said, in the wintertime — most of the time in the wintertime — those bins are empty but still a place where people could go and toss whatever it is that they wanted to in those bins, without any supervision.

Ms. White: Earlier, the minister said that he didn't want to talk about the 119 people who signed the letter for Silver City, but he just talked about 13 people in Silver City. So, does the minister want to talk about the 119 people who signed the Silver City letter now?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No.

Ms. White: It seems unfair for the folks who signed that letter — the 119 of them, actually — that the minister wouldn't want to speak about this now when he has just said that there are only 13 people in Silver City. I guess I am just going to ask the minister to reconsider: Would he consider speaking about the 119 people who signed that letter now?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No.

Ms. White: That is really too bad. It seems to me that if eight months of the year those bins are empty and government is still sending out a contractor to look, that is actually a government problem and not a Silver City problem. Has the minister ever thought to speak to someone in Silver City to, for example, let the department know when the bins needed to be emptied? For example, they could say that, next week, we should probably have them picked up, because they are nearly full. Has the department or has the minister ever reached out to folks in these communities to help with the management of those transfer facilities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, actually, I have reached out to residents of Silver City — people who live there. I did have a nice conversation with one of the residents there just recently, as a matter of fact, and they thanked me for calling. I had a good conversation about this very issue. They informed me that they take their garbage into Whitehorse; I said: That is great; thank you for that information. The truck going to Silver City goes every two weeks, just to finish off the answer I was asked to give a couple of questions ago.

Ms. White: Does the truck go specifically to Silver City, or is it going somewhere else and passing Silver City at the same time?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is a great question, and I appreciate the member bringing it forward. The reason why we're doing the regionalization is that currently all that garbage is trucked to Whitehorse. It has been an incredible expense. We want to make sure that they go to the regional landfills in the district in which the transfer stations exist, which would save some of the trucking costs and some of the costs of transport, but currently, it all comes into Whitehorse, which is one of the things we are trying to solve with this regionalization initiative that municipalities have been backing for almost seven years.

Ms. White: In theory, couldn't the waste from Silver City get taken to Haines Junction, to their actual waste management facility?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's exactly the plan, Madam Chair — exactly the plan.

Ms. White: I think that the minister misunderstood my point. I was asking if the transfer facility, as it stands — if the bins, as they stand, could be picked up and taken to Haines Junction.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, yeah, the whole point is to not have a truck going from Silver City to anywhere. There won't be any truck at all, so that is a savings right away.

Residents, some of whom already do this, bring their waste to Whitehorse, but other residents could choose to go to Burwash or to Silver City. They would do that most of the time, I would assume, as part of their run to those communities to get whatever services they wanted to get. I'm sure that's how people in Rock Creek and other communities do it already.

As far as Haines Junction goes, Haines Junction is a community that we are talking with about the regionalization plans. We still don't have a signed agreement with Haines Junction. We are having talks with that community. Soon, I will be meeting with them. We are scheduling that right now. I know that the department is meeting with that community as well.

One of the things that was driving this whole thing by the Association of Yukon Communities back in 2016 is that municipalities did not want to take unsorted, unsupervised, X-factor refuse from places in far-flung Yukon communities without knowing what was going in. As I said in my opening remarks, communities were receiving industrial waste and things that were unknown to them, which increases their liability, which increases their costs. Communities, such as Dawson City, had to spend tens of thousands of dollars shipping waste that had come from outside their borders to their facility — yeah, one of these unsupervised facilities to their waste management facility — and they didn't want to take on that — and they had to ship it down south to Alberta, to Swan Hills, to dispose of, because it was noxious, and they wanted to end that practice.

So, they came to us, and said: You have to help us. We have to do better. And that's what we are trying to do, which is what this whole plan is about — doing better by our citizens, addressing the climate change emergency that we have declared, and doing it in a way that helps us improve the territory and protect the Yukon's environment as we invest in and improve our community landfills in our bigger communities.

Ms. White: The minister just compared someone in Mary Lake not having access to a transfer station and having to drive their garbage into town. Can the minister just remind me how far away Mary Lake is from the Whitehorse waste facility?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think better examples are Rock Creek or Henderson Corner.

Ms. White: Well, to be fair, the minister did say Mary Lake to Whitehorse, and so I just wanted to find that out, because he did say that Silver City could take their garbage to Burwash or to Haines Junction, so I just wanted to know if he knew the distances. So, Mary Lake to Whitehorse, or maybe

Silver City to Burwash, or Silver City to Haines Junction — what kind of distances are we talking?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe the member opposite is using her phone. I think Google Maps will certainly give her those numbers.

Ms. White: The minister is right; I am using Google Maps, but I am just trying to confirm what he has suggested. Could he just let me know how many kilometres it is between Mary Lake and Whitehorse's facility and how many kilometres between Silver City and Burwash or Silver City and Haines Junction? I'm sure he has an electronic device as well.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Unfortunately, my device, as she calls it, is out of juice. It's currently charging, so I don't have any power right now, but I will say that the goal that the department and the plan encourages is that we have a regional facility that everybody can use. It's controlled and helps bring the territory from an uncontrolled, decades-old approach to waste management to a modern one that's in place across the country and has a regional landfill that is controlled and well-operated and offers a range of services and staffing that helps the community, that everybody in the territory has one such facility within about 60 kilometres of their place of residence.

Ms. White: I missed it before, but was the minister talking about, as an example, Rock Creek and Dawson City, as far as distances to travel — that was something to consider? I just can't remember if he said Rock Creek.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I did say Rock Creek and Henderson Corner. There are lots of communities we could draw on. As I said, the overarching goal is to have a controlled, well-run, supervised, managed, efficient, greenhouse gas-reducing, reduction-of-garbage incentivizing, community-building landfill within 60 kilometres of Yukon residents. That is the goal.

Ms. White: Interestingly enough, Rock Creek and Dawson are just 17 kilometres, and Mary Lake and the dump are just — probably 1,920 kilometres — but Silver City and Burwash is 69 kilometres, and Haines Junction and Silver City is 61 kilometres. Johnsons Crossing — you know, 50 kilometres outside of Teslin; 127 kilometres away from Whitehorse.

The reason why I bring this up is, you know, comparing folks who live in Mary Lake — I mean, in Mary Lake, you have access to things like the Canada Games Centre; you have access to everything in Whitehorse, which is a really great way to manoeuvre into the comprehensive municipal grant review that was done by AYC. The reason why I am bringing that up now is because I have had enough for now of talking about transfer stations with the minister, but I am not saying that I won't come back to it. So, I will leave it for now.

Mary Lake, as an example outside of the City of Whitehorse, has a different property tax from someone who is within the City of Whitehorse, but they access the services in the City of Whitehorse — so, as an example, the Canada Games Centre. One thing that AYC has said — and I am sure that the minister is quite aware of it — is that municipalities need additional funding. The minister came — or not the minister necessarily, but the government came out recently with a press

release announcing the \$24.5 million, I think it was, for next year's municipal grant amount. The interesting thing with that announcement is that it is about six months before the spring budget. Maybe the minister can share with us why that announcement was made now and what calculations are used for that — what is the formula for that amount to the municipal grant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Regardless of distance, the point is that not everyone in the Yukon is served by a transfer station only minutes away. People do manage their waste and arrange to take it where they travel. That is the new system that we're working toward with our municipal partners. It was important to our municipal partners that they were not receiving unknown waste — waste that was dropped off without any oversight. They didn't want to take on that liability and that responsibility. They wanted it controlled and to be able to see what was coming through their gates. That is the process we are doing. We are trying to make the change as easy as possible for folks, which is why we're working on it.

As far as the comprehensive municipal grant goes, the member is right: We have just increased the comprehensive municipal grant as per the formula that has been in place for a while. When we came into office in late December 2016 and then in 2017, the comprehensive municipal grant had been static and had not increased for many years. We changed the formula in 2018.

It was first created in 1991 as Yukon government's unconditional block funding to municipalities. Prior to the new formula that was implemented in 2013, the formula was comprised of four parts: the base grant, adjustment for local cost of providing services, assessment of equalization adjustment, and the size of the municipality. A working group started in 2012 to develop a set of guiding principles and establish a new formula to calculate it. In 2017, another comprehensive municipal grant working group was re-established to review the formula.

Amendments were made to some factors within the 2012 comprehensive municipal grant formula. There are some principles that I think deserve to be noted before going through: adequacy — that it reflects the attributes and cost of services in each individual municipality and is flexible and responsive when factors change; certainty — that facilitates municipal sustainability and future planning through a stable, predictable funding model that is equitable and treats similar municipalities similarly; minimal bias — the comprehensive municipal grant should support us in making decisions that are in the best long-term interest of a community; that it should be transparent, simple to understand, administer, and verify; and that there is accountability — that funds are paid, spent, and accounted for in a consistent manner with financial standards.

There are several parts, but part A, the base amount — and then there is population, the number of dwellings, the spatial price index, the consumer price index, the asset maintenance amount, the property tax adjustment rate, property tax room — and then, in part B, there is a reduction adjustment, which factors the core funding amount if the new grant is lower than the previous year. In part C, there is a transitional amount,

which ensures that a municipality's grant will never dip below their 2017 grant payment. So, we have built a lot of factors in this with the work that my predecessor did on the comprehensive municipal grant. Right now, we are working with the Association of Yukon Communities on how adequate the current funding model is for municipalities. That work is ongoing with the Association of Yukon Communities.

Ms. White: Has the minister responded yet to AYC and their comprehensive municipal grant review analysis?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The comprehensive municipal grant committee continues to meet with AYC and my officials. We have not yet responded formally to the submission that was made by the Association of Yukon Communities.

Ms. White: Has the minister had a chance to look at the document that AYC I think honestly felt a little bit of pressure to get done? They have indicated that there is a shortfall in funding for municipalities, so has the minister had a chance to go over the comprehensive municipal grant review analysis supplied by AYC?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, I have read every single page.

Ms. White: I am glad that the minister has read every single page, which makes it more helpful.

In this document, they talk about short- and long-term suggestions. I am just going to quote: "Some changes to consider for the CMG formula for the short-term financial support to municipalities include: Increase the per person and per property or dwelling value to reflect more updated values (such as the per person amount contemplated in the Regional Landfill Agreements) as these were created in 2012."

Can the minister tell me his thoughts around that suggestion — so, increase the per person per property or dwelling value to reflect more updated values?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member's interest in this. We are currently negotiating and working with the Association of Yukon Communities on their submission. I am not going to do so on the floor of the House this afternoon.

Ms. White: If negotiation is ongoing, why did the government put out a press release on October 24 announcing that \$24.5 million of funding will be transferred for April 1, 2024?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The statement that we put out was based on the 2023 grants. The municipalities need that information so they can do their planning for the upcoming year. It is a typical release — like I made last year as well. It's the same thing. It's based on the existing comprehensive municipal grant that is in place now. I was very heartened to see municipal leaders happy, generally, and making statements of acceptance for the amount that's coming out in this 2023 comprehensive municipal grant under the old formula that my good colleague struck back in 2017-18.

Ms. White: I guess there is one thing, which is that you can have a conversation in private with municipalities and indicate what money you were going to transfer and continue negotiations, or you could make a public announcement with a date in the future and tell me that you're going to continue negotiations around it. Can the minister help me understand

what the next steps are when it comes to reviewing the comprehensive municipal grant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I think that there is a gross misunderstanding by the member opposite. We have a comprehensive municipal grant in place. I just stated in the opening remarks the principles under which that grant structure was established by my good colleague. I have gone through the current escalators that we built into it as a government to make sure that municipalities didn't languish without getting an increase for several years like they did in the past.

What we have been working on during my tenure here was improving and working on assessing whether the existing comprehensive municipal grant that the municipalities have been working under since 2017-18 is up to snuff. We have been going back and forth and had a committee with AYC and the Government of Yukon for that entire time. We funded a study with the Association of Yukon Communities that we gave several thousands of dollars to, to help it come together. We contributed to that report and that report has been delivered to us. My officials have been assessing that report and working now with the Association of Yukon Communities on the content of that report as we seek to improve the comprehensive municipal grant going forward.

The money that we announced recently was based on the old municipal grant, which is currently going on. It has been established and the principles were there.

So, I'm not presaging any negotiations with the Association of Yukon Communities or with municipalities across the territory. That negotiation continues to make sure that we assess whether or not the existing grant meets the needs of municipalities. They have some suggestions that they have given to me. As I recall, it is about 22 pages long. We are assessing that at the departmental level and we will continue to work with our partners to make sure that they have the money they need to operate and serve their citizens.

Ms. White: It is interesting because — as the minister likes to say — going way back, I can find other examples of press releases from the Government of Yukon talking about funding for municipalities and it is often done in conjunction with the president of the AYC, but not this time.

I guess the question I have is — the AYC has thought that there is such a need to review the current formula that the members of the Association of Yukon Communities — it is important to note that, just before anything else — made the decision that, because they had such concerns, nothing was moving with the review of the comprehensive municipal grant — of which members of the opposition were sent the analysis.

One of the concerns again is that municipalities have said that they don't have adequate funding to do what they need to do, and they have made suggestions. I just asked the minister about a suggestion — about increasing the per person or per property or dwelling value to reflect more updated values. The last time this was done was in 2012. It's 2023; I imagine some things have changed. Another suggestion that they had was to increase the asset maintenance factor percentage to better reflect both the cost of aging infrastructure and new capital projects, as well as to better align with the CPI over time.

Again, I am just asking the minister — these are suggestions for short term. Has the minister looked at them, and what are his thoughts on them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, we have an agreement with municipalities. The agreement is carrying forward. Every year, it goes up because of the progressive changes that my good colleague in Community Affairs made with municipalities back in the day in 2017 — not 2012. I just want to make sure the record is clear on that. The new escalators and new arrangement were struck in 2017-18; it's in place. We have committed to review it. We are currently reviewing it. We have a submission from the Association of Yukon Communities. I'm all in favour of transparency. I am glad that the members opposite were handed them by the president of the Association of Yukon Communities. Sure, if that's what the association wants to do, that's totally fine by me. I'm not a hoarder of information, like my good colleagues across the way.

I will say that I have sent letters to all the mayors, accompanying the increase for this year, that say: "We have received the resulting study and have assigned staff from the Department to continue working closely with the identified representatives from the Association of Yukon Communities to further understand the advice of the consultant and to recommend changes to the grant formula that could be considered for the 2025 budget cycle.

"I have directed the department to participate fully, and act with urgency, in this collaborative and positive effort. I know that together we can ensure sustainable, local services in your municipality.

"Sincerely..."

So, I am working with municipalities on this issue as we speak. We are trying to shoot for the 2025 budget cycle. Until we reach the finality of our collaboration, as we review the comprehensive municipal grant, they will continue to get money from the Yukon government, and it will increase every year based on the escalators that my good colleague put in place with the Department of Community Services in 2017-18.

Ms. White: One of the things that this minister and others have talked about is the importance of budgeting and how the process starts long before the budget, obviously, is tabled in the spring. So, knowing that municipalities right now are talking about the struggle to adequately cover what they are responsible for, when can municipalities expect further movement on changes to the municipal grant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said a minute and a half ago, for the potential changes to the comprehensive municipal grant in the budget cycle, 2025 is what we are shooting for. This year, though, we have seen an enormous increase — more than 10 percent — in the comprehensive municipal grants to municipalities. I don't think that they were expecting that under the existing formula, which has to be accounted for in our review.

This year, they saw an increase of more than 10 percent to their comprehensive municipal grant. A lot of the comments that I have heard from municipal leaders — they are appreciative of the increase that they are seeing this year. This is going to go some way to addressing the shortage of money

that they have had in this time of inflation. I am under no illusion that it is going to go all the way. I have seen the report; I am doing it. I am not negotiating new terms for the Association of Yukon Communities on the floor of this House.

Ms. White: I don't think that asking questions about the future is a wrong thing, so I am going to continue on. So, within that analysis, there is a significant difference between the \$24.5 million that was announced for April of next year in the document from the AYC — the calculation with their suggested changes would bring that amount up to \$31,497,173, so that is a significant change. The reason why I ask again is that municipalities are facing climate change occurrences in ways that were unanticipated.

So, I think that, maybe to help with the conversation — and I am working at getting the letter in so that I can table it and the minister can see it, or I can give him a copy — in a September 29 letter from AYC — and I am going to read the letter. It says, regarding the comprehensive municipal grant and future sustainability: “I am writing you today concerning the sustainability of Yukon communities. Yukon municipalities find themselves in a situation where the governance framework and revenue system afforded to us are no longer allowing for keeping up with the modern challenges, and current expectations facing our local governments.

“Antiquated revenue and funding sources are stretched thin for the funding of frontline services, roads, bridges, parks, public buildings, water treatment, waste collection, seasonal maintenance, as well as municipal planning and administration to provide unexhaustive examples on the list - ultimately, it equates to essentially everything we deliver as local governments.

“The comprehensive Municipal Grant (CMG) is unconditional block funding provided to municipalities by the Government of Yukon since 1991. The Association of Yukon Communities initiated work in September of 2022 to review and modernize the CMG, as well as the relationship with the Yukon Government, to ensure our communities are adequately supported. The analysis and our report on CMG modernization was completed in July of 2023, and was presented to the Government of Yukon. I have attached a copy of the report and its findings for your review. This details many of the challenges currently faced by municipalities in addition to containing recommendations on how to address them.

“Financial and long-term sustainability are the most pressing issues currently facing our communities. This could, if not addressed, result in service reductions, a lack of infrastructure maintenance, and property tax increases. Resultantly, the Association of Yukon Communities is requesting your support and expressed advocacy in making this issue a proper priority of the Government of Yukon.”

I appreciate that I just read a lengthy document into the record, but I have for tabling the letter that is addressed to me and which, if the minister wants, I am sure we could pass over. The reason that I am bringing this up right now is because AYC, as the advocacy body for municipalities in the Yukon, has said that they are facing a funding shortfall. Again, the number that

they suggest with those short-term changes brings it up to \$31.5 million over the \$24.5 million.

Again, I ask the minister — he has indicated that there is going to be work on this in 2025, but is there a way to accelerate that process — to have those conversations sooner?

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Chair: Committee of the Whole will recess for another two minutes.

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I was under the impression, actually, that the minister was going to answer the last question I had. I can't even remember what I was talking about, but hopefully he can.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I believe the member opposite was asking about the comprehensive municipal grant just before we broke and the difficulties that municipalities have expressed financially. I have conducted community tours throughout the territory with municipal leaders. I talk to municipal leaders on a regular basis. I have heard their concerns with their funding pressures and what that means.

The comprehensive municipal grant is a grant that covers some of their expenses. Municipalities have the ability to raise their own revenue and have other revenue sources beyond the Yukon government. There is also infrastructure money, and we have seen the federal government make historic investments in all of our communities over the last seven years, which is also part and parcel of the equation. I think that all of our municipalities are better for that incredible investment in our facilities and infrastructure across the territory — be it sewer and water, highways, or recreation facilities. It has just been extraordinary. We are all certainly better off for that, but I have heard municipalities' concerns about money.

I have received the report. We have, based on the arrangement that was part of the last negotiation with the Association of Yukon Communities, managed to increase their municipal funding this year by more than 10 percent. In terms of the negotiations we have been doing, we have had a review working group with the association since 2020, during the

pandemic. That group has met 17 times to discuss the current comprehensive municipal grant as part of our review. That work is ongoing.

As we have talked about this afternoon, we just received a new report that the AYC commissioned. We helped fund that report. We are assessing and working with the Association of Yukon Communities to improve the comprehensive municipal grant as part of our review. That work is ongoing. Those meetings are going to continue at the table. I am not going to negotiate on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, but we are hoping to have some sort of work completed by 2025. That's the goal.

Ms. White: A question asked recently — honestly, Madam Chair, I thought I wasn't going to go back to garbage. I did say that I might go back, so here we are.

For a question that was asked by my colleague about the gasifier in Old Crow, the minister indicated that Old Crow — and I can't remember what other community — were on the list for work for regional landfills. Can the minister give us a bit more of a timeline? Knowing that there was the real thought that the incinerator would be up and running this summer — there is a *Yukon News* article that indicates that it was hopefully going to be repaired in the summer, and now we are in November — can the minister just give me an update on what is going on with the gasifier in Old Crow?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question on the gasifier because, at the time of the question, I had some confusion on that subject initially and then did not have the information for the member opposite to answer the question. I asked for information and an update on the gasifier, and I hope this helps my good colleague in Vuntut Gwitchin and the Leader of the Third Party.

The household waste gasifier in Old Crow was commissioned in 2012 and operated until 2017. It has not been functioning since 2017 and it is unfortunate that the unit has been idle for so long. The problem was that several small explosions occurred inside the gasifier from 2012 to 2017, the last of which caused significant damage to the burner and the control system. We suspect that various types of explosive waste, such as propane canisters and aerosol cans, may have led to the damage within the gasifier.

We are pleased to provide an update to the community. Our staff in the Department of Community Services and contractors completed the first phase of repairs to the gasifier in October 2023. These repairs and upgrades included replacing the burners, upgrading and replacing the control systems, repairing the burn chamber liners, repairing the hydraulic system, completing building upgrades, and performing fuel system repairs. We have just issued a contract for design improvement to complete phase 2 of the necessary upgrades that will reduce the likelihood of future blowback events like the ones that caused damage to the burners and control systems in 2017. The work will be completed in the spring of 2024 and the gasifier will be recommissioned at that time.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that update. It is a concern. Having visited Old Crow at different times, I have been told that it is like a dump decoration. It looks quite

different from the landscape, so it is definitely something that you notice. There has been a lot of construction in that community and with that comes construction waste, and, of course, none of that is being burned in a way that does not release pollutants.

In Question Period earlier this week, the minister had indicated that Old Crow — and I can't remember what other community — but there were plans for the landfill. I am just trying to look for more information about what he was referring to during Question Period this week.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, as part of our solid-waste management regionalization and transfer station plan that we have been talking about a lot this afternoon, we are into phase 2, which includes introducing gate staff and tipping fees at YG sites at Destruction Bay, Champagne, Pelly Crossing and all municipal sites outside of Whitehorse, as well as all of the other work that we are doing.

Phase 3 includes implementing gate staff and tipping fees at the Yukon government-run Beaver Creek and Old Crow solid-waste facilities, but we still have to have conversations with those communities. We haven't started that, but that is the anticipated phase 3 of the regionalization plan. Those last two communities are the most far-flung parts of our waste-management system, so we have carved them off and they will be the last that we do.

Ms. White: I do hope that, when there is involvement and engagement with the community, it is not done through AYC. I don't think that would be very effective for Old Crow.

One of the commitments in the confidence and supply agreement was reform to the land lottery system through a public engagement, so I am just looking for an update on that. When will the engagement begin? Will reforms be ready for the spring of 2024?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am not going to talk on behalf of my good colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. I will leave it for his conversation, which may not happen this afternoon but will come soon.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that reminder. At this point in time, I have been a critic for most areas and multiple ministers and sometimes can't keep them straight.

Recently in the media, we have heard about the theft of fire prevention equipment. Can the minister give us any more details on what equipment was stolen, if it has been found, and what the next steps are or what will be done to make sure that equipment like this is safe in the future?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have a gated and controlled compound that some individuals managed to breach, and they made off with a trailer, a fuel tank, and some quads. We have given descriptions of the individuals to the RCMP, who have started an investigation. I have not heard back from the RCMP on this matter. We have taken additional security precautions in the aftermath of the thefts. It's a serious matter, but the RCMP are involved.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that update. I know that, for example, wildfire equipment was being stolen in British Columbia from on-site where, for example, there were pumps and things set up on bridges, and that is one of the things

that I never hope to see here and I hope that this is not an indication of things to come.

The citizens in Dawson who were affected by the flooding in the Klondike Valley this summer have been asking when there is going to be a comprehensive review of the Yukon government's response to flooding. Initially, I was told that it was going to start soon. I'm hoping that I can get an update on where this process is at and, if it's started, who has been involved and who has been invited and, if it hasn't, when we can expect that to start.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are in the final stages of hiring a contractor. That should be done very soon and then they will be notifying folks in the Klondike and conducting that review on behalf of the Department of Community Services.

Ms. White: Has it been communicated to those who are affected that there are still steps or that there is still time to wait? I know that for those who were hit the hardest, there has been a feeling of a lack of communication, so has that been communicated to all those affected by the flooding that there are still steps to go — so hiring a contractor to start that process?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Stantec has been awarded the contract. I have just heard back from department officials. They are in the process of contacting individuals in the Klondike now that they have the contract. We are in the process of putting together a news release and maybe a ministerial statement on this issue.

Ms. White: I don't think necessarily that ministerial statements will reach those individuals who are in the Klondike Valley and still waiting to hear back from government about that comprehensive review, so I guess I'm urging people within the department to reach out and let those folks know that a process is underway and to maybe give them an indication of time. I am pretty confident that the people whom I talked to are not getting information from ministerial responses.

Another commitment from this government with the confidence and supply agreement is a review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. Can I get an update on where we are at with this and expected timelines for the public consultation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We launched our review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* in June 2023. It's underway. The stakeholder and First Nation government engagement will continue throughout the fall, and public engagement will begin early in the new year. Our aim is to be in a position to table updated residential tenancy legislation in the spring of 2025. Independent contractors are working with our team to design and lead the engagement process.

One-on-one interviews in a group session, representing voices of landlords and tenants, has already taken place. A solutions lab is underway with representation from landlords and tenants groups, and we look forward to hearing the recommendations that come from this process. All of this work will help inform policy considerations and is designed for the public engagement. Seven solution lab workshops have taken place between the end of September and mid-October. This work will end in mid-November.

The goal is to ensure that the rights of tenants and landlords are balanced and that Yukon benefits from a healthy rental market. In the meantime, the residential tenancies office continues to provide information on the current act and timely and fair dispute resolution. The office's enhanced public outreach materials, as well as its technological interface, are to better serve Yukoners.

Ms. White: I caught some of that. I would just encourage the minister to maybe take eight minutes at a time to read stuff off. That would have been one that I would have appreciated in six of those minutes — would have been good — but I will read the Hansard transcript.

Just before I sit down, I again want to thank the folks who are doing the consultations in rural communities around the landfills. Dave, Riel, and Damien and that team — I saw them in action in person in Silver City and participated online for a number of those meetings. They are going into a tough situation trying to find solutions. I wish them luck with that. I know they just had a meeting in Burwash that sounded challenging, but I hope that the next one in Silver City — that we can work toward solutions.

I thank the officials for their time, and I guess the minister and I can get back into this in the spring.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to add some questions. I will jump right in and start by asking a few points of clarification from the previous day when we discussed this in questions from my colleague the Member for Watson Lake. She had asked about phase 4 water and sewer in Haines Junction, so I would just like to confirm the status of that project. When will it be tendered? What is the budgeted cost? I believe that this was a project that was the subject of a letter from the mayor to the minister last year.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was asking for clarification on a question that was asked the last time we met. I wanted just to ask a point of clarification: Is the member opposite asking about phase 4 sewer and water in Haines Junction?

Mr. Dixon: Yes, that is correct.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thanks for that clarification.

So, as I said, back on October 23, the \$100,000 contract had not yet been tendered, so it has not been tendered yet. I will say that the Infrastructure Development branch built the septic receiving station as part of the 2019 upgrades completed by our contractor. When it was first used, it was found that there were odor issues downstream. Haines Junction shut down the septic receiving station in response. Our branch installed odor filters under each of the manholes on the route from the septic receiving station to the lift station. The filters have decreased the odors but there are still some issues to manage. Infrastructure Development branch has explored options to address the remaining deficiency work on the septic receiving station during the summer of 2023. The bid for the work has been received, and the Infrastructure Development branch will continue to work with Haines Junction to investigate options for the septic receiving station.

That is what I have from the department.

Mr. Dixon: I would just appreciate some clarification. My understanding of phase 4 of Haines Junction's water and sewer was that it was a multi-million-dollar project, not a \$100,000 project. So, I don't know the exact budget, but my sense from the community was that it was in the millions of dollars, not a \$100,000 project. I wonder if the minister is talking about a different project.

Last year, the Mayor of Haines Junction wrote to the minister about phase 3 and phase 4, and I know that the minister has provided answers about phase 3 previously, but I just want some clarification about phase 4 water and sewer in Haines Junction and whether or not it has already been tendered and what the total budget is.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say to the member opposite that phase 4 has not yet — phase 4 of this project in Haines Junction has not yet been budgeted.

I have written to the mayor about this. I am meeting with the mayor and council in the coming weeks to discuss matters of importance to their municipality. We are looking for more infrastructure money to deliver on some of these projects in municipalities, getting a sense of what their priorities are and where they sit in terms of the next tranche of federal money coming from Ottawa. We don't have that announcement yet, but Haines Junction's phase 4 project will more than likely be part of that process.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I appreciate the minister's answer.

Just to be clear, I believe that I heard him say that there has been no budget established yet, and I assume that means that, therefore, there is no timeline currently. I just want to clarify that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is correct.

Mr. Dixon: Thanks to the minister for that answer.

The other question is that I just want to confirm, based on my colleague from Watson Lake's questions last week, I believe, which was about the number of lots released since the spring of 2021 — the minister indicated that, in that time frame, there had been 214 released plus four, which were the four in Logan. Can he just confirm that this is the total amount — there were 214, so 218 total residential lots released since the spring of 2021?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The number I have is 240 lots between 2021-22 and 2022-23. That includes the four Whitehorse infill lots on Finch Drive.

Mr. Dixon: I just asked for some clarification because I think that I may have misheard. Hansard said, last week, that the minister said 214, and I thought I heard 240, but maybe I'll ask him to speak just very clearly on this one.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much for the clarification. It was 240 — two four zero — is the number, and that's 106 in 2021-22 and 134 in 2022-23.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that; I appreciate the minister being clear about that. I'll move back to the federal infrastructure funding that the minister just mentioned. He mentioned the fact that we haven't seen an announcement from the federal government about the next tranche of federal infrastructure funding. The question I had was about the

engagement that Yukon has had with Canada about that. Has Yukon ever looked at or lobbied the Government of Canada for O&M funding to be included as a feature of new federal infrastructure funding?

I ask because I know that a lot of municipalities have expressed concern about their ability to sustain pieces of infrastructure following construction, and so, I would just like to ask whether or not the Yukon government has considered that, and if so, have they conveyed that suggestion to the Government of Canada for them to consider in the development of their next program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have been to many, many meetings this summer with housing and infrastructure ministers and a full range of federal meetings at which I lobby and talk about our life in the north and what pressures we face. I have good relationships — we have formed good partnerships with both our colleagues in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. We have collaborated on meetings with federal officials as a group as well.

The issue of operations funding for the infrastructure projects at Ottawa has — the record investment they have made on infrastructure in the territory has not been a subject broached at any of these meetings by any ministers of provincial or territorial governments at these meetings. It is an interesting idea. I know that Ottawa does provide, in addition to the historic investments infrastructure, the former gas tax funding and all sorts of other supports to the territory. But actually, building operation and maintenance costs into their funding arrangements has not been breached.

We do a lifetime assessment of our infrastructure projects when they come in, so they do have that information, and we do work with municipalities to tailor the projects that they put forward to the size of the community, as best we can, to make sure that municipalities consider the operations costs going forward when they build these infrastructure projects.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to move to a few questions specifically about Whistle Bend and the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. I will start on green streets. We know, obviously, of course, the history there. There were multiple property owners along the green streets who had concerns with the path there. The path was laid, and then I believe that it was torn up last year, or sections of it were torn up.

Can the minister give us an update on where things are at with the green streets? Has construction or deconstruction, whichever way we look at it, been completed now, and if so, what is the total amount of money that has been spent on those green streets, in particular, the trails or the green streets themselves over the past two years?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, green streets are an innovative concept in Whistle Bend where neighbours gather, play, and connect to a multi-use trail system free from vehicle traffic. Last year, construction on the green streets was paused to hear from residents who were concerned about some design features, including the widening of the pavement from three metres to six metres to allow for emergency vehicle access. We worked with the City of Whitehorse to engage residents and understand their ideas about the final design of the streets.

The city has approved a design that incorporates resident feedback, allows for emergency vehicle winter access, and adheres to the original intent of the green street concept. The Land Development branch has added the additional fire hydrants, paving, and other requirements to the updated plan. Final landscaping is underway, and landscaping will wrap up early in 2024 — or in 2024 — I expect that it will be done as soon as we possibly can.

The City of Whitehorse is the lead agency on the planning process and any green street guidelines or zoning. The Government of Yukon leads the construction of the Whistle Bend neighbourhood. We adhere to the city's design plan and engineering standards at all times. So, the city is the designer and provides the engineering standards; we execute on what they ask us to do, and we have done that and worked with the neighbours on this project.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information. The minister indicated that the work would be complete early next year. Can he tell us the budget for the contract that is currently out that will be complete next year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I apologize to the member opposite; we are working to get those numbers. I haven't got them right here, but we are working on it.

Mr. Dixon: Deputy Chair, I look forward to hearing back from the minister.

An issue that was brought to my attention at a public barbecue in Whistle Bend related to what seems to be subsurface water on Keno Street. Apparently, there is — or could be — a leak in the water infrastructure along that street. It is causing some issues for a number of property owners. They are given to understand that the infrastructure itself has been signed off by the City of Whitehorse. I would like to ask the minister if he's aware of these concerns. Has he engaged with the City of Whitehorse to address the concerns that have been raised by property owners on Keno Street? What is the status of efforts to mitigate the concerns that have been raised by property owners along that street?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, this is a live file, for sure. I have been in touch with residents in the neighbourhood. I have also written a letter to the member opposite's good colleague on this very matter. The latest update is that — the member is absolutely right — we contracted to have the work done. When the work was completed, the City of Whitehorse signed off on the work that was done by the contractor. I have subsequently learned that there were deficiencies with the work that had been approved by the City of Whitehorse. The City of Whitehorse has now undertaken testing to find the source of the problems with the underground infrastructure. They failed to find anything in the initial discussion. They have now widened the search for potential leaks in the system that may be causing these difficulties. They are the ones conducting that work.

I have been in touch with, as I said, residents on this matter and I will continue to do so as we get more updates. At this stage, they haven't found the source of the underground leaks within the system that was built in that region.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information from the minister.

Just as a point of clarification, once the contract is completed by the contractor who is working for the Yukon government, the city signs off on that work. At that point, they take possession and ownership of that infrastructure; is that correct?

I believe I heard the minister say that this did occur, so is this infrastructure now solely the responsibility of the City of Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That's my understanding. Once the sign-off is done, it becomes the city's infrastructure. The information that I just received from my deputy is that the mains are not an issue. It looks like it's a hookup between the line and a residence somewhere, so they are looking at that now. That work is ongoing. Because we have had outreach from residents in the area, the Assistant Deputy Minister of Community Services will be meeting with those residents to hear those concerns.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on to the Heiland property. This is obviously a large chunk of private land in Whistle Bend. It has been discussed for some time as a possible future development. I understand that it is currently for sale. Has the Yukon government ever looked at or entered into negotiations to purchase that land? If so, what is the nature and status of those discussions? I will leave it there for now.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member bringing forward the issue of the Heiland property. We do want to increase density wherever we can, so that's important. I am sure that the member can understand that the Land Development branch is actually working to get an estimate of the density that the lot can sustain, so we're going to try to find out how many properties and how much development can be put on that lot and what the cost of development will be. We have also met with the landowner so that he understands the cost of the lot and the development cost estimates, so that work is ongoing. We want to keep lots as inexpensive as possible, and adding the cost of purchasing the lot will necessarily have to be factored into the cost of the lots that we sell in the future — were it to go ahead.

There is a lot to deal with here — with buying land from private developers and working that through. That has been communicated to the lot owner and we are continuing work with the landowner. We understand, certainly, the potential that this lot offers to us and to the whole development within Whistle Bend, and we are working with the owner to see if we can advance that, but we're not there yet.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information from the minister. Another issue that I have heard raised in the community relates to traffic. Ultimately, traffic is naturally a city responsibility, but there have been some questions around whether or not there needs to be a third access to Whistle Bend. That's something that would, I think, be of a scale that the City of Whitehorse would need to discuss with the Government of Yukon. Has the minister had any overtures or initiatives brought forward to him to look at solving traffic issues in Whistle Bend vis-à-vis a third access to the community?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I am aware of the issue, of course. I have heard some of the public comments and concerns raised

at city council about this matter, so I am aware of it. The traffic in and out of Whistle Bend is really a municipal responsibility. The city's transportation study has been delayed until early 2024. They are looking at solutions to this. We will, of course, work with the municipality when they come to us officially with some suggestions on how they might deal with this, and we will work with our partners, as we do in the collegial relationship that we have, to help them on traffic solutions to Whistle Bend in the future.

Mr. Dixon: Just to be clear, then: When it comes to the Whistle Bend development as a whole, the design is done by the City of Whitehorse; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The city does the official community plan, of course. When they have a development such as Whistle Bend, they do the master planning and give us all of the criteria. Community Services actually does the detailed plan work for the City of Whitehorse and we then submit those detailed plans to the City of Whitehorse, which then vets them and signs off on the detailed plan that is developed to the city's design plan and engineering standards. They sign off on it, and once they have signed off on it, we proceed with the actual work needed. We contract the work to get the land developed to the city's design standards and exacting specifications.

Mr. Dixon: I just wanted to quickly return to the Keno Street issue. The minister said that the city had signed off on that project. Obviously, it was conducted originally by YG through a contractor, but my understanding is that there were some deficiencies. Is that correct? If so, does YG have any outstanding deficiencies that it needs to ensure are corrected before the project is considered complete?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, there are always deficiencies on projects that are completed. We work with the contractor to deal with any deficiencies that are identified. There is a warranty period after which the contractor is responsible for those deficiencies. The city takes on operations with a construction completion certificate. After that, there may still be deficiencies. Again, we will work with the contractor and the city to make sure that those are dealt with. Eventually, the city will sign a final acceptance certificate with us on that.

Then we get into where the deficiencies are. Are they in hookups? Are they in the main system? Or are they in hookups to the actual residences themselves? That's the important part.

The source of the leak, I have been told, was found today. It is a recirculating line into one home. It was just found today. I will get a full report in the coming days, but it looks like the source of that leak has been found, so that is good news for everybody. We hope we can deal with it now that we have found the source of that leak.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the information from the minister. It sounds like there is some late-breaking info, so we look forward to hearing more information as soon as it's available and we look forward to sharing that with the constituents who have raised concerns about that.

I would like to move on to the Land Management branch of Community Services. In particular, as the minister knows, we have ATIPP'd the briefing notes that he has provided so, for ease of reference, I will direct the minister to the joint briefing

note between EMR and CS. It's LD-01, for the purposes of his note. It's from the spring of this year, obviously, but I think it's still up to date.

It lists a number of projects. It says that LDB — Land Development branch — has a range of land development work underway in Whitehorse, including — and then it lists a number of bullets.

I would like to ask about some of these projects, because they are of interest to constituents. One of them is a Hemlock Street extension. It says that planning is underway, YESA, detailed design work and tender in fall 2023/early 2024 — can the minister describe what that project consists of and if it is still on the timeline that's referenced in this briefing note, which is admittedly a few months out of date?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, this is the extension on Hemlock Street. The note is up to date. They are still hoping to tender later this winter or into early 2024. There has been a zoning complaint on that, and it is currently in a city process, so that's one of the things that's at play right now, and I don't know where that's at. It is within the city system. There was a zoning complaint on that development, but we're still hopeful, at this stage, to get it tendered in the coming months.

Mr. Dixon: Just so that I am clear, what is it exactly that they're tendering? Is it the construction of the road or an extension of underground water services? What is it that is going to be tendered that the minister is referring to?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are going to look into getting more information, but what I can tell is that the plan is for a mixed-lot development of 30-plus units on the Hemlock Street extension, so that's really what we're talking about. There is that zoning complaint. Sorry, it's my aged eyes. It's not a zoning complaint, Deputy Chair, so my apologies to the members opposite. It is zoning compliant. I am so used to seeing it; there's a transposition error there in my mind, I guess.

So, the zoning is compliant. With council support, the Land Development branch will lead the planning, YESA, and hopes to tender in the coming months — so, it is for a mixed-lot development of 30-plus units in the Hemlock Street area. And it was not a complaint; that is totally on me; I apologize for that confusion.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's clarification about the complaint versus compliance. If I understand that correctly, the minister is suggesting that the zoning for that area is compliant with the intentions that the Yukon government has for this land. My understanding — I am fairly familiar with the area. It is right beside Porter Creek high school, just a bit behind the greenbelt, behind the parking lot for that school.

Is the intention to connect Hemlock to Hickory, or is the intention for it to extend Hemlock into the greenbelt?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Deputy Chair. Those are very good questions. I have my team right now looking for the answers, so I will get more clarification and report back to the member opposite.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate any information that the minister can provide. Can I get him to repeat the number of lots that it is intended to create in this area?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The information note I have here suggests 30 plus — around 30 lots of mixed-lot type, so it is about 30 units.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's clarification. I look forward to any other information that he can provide about that project.

I will move on to the next one on the list, which I cited earlier — well, not the next one on the list, but the next one that I would like to ask about is called the Whistle Bend south bench. It says that they are working with the city on approval to harvest granular material for 2024 area projects. Can the minister provide some clarification about that? If I read it correctly, they are looking at harvesting gravel from the south side of the entrance to Whistle Bend. Can he provide some clarification about that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are in discussions with the City of Whitehorse. This is in earlier stages of development, but that is exactly the plan. As the members opposite know, we are looking for new sources of gravel. There is gravel to be had in that area. We have started talks with the City of Whitehorse to harvest or to get that gravel, bring down the bench a little bit, and actually open up new areas of development in the City of Whitehorse for that, but these are still — we are working with the City of Whitehorse on this to understand the potential of this Whistle Bend lower bench area.

Mr. Dixon: So, just so that I am understanding, the intention would be to remove enough gravel from the south side of the road to flatten it in order to allow for lots to be developed; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The objective is lot development for the City of Whitehorse for the growth of the city. Gravel is an ancillary benefit that may come through the work to develop more lots.

Mr. Dixon: Just so that I am clear, we are talking about the area that is on the south side of Whistle Bend Way as you are entering Whistle Bend, the right side? The intention would be to make that area into lots after removing the gravel? If that is correct, how many lots are we talking about? How big of a development would we be thinking about there?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At this point, we are still — this is still being developed. We don't have an estimate for the number of lots. We are still working with the City of Whitehorse. It is very early stages for this, so we don't have numbers for the member opposite and probably won't have any for a while. I don't think we will even be anywhere near this until 2024, minimum.

Mr. Dixon: I'll move on to another quick one, on a different subject matter, though. Can the minister give us an update on Ross River's pool? The note from the spring indicated that it was intended to come into service in the spring/summer aquatic season of 2023. I don't believe it did, but I would appreciate it if the minister could update us on Ross River's pool.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There's no way to sugar-coat this. I mean, we expected to open the Ross River pool this summer following completion of critical repairs to the pool systems. However, just as we were preparing to open the facility, new

areas of concerns were identified, so the pool could not be opened this year because of the structural problems that we identified as we were about to open it. The pool is now being assessed and we're not sure if it's viable to reopen, so we're working with the community — the Ross River Recreation Society — to identify alternative options to support recreation in the community — bus tours to Faro and that type of thing. But as far as that facility that was built, I believe, back in 1999 when so many of these facilities were built, this was not good news for anybody — certainly, not for me either — but the facility cannot be reopened at this time.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the update and I share the minister's disappointment and look forward to hearing more as time progresses on that project. Another one quickly — bouncing to a different community, Mayo, with regards to the reservoirs there. It was something that we discussed a number of times.

I noted that there were plans to have a tender for construction of the new reservoirs to replace the failed tanks. It was meant to be issued this year. Can the minister tell us if a tender was, indeed, issued? Have bids been received, and has the tender closed? If so, what is the budget for that project, and what is the timeline?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: To bring members up to speed, problems have been identified with the Mayo reservoir. It was built in 2018. The Government of Yukon has begun legal action against the project contractor. Community Services is working closely with the Village of Mayo. I met with the Village of Mayo this summer and heard their concerns about this. This is really an issue for Mayo, and I totally understand the community's concerns with this. We are working with the community to make sure that they have a water supply while the new systems are being built.

A tender for construction of the new reservoirs to replace the failed tanks will be issued in the coming months. It's en route to getting done; we are just working on finishing that contract. We hope to have a contract soon, and we have the old water system up and running. It's not ideal, but that's where we're at, and we're going to contract a new system. I wish I wasn't in this situation.

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

Deputy Chair (MLA Tredger): 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

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, 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 5:27 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 2, 2023:

35-1-126

Building Blocks to Children's Rights: 2022/2023 Annual Report — Yukon Child & Youth Advocate Office (Speaker Harper)

The following documents were filed November 2, 2023:

35-1-160

Urgent increases to program funding, letter re (dated November 2, 2023) from Cynthia Rudell-Lyslo, Executive Director, and Tim Brady, Board Chair, Opportunities Yukon/Career Industries to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier (White)

35-1-161

Comprehensive municipal grant and future sustainability, letter re (dated September 29, 2023) from Ted Laking, President, Association of Yukon Communities, to Kate White, Leader of the Third Party (White)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 153

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 6, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	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, November 6, 2023 — 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: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some guests who are here today for the National Skilled Trade and Technology Week tribute. We first have Jeff Wolosewich, who is a department head for the school of trades at Yukon University; we have Katie Mooney, executive director of Skills Canada Yukon; Jeff Van Zandvoort, industry training consultant with the Yukon apprenticeship office; and Jaydee Carrothers, industrial training consultant with the Yukon apprenticeship office; Abbey Gartner, Skills Yukon program coordinator; Jessica Zinn, Yukon University; and I think that we also have a support dog today — Sasha. Welcome.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, we have several guests here today for the tribute to la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone. Please welcome Lorraine Taillefer, Association franco-yukonnaise. Also from l'AFY, Edith Bélanger, Yannick Klein, Diana Romero, and Marie-Pierre Giroux. From the Yukon Francophone Health Network, we have Sandra St-Laurent; from les Essentielles, Laurence Rivard and Maya Auguste; and from the Direction des services en français, André Bourcier and Nancy Power.

Welcome to all. Bienvenue.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask members to join me in welcoming some guests to the gallery. We have with us Cynthia Lyslo, the executive director of Opportunities, as well as Bruno Bourdache, the executive director of the non-profit hub.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Skilled Trade and Technology Week

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government in recognition of National Skilled Trade and Technology Week, which takes place this year from November 5 to 11. This initiative is organized by

Skills Compétences Canada, but it comes to life in the territory through the work and dedication of Yukon people and organizations. I have a strong family connection to skilled trades, having several family members in trades, including my son, who has excelled in a career with trades and technology. Careers here are challenging, in high demand, and can be lucrative. They include such sectors as carpentry, cooking, electrics, hair styling, heavy duty equipment, automotive services and mechanics, plumbing, welding, and beyond.

This week aims to raise awareness of the range of skilled trades and technology careers and the critical role that they play in the Canadian economy and society. I am pleased to be able to celebrate our Yukon tradespeople and their essential skills.

I would also like to draw attention and give a special congratulations to the 15 Yukoners who competed in the 2023 Skills Canada National Competition and those who came home with four medals.

I look forward to Yukon's upcoming 2024 Territorial Skills Competition and to honour and raise our local talent.

The government is dedicated to seeing a steady increase in the number of apprentices enrolled in Yukon's apprenticeship program as well as journey person certificates being issued. The Government of Yukon strives to meet the current and future needs of our labour market by offering significant support for apprenticeship training, and we are working hard with partners to address the needs of the territory.

I would like to thank the many people and organizations who support Yukoners of all ages to explore careers in the skilled trades and technology, including: members of the Yukon apprenticeship advisory board; Skills Canada Yukon; Yukon University; secondary and post-secondary educators; the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; Yukon Apprentice Advisory Board; Yukon Women in Trades and Technology; association of professional engineers of Yukon; local businesses, organizations, makers, and volunteers; Yukon Education's training and apprenticeship branch; and, of course, the many supportive employers who are investing in apprentices.

To all the Yukoners who promote careers in trades and technology, thank you for your important work. Together, we are building strong communities.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Skilled Trade and Technology Week, which is taking place now until Saturday. This event, which is sponsored by Skills Canada on a national level and hosted by Skills Canada Yukon here at home, helps to promote the exciting opportunities offered by pursuing a career in a skilled trade or the technology sector.

There are many career paths available to young Yukoners as they define and refine their skill sets through high school and beyond: manufacturing and engineering; transportation maintenance and servicing; construction; information technology; food; and personal services. Every trade has a need and opportunity for apprenticeship and skill development.

A career in the trades can be fulfilling on many levels, especially for those who have a desire to work with their hands and provide specialized services. Opportunities abound for those who choose trades as a career path, as we expect thousands upon thousands of vacancies in the years ahead. There are many organizations, individuals, and businesses here in the Yukon promoting involvement in these exciting careers. From Skills Canada Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology to Yukon University and the First Nation Education Directorate, everyone is playing their part.

I would also like to congratulate all of the participants in the territorial and national skills competitions from earlier this year and congratulate the four Yukoners who won medals in Winnipeg at the nationals.

Jonathan Fillmore in post-secondary carpentry and Terje Kristensen both won bronze — as I mentioned, post-secondary carpentry for Jonathan and secondary welding for Terje. Gold went to Isaiac Tracey in post-secondary sheet metal and gold to Phineas Pearson in mechanical engineering CAD, and he was also the recipient of the RBC Best of Region Award.

Thank you to Skills Canada and Skills Canada Yukon for the work they do in getting youth involved in the trades, for the mentorship and opportunities to develop skills that benefit the entire community.

Applause

Ms. White: On behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus, I stand here as a red seal baker to celebrate National Skilled Trade and Technology Week 2023.

The world as we know it wouldn't exist without those in the trade and technology fields. Skilled trades play an important role in our economy and our society. The trades touch almost every aspect of our lives, from the homes we live in to the cars we drive to the food we eat.

Approximately one in five employed Canadians work in the skilled trades in many sectors of the Canadian economy, including construction, manufacturing service, and automotive. Canada is a thriving tech hub, attracting talent and companies from around the world in software, cyber security, AI, and more. In 2022, Canada had more than 400,000 software developers in this country alone. This week-long event promotes and hosts awareness-raising events around the many career opportunities and skilled trades and technology in Canada.

Yukon has made leaps and bounds in the arena of skilled trades and technology. Organizations like Skills Compétences Canada Yukon and Yukon Women in Trades and Technology have sprouted, grown, and expanded. Through their outreach and hands-on approach, they are opening doors for Yukon youth toward exciting careers.

There are associations like TechYukon, which believes that Yukon can be a hub for technology and innovation in the north, attracting and retaining talent, and driving economic growth for the benefit of all Yukoners. We have hands-on skill building through places like Computers for Schools, where they collect, repair, and refurbish donated computers to redistribute them to schools and non-profits.

Yukon University continues to invest and build their trades program for pre-apprenticeship training all the way to red seal credentials. Yukoners can go far really close to home.

Mr. Speaker, in Canada's future economy, the skilled trades and technology-related jobs are going to matter more than ever. It's a good thing in Yukon that, with help from so many different organizations and industry associations, we are well on our way to that future.

Applause

In recognition of National Francophone Immigration Week

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Je prends la parole aujourd'hui pour souligner la Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone.

La Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone a lieu chaque année en novembre. Elle est une occasion de souligner l'importante contribution sociale, culturelle et économique des personnes immigrantes d'expression française au Yukon. Le thème de cette année est « Terre accueillante ». Ce thème se veut un encouragement à valoriser nos différentes cultures et à réfléchir à ce que signifie être une terre accueillante pour tous et toutes. L'édition de cette année est aussi une occasion d'en apprendre davantage sur les peuples autochtones du Canada, et de réfléchir à l'environnement et à l'importance de préserver notre « terre accueillante » pour les générations futures, y compris les personnes immigrantes. Je suis heureux que le Yukon continue d'être un lieu accueillant pour les personnes nouvellement arrivées d'expression française. Notre territoire est l'une des régions les plus attrayantes au Canada pour l'immigration francophone. Le Yukon est aussi la seule administration canadienne où le nombre et la proportion de personnes qui parlent principalement le français à la maison ont augmenté entre 2016 et 2021. Plus de 14 % de la population yukonnaise parle français, ce qui en fait la troisième région la plus bilingue au pays, après le Québec et le Nouveau-Brunswick.

Il y a quelques activités qui se tiendront cette semaine que j'aimerais souligner. Les Essentielles, en partenariat avec l'Association franco-yukonnaise, AFY, lance une série de quatre ateliers sur l'intégration des nouvelles arrivantes dans la communauté franco-yukonnaise. Le premier aura lieu le 8 novembre, de 11 h à 13 h, au Centre de la francophonie, sous le thème « L'intersectionnalité et les femmes immigrantes francophones au Yukon ». Le 10 novembre se tiendra un café-rencontre créole organisé par la Garderie du petit cheval blanc et l'AFY. Il y aura deux services, à 17 h et à 19 h, au Centre de la francophonie. J'invite tout le monde à célébrer cette occasion, et les activités prévues sont d'excellentes façons de le faire.

L'immigration francophone est une priorité pour le Yukon. Nous sommes conscients des possibilités de développement économique, social, culturel et démographique que cette immigration francophone représente pour le territoire. Prenons le temps cette semaine de reconnaître et de célébrer la contribution des nouveaux Yukonnais et des nouvelles Yukonnaises à la diversité de notre territoire et de nos vies.

Bonne Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone!
 Merci, Monsieur le Président.
Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Francophone Immigration Week in Canada. This year, we celebrate the contributions of French-speaking immigrants to Canada and to the Yukon. The Yukon has a long and rich history of franco-yukonnaise culture and contributions dating back to the gold rush. This aids in the territory's continued status of being the third most bilingual region in Canada after Québec and New Brunswick. I am proud to see the francophone community here in the Yukon continue to grow with a large number of services offered in French and continued expansion in these services throughout the territory.

Some of these services include French schools, daycare services, employment assistance, workshops and training, and artistic and cultural activities. It is great to see the number of people enrolled in these schools and programs keep growing and expanding. As of this year, there are more than 300 students enrolled in French language schools in the territory. Bilingual English and French students — either French first language or who have learned French through the immersion program — will see benefits throughout their lifetimes in school, in work, and in their own personal experiences. I would like to thank the Association franco-yukonnaise and les Essentielles for the important French services that they provide to their community. These groups and the entire French-speaking community have made great efforts to establish services and facilitate integration of francophone immigrants.

I would also like to thank the French Language Services Directorate staff for their work to help support government with French-language delivery, translation, and learning opportunities. It is great to see the services continually expanding and getting more accessible throughout government.
Applause

MLA Tredger: Je suis heureux de me lever aujourd'hui au nom du Nouveau Parti Démocratique du Yukon pour parler de la Semaine Nationale de l'immigration francophone.

Chaque année, début novembre, cette semaine rassemble des milliers de francophones des quatre coins du pays pour célébrer la richesse de la diversité culturelle et linguistique des communautés francophones au Canada. La francophonie est une partie importante de la culture canadienne. Je suis ravie de la voir si active et si vivante au Yukon.

J'invite tous les francophones, les francophiles et les franco-curieux à participer aux différents événements que la communauté francophone du Yukon organise régulièrement. Entre les cafés de l'amitié, les cours de yoga, des ateliers pour écrire votre testament, ou encore des séries d'exercices et de promenades pour écrire vos propres Haikus, il y en a pour tous les goûts!

J'ai d'ailleurs hâte de lire le recueil collectif de haikus.

En cette semaine d'immigration francophone, un bienvenu tout spécial à celles et ceux qui sont nouvelles et nouveaux au

Canada et au Yukon, que vous soyez francophone, ou de tous milieux linguistiques.

Nous sommes heureux de vous accueillir parmi nous.
 Bonne semaine à toutes et tous!
Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter dated August 2 addressed to the Premier from the chair of the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council and the Premier's response dated September 13.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a letter regarding Takhini River Road.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the *Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees*.

Speaker: Are there any further 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: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House do issue an order for the immediate return of the Yukon government's Public Accounts for the fiscal year 2022-23 which the Minister of Finance was required by law to table in this Legislative Assembly no later than October 31, 2023.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Economic Development to extend the interest-free repayment period on its COVID-19 support loan to September 30, 2024.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to implement a moratorium on mineral staking and exploration within municipal boundaries and within 10 kilometres of a municipal boundary until the *Placer Mining Act* and the *Quartz Mining Act* are replaced by new legislation.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation that would allow physician assistants to practise in the territory.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

British Columbia Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, last week, I had the honour of attending the British Columbia Cabinet and First Nations Leaders' Gathering in Vancouver. This gathering is similar to our own Yukon Forum, which also aims to strengthen government-to-government relationships.

During the gathering, I had the opportunity to share Yukon perspectives and experiences and to highlight some of the incredible reconciliation work happening across the territory. There was a collective recognition among leaders of the importance of being open, collaborative, vulnerable, and comfortable with having challenging conversations. During my remarks, I shared just how significant it has been hosting quarterly Yukon Forums, which provide space for these difficult but important conversations. I also highlighted the development of the Yukon First Nation School Board, which now governs one-third of Yukon schools, as well as the Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and two-spirit+ people strategy and implementation plan.

The last thing I touched on during my presentation was the Yukon's emergency preparedness and climate resilience efforts, emphasizing the significance of our ongoing discussions about connecting to the BC power grid. This is another example of work that will provide significant opportunities for economic reconciliation. It is always a privilege to be able to share our progress and experience with other jurisdictions.

The BC Cabinet and First Nations' Leaders Gathering was also an important opportunity to learn about how reconciliation is being addressed in BC. There were a number of really important discussions on topics such as: implementing the *British Columbia Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, new decision-making models, implementing a distinction-based approach, emergency management, and addressing anti-Indigenous racism.

The gathering was also an opportunity to learn from government and First Nation leaders there, as well as to share our experiences in the Yukon. The political landscapes between BC and Yukon are quite different, but there is a lot of overlap in ways that are critical to Indigenous peoples in both jurisdictions. There are three First Nations with traditional territories that cross the two jurisdictions — the Tahltan Nation, Taku River Tlingit First Nation, and Dease River First Nation — so it is important for us to understand the issues and policies in BC.

I thank the event organizers for the opportunity to attend and share information about our Yukon ways of doing and being. I look forward to continuing and strengthening our connections to British Columbia.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for the update on her meetings. The Yukon Party

agrees that maintaining intergovernmental relationships is important, including with our neighbours, the Government of British Columbia, as well as First Nation governments with traditional territories overlapping in the Yukon. We would suggest that the minister should publicly release her presentation that she referenced from the meetings and that the material may be of interest to Yukoners and Yukon First Nations.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her statement. As this was an opportunity to learn from British Columbia, will her government be working with Yukon First Nations to develop Yukon's own version of BC's *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*?

In British Columbia, this important piece of legislation establishes the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* as the province's framework for reconciliation, as called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action. The declaration act aims to create a path forward that respects the human rights of Indigenous peoples while introducing better transparency and predictability in the work that they do together.

There are four key areas to that legislation: Section 3 mandates the government to bring provincial laws into alignment with the UN declaration; section 4 requires the province to develop and implement an action plan in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples to meet the objectives of the UN declaration; section 5 requires regular reporting to the Legislative Assembly to monitor progress on the alignment of laws and implementation of the action plan, including tabling annual reports by June 30 of each year; and sections 6 and 7 allow for flexibility for the province to enter into agreements with a broader range of Indigenous governments and to exercise statutory decision-making authority together.

The BC government then went one step further by establishing the declarations act secretariat. Announced in their 2022 budget, the secretariat is a central agency within government that was created to guide and assist the province to ensure that provincial laws align with the UN declaration and are developed in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous peoples.

More and more Yukon First Nations are referencing the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and are talking about the importance of consent. As the minister spoke to the importance of reconciliation, when will these important conversations and next steps to legislating the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* be taken in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I thank the members opposite for their remarks and questions. As I mentioned before, addressing complex challenges starts with simple conversations. That's really what this gathering is about: creating space for those conversations. While in Vancouver for this important gathering of the BC Cabinet and First Nation leaders, I had a number of really important conversations with

partners. This includes two bilateral discussions, one with the BC Minister of Education, Minister Singh, during which we discussed our government-to-government collaboration and the role of BC's curriculum in Yukon schools, followed by a meeting with the Minister of State for Child Care, Minister Lore, where we explored the long-standing cooperation between our governments in delivering on early learning and childcare services.

I also had the opportunity to advance some conversations regarding a memorandum of understanding with BC to support the implementation of our plan for missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people in Yukon. Developing an MOU with neighbouring jurisdictions falls within the strategy under the objective of establishing a network and inter-agency system to support affected families and survivors.

Violence does not respect boundaries or borders. When someone is missing, I would like other jurisdictions to have a process in place for a coordinated approach. As we move forward with our implementation plan, this work will also include discussions with Alaska and the Northwest Territories.

I had the privilege of joining an impactful conversation regarding the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and, in particular, BC's approach to implementation, as well as consent and decision-making models. As part of this discussion, I highlighted some of the ways in which our government has worked with Yukon First Nations to implement initiatives under which First Nations have assumed control over different aspects of education. This was a significant conversation as we look ahead to the connection to the BC energy grid and other opportunities with British Columbia.

These discussions were very meaningful and I think important to Yukoners. The importance of continually learning from others and staying open to collaboration, as well as embracing diverse perspectives, is a value I uphold in my roles that I hold for Yukon government. There were some really in-depth discussions that happened at this gathering.

I had a chance to talk about *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow* and the significance of this year being the 50th anniversary and that we take much of our guidance around the application of the United Nations declaration from Yukon First Nations. I really look forward to further discussions. This type of knowledge gathering and idea sharing is crucial to helping to address local issues. I look forward to more discussions with my BC colleagues.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Support for substance use emergency

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, in January 2022, the Yukon government declared a substance use emergency following a drastic increase in overdose-related deaths in the territory. At the time, the minister said — quote: “This declaration is a

commitment to action by our government, and a call to action to all Yukoners.”

It is noticeable that this so-called “call to action” has resulted in very little action from the territorial government. In fact, it took them over 19 months to announce their substance use health emergency action plan in August this year. When they did finally announce their plan, it had no timelines, no implementation plans, and no costing.

Does the Minister of Health and Social Services think that waiting 19 months to come up with a strategy is reflective of the call to action that she issued in January 2022?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to talk about the importance of the substance use health emergency here in the Yukon. Our government is committed to working with community partners, First Nations and other governments, and individuals and organizations to respond to the substance use health emergency. While I think it was closer to 18 months — 19 months — doesn't matter — before the substance use health emergency was completed, it was completed in partnership with all of the individuals and organizations that have come together to result in the declaration of the strategy.

What I can note is that the perception or at least the attempt to have Yukoners believe that nothing was done until the strategy was released would be completely false. The territory-wide challenge has been responded to from the first day that it was declared. It cannot be resolved alone. That's why we continue to work with partners to coordinate our response. We have started initiatives like the Car 867, an overdose outreach team that increased opioid treatment services, access to safer supply — all of which happened long before the strategy was released.

Mr. Cathers: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister made the announcement of the substance use health emergency strategy on August 23 — 19 months after she declared an emergency — and the strategy contained no implementation plans, no costing, and no timelines. At the press conference, the minister stated that there were 14 priority actions that would be taken but was completely unable to say what those 14 priority actions were. It wasn't until the next week that the government issued another press release that detailed the 14 so-called “priority actions”. Noticeably absent was any commitment to increasing or expanding addictions treatment.

I would like to ask the minister now: Since the government declared a substance use health emergency, how many new addictions treatment spaces, if any, have been created in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government has actively engaged in collaborative work with the health system and community partners on the development of the substance use health emergency strategy. Along with the Council of Yukon First Nations, the Government of Yukon released the strategy in August 2023. The primary purpose of the strategy is to provide a road map for action on how the Government of Yukon, working with partners, can reduce substance use-related harms in the territory.

The strategy highlights four areas of growth that focus on prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery support, and community safety and well-being.

As a living document, the strategy is designed to evolve over time as it adapts to the changing needs of the communities and incorporates ongoing, valuable feedback from our partners.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, talking about doing something doesn't equal action. Last week, my colleague asked the minister a simple question about a commitment in the confidence and supply agreement to increase bed nights available at detox and to increasing funding available for Yukoners to seek out-of-territory treatment when services are at capacity.

We continue to hear of people being turned away from detox because it is full. A report that government released a few months ago said that almost half the people interviewed had been turned away from addictions treatment, including detox. In the 21 months since declaring a substance use emergency, has the minister created any more addictions treatment spaces, and has any additional funding been provided for Yukoners to access out-of-territory addictions treatment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As noted in September 2021, we opened the supervised consumption site. In May 2022, we completed renovations to support inhalation as a consumption method. In January 2022, we increased access to opioid treatment services at 405 Alexander by expanding prescriber coverage. We are strengthening the opioid treatment services team with nine new positions. These positions include one registered nurse supervisor, two registered nurses, two licensed practical nurses, one community engagement worker, and one administrative assistant. Some of these positions have been filled and recruitment is underway on others.

In October 2022, we launched Car 867, the mobile crisis unit. That includes RCMP and a psychiatric-trained mental health nurse. We have organized two territory-wide public awareness and education campaigns. In November 2022, we held Youth Roots, a substance use prevention gathering. We continue to gather information from the ongoing ministerial advisory committee. We are working on communications.

At the Project Executive Committee, we hosted two mental wellness summits, all of which required additional funding, all of which has been provided by our government. I hope the members opposite will start voting for our budgets.

Question re: Funding for non-governmental organizations

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, throughout the summer, a number of non-governmental organizations have been raising the alarm about the level of support they received from the Yukon government.

In May of this year, the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council wrote to the Premier to express the concerns on behalf of dozens of Yukon NGOs. Since then, this group has been back and forth with the Premier by letter, urging him to take action. They have indicated that the combination of inflation, employee shortages because of stagnant wages compared to the Yukon government growth, and a lack of support from the

Yukon government is threatening the sustainability of the NGO sector as a whole.

In an August 2 letter, they made a clear request for the government to take the sustainability of the NGO sector seriously and requested an urgent meeting with the Premier. The Premier has not met with this group and has continued to brush them off by letter.

Will the Liberal government take the request expressed by these NGOs seriously, meet with them, and come up with a strategy to ensure the financial sustainability of this important sector?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. We certainly have high regard for our not-for-profit organizations in the territory and the work that they do to provide services to Yukoners. I know that we worked very hard with them, particularly during the pandemic. A number of programs were put in place during that time, and I know that our Premier certainly holds up the work of our not-for-profit organizations. I can come back to the House with a little bit more information based on some of the specifics.

I know that our Premier certainly has not shied away from meeting with folks and meeting them where they are at and having the appropriate discussions, which certainly will be the case here.

Again, I will endeavour to bring back further information on the specific questions that were posed today.

Mr. Dixon: Many of the NGOs represented in the August 2 letter deliver services directly on behalf of the Government of Yukon and they make it clear that the Premier's multiple responses throughout the summer ignored the issue. They said — and I quote: "... the Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council ... does not believe that the provided responses adequately address our three critical requests, as outlined in our initial letter."

So, I would like to give the Deputy Premier a chance to respond specifically to some of their requests today. The Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council makes the case that a government-wide strategy is needed to effectively support the NGO sector and calls for a commitment to developing such a strategy to ensure the sustainability of the non-profit sector in the Yukon. Will the Deputy Premier agree to this commitment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government certainly is committed to supporting non-governmental organizations and other partners that provide Yukoners with access to services and supports and timely access to care that might not otherwise be available. We recognize the essential role that non-governmental organizations play in the delivery of health and social services across the territory, which is their primary role in most cases, and our government recognizes that some non-governmental organization partners have identified additional pressures, as we see in every sector of our lives at the moment — our home budgets, our work budgets, our government budgets. Identifying those pressures is resulting from the cost of living and the situation after COVID-19. We remain committed to working together with those partners to address funding needs and program opportunities. We understand the vital role and we support the services that are provided to

Yukoners through the non-governmental organizations. We look forward to our continued work as we begin the budget analysis for 2024-25.

I'll complete this when I have a moment.

Mr. Dixon: Unfortunately, we heard no direct response to the very specific question that was raised by this group. Another issue raised in the letter from NGOs, which was cc'd to all the ministers across the way, relates to funding programs available to the sector. The Premier has highlighted existing programs, such as the community development fund, but in the words of the YNAC — quote: "... these programs are not specifically designed to address the sector's recovery needs from the pandemic, inflation, rising costs, and the growing staffing crisis." Following that, they make a very specific request — quote: "We seek a clear commitment from your government to honor the commitments made in your public statements, specifically regarding the disbursement of the remaining \$2.75 million as part of the Social Recovery Plan."

How does the Liberal government respond to this very specific request?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, I will endeavour to bring back very specific information to the House and reiterate, of course, that we hold the work that not-for-profit, non-governmental organizations do for our territory.

Continuing, I would like to just make one comment before going into some specifics around the NGOs that I work with specifically. We continue to explore, of course, additional opportunities to improve reporting requirements for agreements to understand outcomes, including the requirement for logic models and performance measurement frameworks.

In terms of the work that I am doing with women and gender equity, we have recently signed the new *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*; we are providing very specific funding to all of the equality-seeking organizations in the Yukon and working very closely with them to bring folks together to really determine where we can adjust to make sure that we have the most reach of this fund. I am happy to bring back more information.

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital has done a world of good for family doctors since the program first started in 2020. Before this program existed, any patients admitted to the hospital fell under the care of their family doctors, leaving family doctors to do hospital rounds in-between seeing patients at their clinics. It made for long days and zero work-life balance.

The hospitalist program changed that by creating a roster of dedicated doctors taking charge of patients at Whitehorse General. It has proven to be better for patients, doctors, and hospital staff — everyone agrees that it should continue — but now the program is heading toward collapse in January because this government is proposing what would represent a 10- to 15-percent pay cut to these valuable professionals.

It should be obvious that no government can retain or recruit doctors by offering them less money to do the same

work. Knowing that this is an essential program, why does this government want to cut their pay?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I am always happy to stand to give Yukoners accurate information. Nobody is interested in cutting anyone's pay — certainly not doctors. We are working in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and hospitalist physicians. We have continued to work to support a request to formalize the hospitalist program. What the member opposite is referring to as the doctor-of-the-day program will be formalized into a hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Over the last number of years, inpatient care has been provided by family physicians supporting their own patients and the doctor-of-the-day model that provides inpatient care to patients who are otherwise unattached to a family doctor. That program began in 2008. In 2020, it merged into one physician who undertook the trial as a hospitalist type of model at Whitehorse General Hospital. It has since evolved into a three-person model to support inpatient care as additional family doctors have now handed the care of their own patients over to those hospitalist physicians who are providing hospitalist services. We are working to formalize that program and to make sure that there is care for inpatients at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the hospitalist program will collapse in January unless an agreement can be reached to safely and sustainably staff the program, but instead of making a competitive offer, this government is slashing hospitalist doctors' pay. The minister may think her offer is reasonable, but she doesn't seem to understand that hospitalist doctors have more responsibilities than their southern counterparts. They can't refer patients to specialists as easily, which means that they care for sicker patients with more complex conditions. On top of that, they run the intensive care unit, which is usually not the case down south.

The government is asking doctors to move to the Yukon for more work and less pay, so will this government reconsider the offer that they put to hospitalist doctors?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, an expression of interest will be sent out in the coming week that will seek physicians both inside the Yukon and perhaps from other jurisdictions to fully resource the hospitalist program. The current cost for inpatient physician insured health services is \$1.5 million and the new cost for physicians is expected to be approximately \$2.6 million. Once fully operational, the hospitalist program will continue to contribute to a health care system that values people, is patient-centred, achieves overall wellness goals for Yukoners, and will be driven by the patient experience in that it shall be person- and family-centred, accessible, integrated, and safe.

We look forward to the new integration of the program and the formalization of the doctor of the day.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, for almost a year now, this government has known that the hospitalist program needed to be renewed. We are two months away from January and doctors don't want to sign up to the hospitalist program. This

government has caused this crisis by ignoring a group of dedicated physicians who have created a great program that works better for patients, for doctors, and for the medical community as a whole. Because of this government, doctors will be left with an old system where they had to be both primary care providers at their clinics and acute care providers at Whitehorse General Hospital.

A family doctor and a hospitalist doctor develop a very different set of skills and expertise. They are not interchangeable and, most importantly, neither want to go back to the old days.

Will the minister listen to hospitalists and family doctors instead of trying to force them to either quit or accept a pay cut?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate the opportunity to give accurate information to Yukoners about this important integration of this program so that family physicians can concentrate on their family practice and, in the event that one of their patients is in the hospital, the hospitalists employed at the hospital will be able to provide inpatient care to those individuals.

It is our understanding that the medical staff at Whitehorse General have agreed that, come January, should there not be a sufficient number of physicians that we have by then been contracted to provide, the current system will continue short term. I am not sure where the member opposite is getting their information, but we have great hopes that the expression of interest for the hospitalist doctors will be successful in the very near future and that we can transition into a system that has been operating very well and certainly operates Outside.

I met with the Yukon Medical Association on Friday and had a terrific opportunity to speak with many of the doctors there. I met with the president of the Yukon Medical Association last week. We have had many conversations. They have been involved in the development of this program and we look forward to its success.

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the hospitalist program allows family doctors to spend more time with their patients at their clinics. If the hospitalist program shuts down, each family doctor will be required to take time away from their clinics to care for patients admitted to hospital. We have heard from family doctors that the loss of the hospitalist program will increase their workloads and make their work less efficient. Some family doctors will retire or even leave the Yukon entirely rather than taking on shifts that they don't feel comfortable doing. Losing the hospitalist program is going to make the Yukon's doctor shortage even worse.

Does this government understand that if we lose the hospitalist program, we will lose family doctors too?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to repeat the information if I wasn't clear earlier. This is not a situation in which we will be losing the hospitalist program.

In fact, we will be integrating it into the care at Whitehorse General Hospital, formalizing the hospitalist program so that three individuals will be employed as doctors who will provide inpatient care at the hospital so that individual family

physicians, who might be attached to a patient who is in the hospital, will not be providing that in-hospital care. They will be providing care at their clinics. If an individual has to be admitted to the hospital, then the hospitalist process will provide inpatient care.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, a hospitalist program is the backbone of a well-functioning primary care system. Without it, family doctors will have less time in clinics and less time at programs like the cancer clinic, the Kwanlin Dün First Nation clinic, the walk-in clinic, the Yukon Sexual Health Clinic, and even for community visits.

All the good work that these programs do — or will do, in the case of the walk-in clinic — will be at risk. Not only will we be at risk of having fewer doctors, but those who stay will have less time for primary care.

There's a real risk that if the hospitalist program collapses, it will mean fewer doctors to sign up for shifts at the walk-in clinic or any other outpatient program.

Does this government understand the potential impacts on the health care system as a whole?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, in partnership with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the current hospitalist physicians — which are also known as “doctors of the day” — the Government of Yukon has been working to support a request to formalize the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital.

Over the last several years, inpatient care has been provided by a family physician if one of their own patients is admitted to the hospital. Additionally, care has been provided by a doctor-of-the-day model to provide inpatient care to patients who are not attached to a family physician. The hospitalist program will be developed and is underway to operate at Whitehorse General Hospital so that the model of care is developed into one that has been operating since 2020 where — first one and now three — physicians provide support for inpatient care, as additional family doctors have now handed over that care of their patients to the physicians. This process has morphed into a situation where a program known as “doctor of the day” is operating as hospitalists. It is going to be formalized.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, this government recently released pay rates for doctors who would work at the walk-in clinic. This pay gives family doctors an hourly rate similar to what they would make at their own clinics but only for the first two shifts they would work each month. After those two shifts, they will receive less pay for their third shift onwards. Doctors without a family practice will also make less pay. This is not an incentive for doctors to come to the Yukon or to attract doctors to work at the walk-in clinic. If this government wants to attract and retain doctors in the Yukon, then they have to offer at least as much as they would make elsewhere in the country.

Will this government use a pay structure that attracts doctors to the Yukon and encourages them to participate at the walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, this is definitely a new question, but I'm happy to talk about the Whitehorse walk-in clinic. In January 2023, as part of the CASA, we committed to

improving the delivery of access to health care by contemplating a walk-in clinic and developing one. We have been working with our physician community to have walk-in clinic services available to Yukoners in Whitehorse by 2024. Our plan is to launch as soon as possible.

The clinic will be located at 9010 Quartz Road. That will be temporary, as we wish to open as soon as possible. There is some space available there while we complete renovations on another space. I'm happy to provide information to Yukoners about this program. How it will operate, the staff that are needed, the development of the location, and the development of the physical space — it has all been done in collaboration with our physician community and we look forward to providing that service to Yukoners.

Question re: Government support for local media

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, quality local journalism is critical to democracy and local newspapers are one of the most reliable sources of information, especially in rural Yukon. These points have become especially important as the debate about federal Bill C-18 and the importance of supporting local journalism have been a top issue federally.

This summer, representatives of the local media wrote to the Premier to request that the government reconsider the declining level of support that is provided to local newspapers and media outlets. It was pointed out that the Yukon government continues to advertise heavily with large tech giants like Google and Meta, but the amount of investment in local media has declined. According to the general manager of the *Yukon News* — and I quote: “This decline in financial support hampers our ability to provide quality journalism and keep the public informed and engaged.”

Why has the amount that the Yukon government spends with local media declined so much in the past years?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I would like to start by stating the importance of media in the Yukon and throughout Canada and the world, especially during these times when we really need to rely on reliable information.

The Government of Yukon, of course, supports informed decision-making through internal media monitoring and transcript services internal to government. I believe that there are some very specific questions that are intended for the minister. I will certainly endeavour to bring information back to the House, but I really want to emphasize the importance of media and ensuring that Yukoners are well-informed. We will endeavour to bring back more information to the House.

Mr. Istchenko: In the summer of 2021, we wrote to the Minister of Highways and Public Works about the change in policy that the Liberal government had made regarding the advertising and procurement opportunities in local newspapers. Previously, there was a significant reliance on the advertising RFPs and other procurement opportunities in local newspapers, including those newspapers that are available throughout rural Yukon. This was good for transparency. It allowed rural Yukoners to be made aware of government work in their communities and it also had the added benefit of providing an

important source of revenue to local newspapers, which are small businesses in their own right.

Unfortunately, the government has changed this policy, and much more of their advertising, as I said earlier, has been spent on the big giants like Google and Meta. Will the minister agree to reverse this policy that takes money out of the local economy and hurts small businesses?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is really interesting to see the Yukon Party interested in public discourse and the media. In the past, they have shown absolutely no regard for public statements or anything else. As a matter of fact, just last week, we offered a ministerial statement on public engagement, and the Yukon Party said: No thanks, we are not going to take that up.

Yes, there is an issue right now in Canada. The federal government is trying to deal with it. I met with the media on this issue just this summer. The local media want us to pull back from our social media. As I said to the media advisors — the media companies — at a time of flash floods and of floods and fires in the territory, any medium to get in touch with our constituents was not going to be ignored and that we really couldn't just pull back from that at that time.

I understand that this is an issue. We have done social media; we have no verification of facts. In our media, we do have a robust editing system that tries to get to the truth of the matter. This is a bridge where society is going to have to make the connection between social media and an established and verifiable media presence, and I know that the team here in the territory is looking at that.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, the question was for the Minister of Highways and Public Works. It was about reversing the policy that takes money out of the local economy and hurts small businesses, and I didn't get an answer. As I said previously, this summer, representatives of the local media have reached out to the Premier directly and requested an urgent meeting, and they have followed up several times but have never had a confirmation of receipt from the Liberal government. These folks have cc'd both the leaders of the Yukon Party and the NDP, and they both responded, but so far, the Premier has not.

Will the minister ask the Premier to respond to this meeting request, and will he agree to consider the policy change asked about in my second question that the government has made to reduce the amount of money spent with local media companies?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of experience in this realm and change is very, very difficult in this realm, of course.

We have the opposition, which has demonstrated a real contempt actually at times for public discourse — for giving the public information, which is one of the reasons why we improved the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. We just recently saw them try to interdict and establish the fact that we cannot give statements to the public anymore. They are meddling in that realm as well, and now we have some sort of desire to see more public discourse. I find it very surprising to hear these questions coming on the part of the Yukon Party.

We know that there is a social media presence in Canada that really has been vital in getting public information to our constituents during floods and fires. We know that Facebook and Google — all of these avenues for public information dissemination are important to the territory. We also know that the local media companies, which I was once a member of, have seen real financial difficulties imposed on them because of the changing world that we live in. We are working with those media industries. That is one of the reasons why I met with them this summer — to try to come up with ways to help them out, and we will continue to do that work in this government.

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

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

Motion re appearance of witnesses Committee of the Whole Motion No. 13

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I move:

THAT, from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 6, 2023, Mike Pemberton, chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Lesley Cabott, chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, Dennis Berry, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Chris Milner, acting president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operation of the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 6, 2023, Mike Pemberton, chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Lesley Cabott, chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, Dennis Berry, president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation, and Chris Milner, acting president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operation of the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 13 agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Justice

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to stand today on the first supplementary budget for 2023-24. I just have some very brief comments because there is only one line in this supplementary budget with respect to the Department of Justice. The total sum of increase for 2023-24 included in this budget is \$1.734 million. It is with respect to the wage increase for the Yukon Employees' Union and it is for a three-percent wage increase from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. This increase will be paid for in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

The breakdown for the program area, should these amounts be voted as retroactive payments, are as follows: Within the Department of Justice Corporate Services, \$270,000; Court Services, \$228,000; Legal Services, \$120,000; Regulatory Services, \$197,000; and Community Justice and Public Safety, \$919,000. All are dependent on the number of employees who are eligible for these increases in each of those sections of the Department of Justice.

I have with me Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, and Luda Ayzenberg, the director of finance for the Department of Justice. I thank them for their attendance here today. I will be happy to address any questions that the members opposite may have regarding this supplementary budget.

Mr. Cathers: Since 2015, according to the statistics on the Statistics Canada and the federal Department of Justice websites — which I will share the links to for Hansard — hate crimes have increased dramatically. In information it released in March of this year, Statistics Canada said that police-reported hate crime grew from 1,362 incidents nationally in 2015 to 3,360 in 2021. Justice Canada says: "Between 2015 and 2021, the total number of victims of violent hate crimes increased by 158%." Statistics Canada reports: "Hate crimes targeting the Black and Jewish populations remained the most common types of hate crimes..." It's also worth noting that

among religious communities, the hate crimes targeting Jewish Canadians are both of a higher number and rate than for any other religion.

In October of last year, my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition gave notice of motion in the Legislative Assembly on October 17 urging the Government of Yukon to endorse and adopt the working definition of “anti-Semitism” as adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and he followed up with a letter on that topic to the Minister of Justice dated May 2, 2023. Can the minister please provide us with an update on this matter? She had at one point given indications that suggested that they might be supportive of that, but it has been quite some time since we have heard any update from the government on this topic.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I do not want to rely on my memory with respect to this matter. I do recall the matter; I do recall responding to the letter, I believe, in a positive way. I just don’t recall whether or not it was adopted in this Legislative Assembly or tabled here, but I will look into the matter and provide a response.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the indication. I would note that it hasn’t been formally adopted in this Assembly yet, and I would just refer the minister to my colleague’s letter that asked, if government was going to formally adopt it, what way that would be, noting examples of how another provincial government had done so and asking what was associated with the implementation plan and what actions might be taken. Recognizing that she obviously doesn’t have that information at her fingertips at this moment, I would ask her to get back to us with a fulsome response on that matter.

I am going to move on to the topic of policing priorities. The Minister of Justice holds the final pen on the policing priorities, and this year’s letter is notably completely silent on the topic of property crime. This is despite the fact that we know that the business community specifically asked for combatting property crime to be a priority in this year’s policing priorities.

As the minister knows, a number of businesses near the shelter at 405 Alexander have been repeatedly and regularly raising concerns with the Yukon government and the city, often copying us and the Third Party, but so too have many other businesses in the downtown core which have also seen an increase in property crime and in issues such as needles and other paraphernalia often being left on business premises that the owners have to clean up frequently in the morning. All of this has notably gotten worse under the current Liberal government.

This morning, I spoke to a long-time local business owner whose business had been broken into three times in the last three weeks, and that business owner noted that they, as well as some other business owners, are becoming quite frustrated and some are considering whether they even want to continue in business as the downtown core increasingly becomes less safe and more susceptible to property crime.

My first question for the minister is: Why is her letter on policing priorities completely silent on property crime? My second question is: Will she agree to correct that by amending this year’s policing priorities letter? Third, will the minister

agree to our calls for this government to further increase resources to the RCMP to help them to go after illegal drug dealers as well as crack down on property crime that is hurting many long-time Yukon businesses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to deal with the question of policing priorities, and if I have another opportunity, I am happy to talk about police resources as well, but I know that we are limited in the response time.

Each year, the Yukon Police Council works to collect community perspectives and to provide recommendations to the Minister of Justice to inform policing priorities for the Yukon RCMP. This is a process unique in Canada. It is incredibly important that we support the Police Council in doing their work in collecting community perspectives and making sure that those are communicated to me as the minister so that I can speak to them and communicate them to the Yukon RCMP as being the issues that are of concern to Yukoners — and Yukoners who take the time to address the Police Council or to meet with them.

The 2023-24 policing priorities are: strengthening relationships and increasing public trust; enhancing policing targeted at toxic illicit drugs and serious crime; and policing with First Nations. The council’s recommendations are considered when setting police priorities, and as such, they affect the council’s annual engagement process to identify policing needs from the perspective of Yukoners, communities, and First Nations. The policing priorities build on the priorities from the year before. They don’t necessarily have to, but there is an opportunity to make sure that, if they do build on the previous year’s priorities, the RCMP can have a focused approach to allow them to effect substantial and long-term change in supporting Yukon First Nations or visible minorities, vulnerable populations, and Yukoners as a whole.

The most recent statistics that I have show that, between 2021 and 2022, Yukon property crime was reduced by 0.09 percent — not very much of a decrease but, nonetheless, not a marked increase either. The policing priorities note the values and priorities captured by individual meetings with Yukoners and the Police Council engaging with diverse community groups across the Yukon, including stakeholders and the public through in-person discussions and presentations. In order to engage and seek feedback from Yukoners, the council travels to Yukon communities and has a schedule by which they attend those communities. This year, in order to set these priorities, they travelled to Haines Junction and Beaver Creek, and they attended the Kluane First Nation annual harvest camp.

Elements and recurring themes from those engagements as well as feedback from the Department of Justice, individuals, and, I understand, the Chamber of Commerce here in the Yukon was incorporated into those policing priorities.

I should note that the policing priorities generally operate at a high level and don’t speak to specific types of crime, although those types of crime, including property crime, as noted by the member opposite, are included as issues in the umbrella of the policing priorities, including the opportunity for the RCMP to strengthen relationships and increase public trust.

Clearly, property crimes are an issue with respect to increasing public trust.

I can also note that, this year, it was noted through this process that we will see additional challenges as we continue to work collaboratively with our partners to combat the substance use health emergency in the territory. I know that the Yukon Party members opposite are supportive of further enforcement with respect to addressing the substance use health emergency, and they have said so here in the House.

We are working to support community safety planning initiatives and to work to reduce violence and strengthen relationships with Yukon First Nations and municipalities. Furthermore, we are continuing to do the important work that arises from *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*, which will further support our commitment to reconciliation. These details of the priorities and the priorities of our department and government going forward were all conveyed to the chief superintendent as part of the policing priorities.

Lastly, I can indicate that the underlying issues are noted — property crime, supporting the arrest and processing of drug dealers — the reduction, therefore, in crimes that harm Yukoners and in crimes that harm individuals with respect to drug enforcement, et cetera — and are captured in the policing priorities because they are the underlying issues, as noted and as certainly understood by the community here in the territory.

Mr. Cathers: I have a few questions for the minister about RCMP resources, which, in the interest of time, I will group together. My first question is a simple one, and that is regarding what the next detachment is that is scheduled for replacement and/or major renovations — if the minister could provide us with that information about which community that will be in and when it is scheduled.

Also, in terms of the RCMP's overall resourcing capacity, as I mentioned earlier in this Sitting, the ratio of RCMP members per capita has declined significantly under the current government from where it was in 2016. Adding to this, we have learned that the Trudeau Liberal government is planning to cut resources for the federally funded RCMP positions again. This follows a cut five years ago in 2018, which, according to information provided for the minister earlier this year, involved — quote: "After the federal government announced changes to its policing strategy in 2018, the Yukon lost the service of three federally funded police officers. Earlier this year, the RCMP advised the Government of Yukon to anticipate further reductions in funding for federal RCMP positions."

My question for the minister regarding that is: Can she please tell us what the Trudeau Liberal cuts to the RCMP that are being anticipated will mean here in the Yukon? Could she indicate what steps, if any, she or the Premier have personally made to urge the federal Liberal government to cancel the cuts and increase RCMP resources for the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I thank you for the questions. These are important opportunities for Yukoners to hear about the things that they don't often hear about.

Old Crow will be the next detachment that will be dealt with through the collaboration between the Yukon government and the RCMP, and we continue to work together to ensure that policing infrastructure in the territory meets the operational requirements needed in cycle 2.

Between 2017 and 2022, we funded three major detachment projects: Faro, Carcross, and Ross River. As I have noted, Old Crow will be the next one. In late 2022, the Government of Yukon signed off on a revised budget — what is known as a cycle 3 budget — of \$19.627 million. That is the territorial contribution over the next five years, or since late 2022, for the construction of a new detachment building in Old Crow and life-cycle investments to maintain the Yukon RCMP's entire infrastructure portfolio going forward.

The next question was about federal policing and what changes are contemplated at the federal level. I don't want to speak for the federal government, but I can assure Yukoners that we have been very engaged in making sure that they do not make decisions in Ottawa with respect to the federal policing model that adversely affect Yukoners.

I can note that Canada has invited Yukon to a meeting in Ottawa on November 17, 2023. It will be attended by the deputy minister and by the chief superintendent for the Yukon. The government is extending — we have brought M Division chief superintendent to attend the meeting to discuss, generally, federal policing concerns and the federal policing model. The reallocation of federal policing resources will increase pressure on contract policing jurisdictions, of which the Yukon is one, to fund additional officers through the police service agreements.

It is imperative that the federal government understands the impact that these decisions will have on communities like ours in the north. Rural communities — despite the fact that Yukon is getting regularly more population and becoming a larger and more sophisticated city, we are still a rural-style and rural-populated city in Canada. We rely heavily on our contract policing services here in the territory, and we will be making those representations as noted.

The deputy minister — I guess it is just next week — will be doing that. I will also be meeting with the federal Minister of Justice and hopefully the minister of public safety during the first week of December when a number of us will be attending an intergovernmental forum in Ottawa for the purposes of having these discussions in a general way but in a more specific way with the ministers in a bilateral meeting. I can indicate that this representation on behalf of Yukoners is considered to be urgent from our point of view. We are responsible for setting the yearly policing priorities. As noted, the RCMP here in the territory are well-versed to be able to speak to this situation on what the federal government is contemplating with respect to funding and with respect to the model.

I do have some additional information regarding the funding. Back in January 2019, the RCMP M Division commanding officer informed Members of the Legislative Assembly that the readjusted budget allocated for the federal investigation unit was \$1.791 million, which was a 12-percent decrease from the previous year's budget. We did work

diligently to deal with the federal investigation unit and it resulted in remaining positions not being staffed at the time, and the federal funding has been maintained. As a direct consequence, the RCMP M Division requested further increases to their funding and staffing levels under the TPSA. We have responded to that, and they also worked diligently to make sure that all of the positions here in the territory were filled, and as a result, the conversations will continue. We will also be working with the other northern ministers of Justice, particularly to make sure that we speak collectively on behalf of the territories and the impact that these decisions have and will have should they be maintained in a way that does adversely impact the territory. I am very hopeful that we will be able to convey those messages and be able to move forward together and make sure that the RCMP are properly and appropriately funded.

Mr. Cathers: My next question is regarding an initiative that the minister has liked to refer to a number of times in talking about actions that the government is taking, and that is Car 867. My understanding is that there are two nursing positions established in association with that initiative. One was not filled, and due to the nurse in the other position taking leave, there has been an impact on operations of that car. I also understood that there is a dedicated RCMP member associated with it and that the impact of this has been a significant disruption to its operations that may be as long as four months.

Can the minister provide an update on the current status of Car 867? If indeed there is an interruption to operations, how long will that be and what does the government plan to do about it?

In the interest of time, I'm going to group together other questions too. My next question is a follow-up question on the issue of bail reform. The minister will recall that we debated this previously in the Assembly, including during both Question Period and budget debate. As the minister knows, the changes that the Trudeau Liberal government made with Bill C-75 had a significant negative impact on public safety as a result of effectively putting a reverse onus on prosecutors to prove that an offender shouldn't be released instead of requiring the offender to demonstrate that their release would not create an unacceptable risk to public safety.

This led to all 13 premiers unanimously signing a letter to the Prime Minister that included the sentence that: "The justice system fundamentally needs to keep anyone who poses a threat to public safety off the streets ... And this starts with meaningful changes to the Criminal Code, an area solely within the federal government's jurisdiction."

We have discussed this in the past. I would appreciate it if the minister could update us on what is happening on the federal side and — to the extent that the legislation that they're advancing may not be fixing the problem as suggested by the national police federation in the report that it issued this summer — what efforts she is making, or the Premier is making, to lobby the federal government for additional actions.

Additionally, as the minister will recall, I made reference to the National Police Federation — which, of course, represents RCMP members — president referring to the current

system as "catch-and-release" and calling on the federal government as well as provinces and territories to take action. That position paper that was released this summer in July — all seven action items laid out by the National Police Federation involve some action by the Yukon government. The minister previously was not able to indicate what actions the government would take related to that. I would appreciate it if she would provide me with an update today.

Last but not least on my short list here is a question regarding Bill C-21. That, of course, is federal legislation that is going after firearms owners who have lawfully acquired their firearms, and it includes the so-called firearms buyback as well as a ban on handguns. The program is massively expensive. The National Police Federation has expressed concern with that model diverting resources from where they are most needed. Other police organizations and chiefs have also expressed concern regarding that. I have quoted a number of them in the past, so I won't repeat them today.

My question is regarding what the territorial Liberal government has done on this file that is of great interest to many Yukon firearms owners. Have they urged the federal government to cancel the plan to confiscate firearms under the so-called buyback program?

We know that Yukoners, including the Yukon Fish and Game Association, have recently presented to the Senate committee dealing with Bill C-21 their views on this topic. Has the Yukon government made any presentations or submissions to the Senate regarding Bill C-21? If so, what did they do? If not, will they consider, in fact, providing a statement to the Senate on behalf of Yukoners and specifically reflecting what we hear from a great many Yukoners who feel that this legislation is federal overreach that is going after law-abiding firearms owners who statistics clearly show are not the source of the problem?

Experts including police organizations like the National Police Federation have said very clearly that those lawful firearms owners are not the source of the problem. As I have mentioned a number of times, I think, in this Assembly, the Toronto police department, for example, has consistently found that 85 percent or more of the firearms used in committing crimes in the Toronto area are smuggled in from the United States.

Police are in agreement that licensed firearms owners are not the source of the problem, and Yukon firearms owners and hunters are very concerned about this as well.

What have the minister and her colleagues done on the topic of Bill C-21?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I can cover these answers with respect to the time allotted.

Back in November 2022 — about a year ago — our government and the RCMP announced the launch of the Car 867, which is a mobile crisis unit. It is a program in partnership with the RCMP, the Department of Justice, and the Department of Health and Social Services to provide RCMP and mental health nursing responses for mental health and wellness-related 911 calls. The impact of these officers and these health care professionals being on the street — on the

calls that are normally referred to a regular watch — is significant. It is staffed with a police officer and registered psychiatric nurse from Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. Its duty is to respond to calls for service related to mental health issues — perhaps suicide risks and other 911-related calls.

They provide a specialized joint response, including on-site mental health assessments and referrals to other appropriate care providers, such as rapid-access counselling, the child and youth and family treatment team, a psychiatric outreach program, or adult protection services, depending on the situation. As well as safety planning and working with the client on issues in real time, they respond in real time to help someone.

Currently, this program is being implemented exclusively in Whitehorse. Between October 2022 and September 2023, the unit has responded to 281 calls. I can note that there are currently two police officers assigned to this service. It is currently a pilot project. They operate from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. At present, the capacity and the service providers and the program respond to 47 percent of incoming mental health-related calls. Additional support will increase Car 867 coverage to seven days per week to help cover critical call periods and evaluation of the expanded program. My note indicates, if I can recall correctly, that we are currently recruiting a second psychiatric nurse for this program so that we can expand the hours.

The additional question with respect to bail reform — I can respond as well to that question. Bill C-48, which is progressing through Parliament, was developed to address the concerns about public safety and increase confidence in the justice system related to repeat violent offending. I can indicate that this came about very quickly after recognition of the need for the previous law to change. The Government of Canada agreed to take action as soon as possible and then did so by bringing amendments to the *Criminal Code* in May 2023, after the ministers met in March 2023. This is a significant opportunity and was a significant response by the federal Department of Justice when territorial and provincial ministers of Justice as well as others such as National Police Services and others brought it. The RCMP brought it to their attention as an urgent matter.

On October 11 to 13, the ministers of Justice and public safety met. The ministers agreed to continue working on enhancements to the bail data, which is incredibly important for this to proceed well. We also agreed to monitor the effectiveness of the impacts of Bill C-48 after it becomes law. Within our own jurisdictions, ministers remain mindful of the potential impacts of these measures on groups that are overrepresented in the justice system, such as Indigenous people, black persons, and other vulnerable groups. That work is important to make sure that there is no adverse impact. We are aware of the National Police Federation's recommendations on bail reform and we are discussing them with M Division — Yukon RCMP. Those recommendations are being considered alongside input that we have received from Yukon First Nations and others informing the work that we are doing to

advance improvements to the bail system in the Yukon. We certainly continue and look forward to continuing our work with other provinces and territories to explore both the legislative and non-legislative tools to better address the issue of repeat violent offenders, being mindful, of course, of judicial independence — who are the decision-makers with respect to how bail decisions are made in a courtroom to determine whether or not someone can be released. The issues of reverse onus with respect to the obligations of the Crown or the obligations of the defence counsel are incredibly important with respect to how those bail hearings play out.

The recommendations and calls to action made by the National Police Federation are all things that we think we can work together on. The first involves data; the second involves technology; the third involves JP legal training for justices of the peace where they have them, and we do have them here in the territory. The fourth one is related to systemic research in Canada and the importance of that opportunity to work together. The fifth is that provinces and territories should commit more resources to the collection of data, and this is important as we go forward to determine what the impact of the new bill is — the impact of the decisions and the recognition of the importance of bail in the process for keeping our streets safe. The sixth one is that government should commit to evidence-informed bail reforms that include alternatives to monetary bail deposits, sureties, et cetera, to modernize the bail system. That's an important aspect here in the territory. The seventh is that government should invest in creating a community bail enforcement monitoring system involving dedicated law enforcement units and cutting-edge technology throughout Canada. It's all forward looking.

Ms. Blake: I thank the officials for being here today. I probably only have time for one question for the department. Over the summer, I have been travelling to numerous communities, and one of the primary concerns that has come up from First Nations or families who have been victimized or who have had offenders in their families related to charges of murder, manslaughter, or sexual assault charges — numerous communities have asked what supports is the government providing before, during, and after court, and this question has come from communities that have had manslaughter or murder charges in the community with citizens. The concern from First Nations is that they don't have the capacity or resources to address the dynamics in the community or the challenges that come after charges have been laid. Communities are wondering what supports they have access to.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to speak further with the member opposite or answer other questions on another occasion when we have more time. I can indicate that the Department of Justice supports funding for the Indigenous courtworker program. I know that there are very skilled individuals who support families and individuals going through the court process — not only individuals who are accused of a crime, but they also reach out with their special knowledge of families and communities.

Our Victim Services branch at the Department of Justice is responsible for supporting victims through this process or any

process in which they are identified as the victim, even if the matter is not going to court. If the matter is going to court, I am aware that, should victims want to have the support of Victim Services, they can request it. If they are working with Victim Services, certainly the kinds of things that Victim Services does support families and individuals who are going through these processes.

I don't really have the time today to acknowledge how incredibly difficult it is. With respect to Victim Services, they also work closely with the mental wellness unit at the Department of Health and Social Services. For instance, when the anniversary of the horrible tragic crime in Faro was coming up, we proactively made sure that there were additional counsellors in the Town of Faro to support individuals who might be having difficulties or want to get support through that horrific situation. It goes on with respect to the charges that have not yet come before the court. We also support Gladue reports and Gladue aftercare by the team of individuals who work on those reports to make sure that a full perspective of an individual's background goes before the court.

There are a number of opportunities, and we are mindful of making sure that we can support victims as they proceed through this process and make sure they have what they need if at all possible. I would encourage, if you are aware of any individual situations, that you reach out to us or to Victim Services directly and help get services and wraparound services for individuals who are experiencing stress going through the court process.

Deputy Chair: The Chair would like to suggest that the member move that the Chair report progress to allow the witnesses time to take their seats before 3:30.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I wasn't sure if you would call order, but I'm happy to move that you report progress today.

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

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 13 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

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

Appearance of witnesses

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 13 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses, and I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, I believe that you will introduce the witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, we have several folks here today — first of all, the chair of the Yukon Development Corporation Board of Directors, Mr. Mike Pemberton; then we have Dennis Berry, who is the president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Development Corporation; next to him is Chris Milner, the acting president and chief executive officer of the Yukon Energy Corporation; and then on your left, Madam Chair, their right, is the chair of the Yukon Energy Corporation Board of Directors, Lesley Cabott.

I welcome them to the Assembly and am looking forward to questions this afternoon.

Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks?

Mr. Pemberton: I thank the minister and I thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to provide information for the members of the Legislature with respect to the Yukon Development Corporation. I would like you all to join me in recognizing today that we are meeting on the traditional territory of Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

The Yukon Development Corporation is charged with continued investment into renewable projects with First Nation and community partners, which includes the Atlin hydro project and many others. Developing new reliable sources of electricity is a fundamental step in meeting the challenges and targets described in the *Our Clean Future* strategy.

Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation continue to work together to ensure that we access reliable, affordable, and renewable energy to meet the needs of the Yukon's growing population and economy. Through the independent power production policy, the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative, and the Arctic energy fund, we encouraged the development of First Nation and community-led renewable energy projects to reduce the use of fossil fuels in generating electricity across the territory. This requires an inclusive, collaborative approach, and YDC is actively working with all levels of government as well as the utilities to identify and support the renewable energy projects that best address the Yukon's unique energy context.

Yukon Development Corporation also continues to monitor impacts on electrical ratepayers, and we are pleased to be able to respond quickly to the recent impacts of inflation on Yukoners by working with the utilities to implement the inflation relief rebate.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on YDC's behalf, and I will turn the floor over to my colleague from Yukon Energy Corporation.

Ms. Cabott: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to be here today to share information with members of the Legislature about ways that Yukon Energy is providing Yukoners with sustainable, reliable, and affordable electricity.

I would first like to start off by celebrating that, on average, over 90 percent of the electricity that we generate comes from renewable sources.

The Yukon is a Canadian leader in renewable electricity generation, which is no easy feat considering we are an isolated grid with small economies of scale. Looking ahead, we know that the Yukon's electricity system is in a state of transformation. This means that demand for electricity is growing and that the way that people use electricity is changing. As a result, significant and ongoing investments are needed in all aspects of the Yukon's electricity system, from generation, transmission, and distribution to storage and end-user programs. This includes significant investment from all levels of government to keep electricity rates affordable. These investments must focus on three key priorities: increasing the supply of winter capacity and energy resources; decreasing winter demand for power; and upgrading our existing electricity system.

Yukon Energy recognizes and expresses our sincerest thanks to First Nation governments in the Yukon for allowing us to own, operate, and connect to critical energy infrastructure on their traditional territories. We also recognize that ongoing collaboration with First Nation governments and development corporations is critical to our energy future. Yukon Energy is committed to advancing meaningful reconciliation with First Nations and embracing new ways of working together.

Our work with First Nation governments and development corporations will continue as we begin to update our long-term resource plan next year. At the same time, we will kick off our short-term energy supply plan that is focused on testing the potential for wind along with firm backup capacity. For now, we know that we will need to continue to rent diesel generators during the winter. Renting diesel generators is the only solution available to us now. That allows us to keep the lights on and homes warm on the coldest and darkest days. As more Yukoners rely on electricity for heat, it is becoming increasingly important that we have these generators.

Chair: Order.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I will allow the witnesses to complete their opening remarks.

Ms. Cabott: May I continue, Madam Chair? I put my notes away. Okay, I know where I am.

As I was saying, more Yukoners are relying on electricity for heat and it is becoming important that we have these generators while we advance other projects. These other projects include uprates to substations in Dawson and Whitehorse, as well as to the distribution system in Dawson; uprates to hydro units in Whitehorse and Aishihik; the battery project; the Atlin hydro expansion project; the soon-to-be connection of four more independent power producers to the Yukon grid; and last but certainly not least, our latest demand-side management program, peak smart home, which launched last week.

Of course, progress does not come without challenges. Obtaining funding and social licence is key to the success of all our work. It is also why some projects take longer to complete than others. Yukon Energy's dedicated staff and board work hard to overcome these challenges and to build the sustainable electricity future we all want for the Yukon.

Thank you, Madam Chair. That concludes my remarks.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opening remarks from our witnesses today. I will, of course, welcome everyone to the Legislature, and we will jump right in with questions for our witnesses.

The first thing I would like to ask about is the status of the CEO hiring. I note in the motion today that Mr. Milner has the acting role. Can the board provide us an update as to the hiring of a permanent CEO for the Energy Corporation?

Ms. Cabott: We have been in a recruitment process and we expect that to end very shortly. We have upcoming board meetings and expect to have a recommendation to the board at that time.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that. We will jump into projects and the overall plan. When witnesses were here last year in November 2022, the previous CEO of the Energy Corporation noted that they would be looking at reviewing the 10-year renewable energy plan. Obviously, we are only a few years into it, but a number of things have changed. The previous CEO noted that it was time to look at changes to that plan or renewing that plan.

I would like to ask for an update as to what has been done to look at the 10-year renewable energy plan for the corporation.

Mr. Milner: Madam Chair, resource planning is going to take two forms over the next little while. Basically, the short-term needs will be identified through a supply plan, and we have started that process already. That's looking specifically at what we do between now and 10 years from now, but more importantly perhaps is: What does 10 years beyond and the decades that follow look like? I think that's where you start seeing conversations about large-scale projects that are set to meet generational demands and what the energy future of the Yukon could look like. It's where you start seeing conversations like the grid connection take shape. It's where you start seeing conversations such as emerging technologies that aren't quite market ready that the Yukon doesn't want to be out in front with but show potential for the Yukon in the future.

It's also where you start seeing big projects that take a lot of time, a lot of money, and a lot of social license taking place, so options such as: additional hydro; the pump storage projects that sit in the current renewable energy plan; larger scale grid-connected batteries; and larger scale renewable energy projects, such as wind projects that deliver energy in the winter.

We are actively pursuing this process right now. We have kicked it off in the summer with a strategy meeting with the board itself, we have engaged a contractor to map out the plan with our staff in place, we have two staff people in the office working on this actively, we introduced it to the CYFN conference that was in October, and we should start seeing

progress on the short-term supply plan — the zero- to 10-year options — in the next four to six months. I will say that we know that this will involve rental diesels for at least five years, as it takes that long to build anything.

Mr. Dixon: So, what will the outcome of this planning initiative be? Will there be a new 10-year plan? Will there be a set of revisions made to the previous plan? What can we expect to see as an outcome of this process?

Mr. Milner: The outcome will be two things: One will be a short-term supply plan, mapping out real projects that can be implemented in the near term; and the second thing will be a long-term resource plan. The reason why they are separated is that long-term resource plans take more time to do. We know that we need to update the current activities between zero and 10 years sooner than it takes a long-term resource plan to be completed. Larger projects are more complex. They take more time to determine their feasibility and certainly take more time to implement than the shorter projects in the interim. Those shorter projects would be more addressing the gaps that we know to be true today, which we are currently meeting with rental generators.

Mr. Dixon: What is the current dependable capacity gap?

Mr. Milner: Madam Chair, it is 37 megawatts.

Mr. Dixon: So, in the most recent general rate application, on page 3, the Energy Corporation notes that, with current trends, we're expected to see an increase of our non-industrial peak by 2030 of 36 percent. Does that sound correct to witnesses?

Mr. Milner: That is what we're expected to see: 36 percent between now and 2030. Certainly, we have seen an increase of about 25 or a little bit less in the previous five years.

Mr. Dixon: Yes, the CEO is close. It has been 23 percent in the last five years and it's projected to increase by 36 percent by 2030. Now he's noted that there is a current dependable capacity gap of 37 megawatts. If that increases by 36 percent, we're looking at a dependable capacity gap by 2030 of roughly 50 megawatts — 49 and change.

I think what many Yukoners are looking at understanding is how that gap is going to be filled. The CEO has made it clear that they are undertaking a zero- to 10-year plan — a short-term supply plan. What kind of projects can we expect to see in that short-term supply plan?

Mr. Milner: We're going to have to be really specific in the projects we look at in the short-term supply plan because the options to us are limited. We know that we need projects that emit less GHGs, so we will be aiming at projects that provide winter energy that are non-emitting, such as wind. We are in a really good place to understand that right now. We are the eve of connecting four megawatts of wind up on Haeckel Hill. That will provide inputs and intel that we have not had before — modern turbines connected to an isolated grid and delivering energy will give us a lot of information.

The other piece that we have coming forward is a large-scale grid-connected battery — 20 megawatts for two hours. What that does is two things: It helps with peaks and shaving peaks during times of high-intensity use, but it also

conditions the variable energy that would flow from wind turbines and other sources.

These are the kinds of projects that we can expect to look at in greater detail in the short-term supply plan. That said, we know that, in the background of any system, you need firm capacity. Right now, firm capacity comes to us in the form of diesel rental generators, LNG units that we own, and diesel units that we own. As well, the vast majority of our firm capacity is hydro. So, that system together is something that we will be exploring through the supply plan.

Mr. Dixon: The projects that the CEO just listed were all ones that are currently in the plans. Are there any new projects that we can expect to see in the 10-year plan?

Mr. Milner: Agreed — examples of those projects are in the current plan. The short-term supply plan will look at the scalability of them.

Mr. Dixon: Obviously the bulk of the dependable capacity shortfall is being filled with rental diesels. That has been acknowledged by the CEO already.

Can the witnesses give us a date or a year that we will no longer need rental diesels?

Mr. Milner: It is a difficult question to answer. We will always need dependable capacity, so the options for that dependable capacity will depend on the projects that come to life during that time. There are several projects in play right now that will reduce our reliance on rental generators and those are in play today. Whether they be the battery, the various IPPs that are in place, or the thermal replacement projects happening in Faro, Dawson, and Whitehorse — all of those put downward pressure on the existing number of rental generators. But until we get a larger renewable energy project, we will be relying on thermal in one way or another.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I am sure that it goes without saying that we will return to rental diesels more, but I will jump into a few other projects that are on the horizon. I will start with the Atlin hydro project. Can the witnesses give us an overview of where we are at today, what the current budget and timelines are for that project, and any other updates that they can provide?

Mr. Berry: The current update on the Atlin project is that the estimate currently on the overall project value is \$360 million. We have a funding gap of \$106 million. We continue to work with the THELP — Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership — and the local Atlin community. What I can say is that Yukon has committed \$50 million to the project. I have currently expended \$2 million on the geotechnical work on the transmission line. This has also leveraged \$6.5 million in federal dollars to look at the generation footprint and undertake the geotechnical work there. This will be critical for us to get finalized engineering and better numbers for actual construction.

In terms of construction timelines, it is a two- to three-year construction window and, of course, that would commence as soon as all funding is in place. That is the current update.

Mr. Dixon: I think I misheard some of that, so I am just going to ask the witness to repeat one part of that: Can he tell us what the current funding gap is?

Mr. Berry: The current funding gap is \$106 million.

Mr. Dixon: That is roughly where it was last year, according to the witnesses last year. However, since the witnesses were here last year, we have seen a few developments. One was that, in May, the Premier travelled to Ottawa and gave an interview to the *Whitehorse Star* where he exclaimed that he had secured a “strong commitment” from the federal government in May in Ottawa. How much additional funding has been secured from Ottawa since the Premier’s trip in May?

Mr. Berry: What I can say is that I continue to meet monthly with Minister Vandal and Minister Wilkinson’s office. That strong commitment is still there. We have been lobbying the federal government as part of this, and I can say that this is still a project that is on their radar and that they are still committed to. In addition, staff through my office meet monthly with other counterparts, like ECCC, CIRNAC, and CanNor on this topic in particular. All indications I have is that the federal government is still highly supportive and we continue to work with them.

Mr. Dixon: Has the federal government being highly supportive provided any additional funding?

Mr. Berry: At this point, we are still working on the commitment and working to nail down the actual funding gap — the project gap. Part of that will be through the geotechnical work that is happening. So, I guess, to answer the question — no, other than the \$6.5 million that we leveraged to do the footprint work around the generation area.

Mr. Dixon: I note that the Premier also recently met with the Premier of British Columbia and referenced this project. Other than the amount contributed previously last year, has the Government of British Columbia indicated any further support financially for this project?

Mr. Berry: I can see that the \$20 million is what the Province of British Columbia has committed to this project. Any other updates regarding those discussions are probably best for the minister to answer.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that. The witness began to explain some of the money that has been expended already by the Yukon on this project; I believe he said it was \$2 million. Can the witness explain with some clarity what money has been advanced to this project? Which funding pot did it come out of? Was it out of general revenue from the Yukon government or was it from YDC and YEC? If so, what was that funding used for?

Mr. Berry: There has been \$2 million committed. It has not been spent yet. That \$2 million is specific for the geotechnical work along the transmission line that will come into Yukon through BC. That work will de-risk the project by actually coming up with the actual engineering for the transmission line itself. Again, the \$2 million leveraged \$6.5 million from the federal government to undertake, at the same time, the geotechnical work on the actual generation footprint, which, again, will allow us to get detailed drawings so we can start to de-risk around overall cost of the project.

We had \$50 million set aside through the Yukon Development Corporation, through the Government of Yukon. Those are our dollars to leverage toward the project. In order to

do that this year, I used a portion of the remainder of ICIP funding to pay for that work. It comes out of the \$50 million that we have set aside for Atlin hydro.

Mr. Dixon: Can I ask the witness to explain further? He said that it is ICIP money that has been expended so far. Can he explain that?

Mr. Berry: I misspoke. Sorry. Not ICIP funding. I will just look through my notes. It was from general revenue. Sorry; I am confusing my programs.

Mr. Dixon: The amount that has been expended so far was out of the \$50 million that has been earmarked by the Yukon government to spend on this project; is that correct?

Mr. Berry: That is correct; \$2 million.

Mr. Dixon: There’s one other piece of clarity that I’m looking for. The witness has said a few different things, Madam Chair. One is that the money was committed and one was that the money was spent, so I would just like some clarity: How much money has actually been spent — not committed, but how much money has actually flowed to the project?

Mr. Berry: So, committed through a transfer agreement with the company. Actually, spent so far — I don’t know if I’ve got the first invoice yet for that work. I could confirm here. It has not been dispersed yet, but we are expecting — the work is being undertaken right now before it frees up, so I’m expecting that first disbursement, but I haven’t received it yet.

Mr. Dixon: It attracted some attention last year when the former CEO of THELP allegedly absconded with some money from this project, and I was wondering if any money from the Yukon was involved in that alleged activity.

Mr. Berry: I can’t speak to what occurred then, but I can say that the Government of Yukon had spent no money with THELP at that time and had transferred no funds.

Mr. Dixon: I’ll move on from that. I would like to talk about Moon Lake now. Can the witnesses give us a sense of the timeline currently for that project? I know that when the 10-year renewable energy plan was first tabled, Moon Lake was forecast to be providing power to Yukon in 2028. Do the witnesses have a sense of when that project will be advanced, what the current budget is for it, and what milestones have been accomplished so far?

Mr. Milner: Moon Lake is in the renewable energy plan. It’s listed as a pump storage project. It could deliver 35 megawatts of energy to this storage during the summer and used during the winter. It’s a project that has a lot of complexities to it. It’s taken a lot of time to get to where we are today. It has been discussed in terms of what it can deliver to the grid from a feasibility perspective, but it has never been discussed as to how the project would be implemented in partnership with First Nations and funders in a successful way, and I believe that’s the stage we’re at right now, just looking at energy planning in the region and how best to work with First Nations on moving projects of that size and nature. Until we can get some clarity around what that looks like, projects like that are going to be slow to move.

Mr. Dixon: The current forecasts on Yukon Energy’s website have that project coming online in 2028. Does that seem realistic to the witnesses?

Mr. Milner: It is not realistic. Also, I am just getting a note here to correct the record on some of the dependable capacity comments that were made in our previous line of questioning. If we can go back to that for a moment just to clarify that dependable capacity comes from a variety of areas. It is basically the firm energy that we can rely on — dispatchable energy — such as hydro, the rental generators themselves, the generators we own, and the LNG units. The comment referenced that the bulk of our dependable capacity comes from rental generators and the bulk of our dependable capacity comes from hydro.

Mr. Dixon: I will return to that one in a moment, Madam Chair, but I will let the witness answer the first question about Moon Lake. When is a reasonable time that we can expect to see Moon Lake come online?

Mr. Milner: We are not able to put a timeline on Moon Lake right now until we can work through the critical partnerships that would be needed to move a project such as that and any large renewable energy project.

Mr. Dixon: I will jump back to the witness' correction of earlier comments. Of the 37-megawatt dependable capacity gap, how much is filled by rental diesels?

Mr. Milner: Thank you for the clarification. The dependable capacity gap during the winter peaks, between December and April each year, would be met by rental generators.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear, the dependable capacity gap of 37 megawatts that will happen in our non-industrial peak will be filled 100 percent by rental diesels?

Mr. Milner: It is met through 22 rental generator units this winter.

Mr. Dixon: My comment that it is largely filled by rental diesels was inaccurate in the sense that it was not — I didn't say "100 percent"; I said that the bulk of it was. I do stand corrected — 100 percent of the dependable capacity gap is filled through rental diesels. I stand corrected.

As that gap grows in the coming years — and according to the YEC's current estimates, it will grow by 36 percent between now and 2030 — other than the battery project and new thermal capacity coming on in Dawson and Faro, are there other short-term projects that will fill the dependable capacity gap between now and 2030?

Mr. Milner: The only other project not mentioned would be Atlin.

Mr. Dixon: So, outside of Atlin coming online in the next few years, is it safe to say that the 36-percent increase that they are forecasting between now and 2030 will be filled 100 percent by rented diesel generators?

Mr. Milner: Our supply plan will help inform that answer in a better way, but for now, we are using rental generators to fill our dependable capacity gap.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I will move on then to another project that is within the 10-year renewable energy plan, which is the Southern Lakes enhanced storage. Can the witnesses give us an update on this project, what its current status is, how much money has been spent on it so far, and whether or not it's achieving any increased generation?

Mr. Milner: The Southern Lakes enhanced storage is not currently advancing. It is also another project that requires a fairly extensive permitting process like the water licensing process that we're currently going through. We are advancing the water licensing process without that component to it to make that process as efficient as possible.

Really, in the end, a project of that nature would require some level of support from the First Nation whose land it impacts, and we have not achieved that.

Mr. Dixon: Is the Southern Lakes enhanced storage project currently cancelled or is it just paused? What is its current status? If they are not pursuing it, is it safe to say that it is paused or cancelled? What is the current status?

Mr. Milner: The Southern Lakes enhanced storage project is not moving forward. In fact, we have asked to recover the cost through the current general rate application. I was looking for the detailed number on that, but it is in the neighbourhood of \$8 million. I can circle back with the detailed numbered for you.

Mr. Dixon: The amount that has been spent on the Southern Lakes enhanced storage project is being captured in the current GRA that is before the YUB; is that correct? If so, what percentage of the total increase being sought by the YEC at the YUB through the GRA — forgive the acronyms — is made up with the amount spent on the Southern Lakes?

Mr. Milner: Funds spent so far on Southern Lakes enhanced storage is \$8.75 million. I'll have to take away that percentage of the rate increase aspect of that question.

Mr. Dixon: I note the major increase drivers that are included in the GRA. For instance, there is \$6 million spent, which the GRA indicates is 39 percent of the total increase. If it's \$8 million, that would seem to be above 39 percent. That seems like a large amount. I haven't seen it mentioned in this GRA previously.

I would like the witness to just confirm that the \$8.75 million that was spent on the Southern Lakes enhanced storage is in fact contributing to the GRA that's before the YUB currently.

Mr. Milner: I'm going to take that question away. Just because of the way that costs are applied to the GRA, the amortization period matters a great deal. It's not a straight line — this cost was a million dollars, that cost was a million dollars, and therefore that relates to the percentage increase. There's more complexity to that. I would like to get the right number.

Mr. Dixon: I look forward to whatever clarification the witnesses can provide.

I would note that the witness noted that \$8.75 million has been spent so far on that project — and if not all of that is being captured in the current GRA, how much either has been captured in previous GRAs or will be captured in future GRAs? I appreciate that they will come back with that.

I'll move on to the BESS project, the battery project. Can we have a status update on the battery project? What are the current timelines for it coming online? What is the current budget?

Mr. Milner: The battery project is expected to come online in 2024. In terms of the current status of the project itself, it is advancing. We have a contractor on-site right now prepping the electrical connections as well as the site prep. It will sit on screw piles and the battery itself will be inside of sea containers. The sea containers are being shipped to Canada as we speak and the batteries are sitting in a climate-controlled warehouse in Alberta.

Mr. Dixon: And the total budget of the project?

Mr. Milner: It's \$35 million.

Mr. Dixon: Last year, I believe the number was closer to \$33 million or \$34 million. Can the witness explain the increase between last year and this year to \$35 million?

Ms. Miller: I don't have that detail in front of me right now. I will have to bring that back.

Mr. Dixon: Of the \$35 million, what is the breakdown between Canada, Yukon, and ratepayers in terms of the cost?

Mr. Milner: We are receiving \$16.5 million from Yukon, and that leaves \$18.5 million that will go to rate.

Mr. Dixon: My understanding was that this project was funded by the federal government; is that not correct?

Mr. Milner: For clarification, the funding agreement is with Yukon. The funds are from the federal government.

Mr. Dixon: I am just looking for further clarity. How much was going to rate and when would we expect to see that submission go to the Utilities Board?

Mr. Milner: \$18.5 million is going to rate. It will be included in the next GRA.

Mr. Dixon: What is the timing of the next GRA submission?

Mr. Milner: The timing is unknown at this time.

Mr. Dixon: The Yukon government didn't provide any capital funding to this other than the funding that flowed through from Canada; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: The funding is through ICIP.

Mr. Dixon: I understand that the federal funding is from ICIP. My question is whether or not there is any funding from the Yukon government.

Mr. Milner: The only government funding right now is through ICIP, so not from the Yukon government.

Mr. Dixon: That's interesting. I look forward to further discussions about that.

I will turn specifically to the GRA that's before the YUB currently. I would note that the rate increases that are being proposed and that are before the YUB currently would result in a rate increase of 14.11 percent, and, of course, that is specific to the rate itself.

I realize that it is being timed with a number of riders that will be coming off and that the average residential and commercial bill will look different from that. But my question specifically is about the rate itself. Can the witnesses tell us how much the rate itself — first for the average residential bill up to 1,000 kilowatt hours — has increased since 2017 to this GRA that is before the YUB currently?

Mr. Milner: The last GRA was timed also with riders coming off and delivered no impact to bills itself. This current GRA was timed with riders so that it would result in a

three-percent impact in the fall of 2023, which was not accepted by the YUB and was moved to January 2024 and another three percent in August 2024 — so, six percent in total.

Mr. Dixon: My question is not what the average bill is. My question is what the current rate is for residential for the first 1,000 kilowatt hours. That is the rate that people pay for the electricity that they use. My question is: How much has the rate increased since 2017?

Mr. Milner: Madam Chair, I would like to get you a full and complete answer on the rate structure changes during that time. For that, I am going to have to take it away.

Mr. Dixon: I look forward to learning more about the increases in Yukoners' rates since 2017.

One of the major rate increase drivers, according to the GRA, is the diesel rental cost increases. The GRA notes that \$3.3 million is attributable to diesel rental cost increases, which is 21 percent of the total increase being sought through the GRA.

Can the witnesses give us a sense of the breakdown of that \$3.3 million? What is the increase? I know that there are increased units, but I also understand that there is an increased cost to those units. Can I ask for the breakdown of that \$3.3 million that is being sought to add to rate?

Mr. Milner: I can speak to the overall increase in the rental generator program. To break down the financial formula inside of the rate application, I will have to bring you back a different answer on that, because there will be a formula there that would be quite complex to share here at this time. Certainly, we have seen an increase in rental generators in general, in the cost of units, and in the number of units. That would be the primary driver there.

Mr. Dixon: Okay, well, let's talk about these rental units then. We are at 22 currently to meet the 37-megawatt dependable capacity gap that exists currently for our non-industrial peak. The witnesses have acknowledged that we anticipate a 36-percent increase between now and 2030. How many rental diesels will we need by 2030 to fill the dependable capacity gap that is projected by the YEC for 2030?

Mr. Milner: The number of rental generators required in 2030 is dependent on the projects that are in place in 2030.

Mr. Dixon: The projects that will be in place by then, according to the witness so far, are the battery and additional permanent capacity in Dawson and Faro.

Let's start with the battery. How many rental generators will be removed as a result of the battery?

Mr. Milner: The battery reduces our reliance on rental generators by four units.

Mr. Dixon: If Atlin were to go ahead somehow, how many units would that take offline from rentals?

Mr. Milner: Atlin would reduce the reliance on rental generators by four.

Mr. Dixon: That gets us down to 14 as of today, and we anticipate a 36-percent increase in the next seven years. I'm not going to attempt the math now, but it is pretty clear to me that there will be at least several dozen rental generators in place by 2030 in order to accommodate the peak gap. Does that sound correct? Is there something I'm missing? Are there some other

projects that are going to come online that will alleviate that gap that we're not aware of yet?

Mr. Milner: The primary factor that is going to result in the answer there is what happens as a result of the short-term supply plan. The thermal replacement program will also reduce generators in the near term, and it is possible that, between now and 2030, additional projects will come online. We will be working very aggressively to do exactly that to reduce our reliance on rental generators.

Mr. Dixon: But just to be clear, those other projects that the witness referred to at the end haven't been identified yet; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: The project that has been identified is the thermal replacement, which will reduce by nine. Additional projects will be identified through the short-term supply plan, which we should start seeing results on in the next six months.

Mr. Dixon: In the GRA, on page 3, it notes — this is early in the GRA; it's in the introductory component, and it talks about one of the reasons why this GRA is necessary. It notes that there is a growth in winter peak electricity demand. This is page 3 of the GRA — and I will quote: "Meeting these peaks demands for power in the short term requires the rental and operation of diesel generators each winter until new sources of dependable capacity can be built or connected to the Yukon grid." This comment is very much consistent with what the witnesses have told us so far — that we will need rentals to fill the gap until new sources of dependable capacity come online. But since we don't know of any new projects that will come online in the near future, my question is about the term in this GRA: "short term". It says that meeting those peak demands for power in the short term requires the rental and operation of diesel generators and so on. My question is: What do the witnesses consider to be "short term"? It is clear that we are going to need these for at least 10 years, and I would posit that we will need them much longer. What is the witness' view on what is "short term"?

Mr. Milner: For the purposes of planning, we are using the supply plan as short term — zero to 10 years — but "short term" can essentially be defined by the length of time that it takes to bring additional projects online.

Mr. Dixon: It seems to me, then, that we will be relying on rental diesel generators for the foreseeable future, or at least until some large-scale, new renewable energy project comes online that can displace the rental diesels that are filling the dependable energy gap right now.

I have heard the witnesses indicate that some projects that could contribute to that can be found in the potential projects that are before the IPP, so I'll move to the IPP for a moment now. What existing and potential projects are being considered under the IPP? I know that the IPP has a total program capacity. How close are we to the top of that capacity?

Mr. Milner: I'll start with the last question, which is: How close are we to the total capacity? The total capacity is 40-gigawatt hours. There are several projects in the queue to achieve that full capacity. If you add up all of the projects that have started the process, we will be just slightly over the 40-gigawatt hours. The projects that are advancing inside of the

next four months total about half that. Again, half of that would be solar and half of that is the two times 2-megawatt wind energy projects on top of Haeckel Hill.

Mr. Dixon: Once that program is fully subscribed and we're at that 40 gigawatt hours threshold, how much will those IPP projects contribute to filling that dependable capacity gap?

Mr. Milner: The IPP projects largely provide energy. Capacity comes in the form of something that is dispatchable. What we will be doing through the supply plan is looking at firming up renewable energy sources with battery storage and conditioning and, again, firm capacity in the background. If that firm capacity in the short term is diesel or LNG, what the renewable IPP projects do is allow us to bring energy on to the grid that is non-emitting and have the firm capacity in the background but yet using it as little as possible.

Mr. Dixon: Just to be clear then, the projects under the IPP provide no firm capacity; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: The projects in the IPP program are a critical part of a system that involves renewable energy, temporary storage and conditioning through grid-scale batteries, and firm capacity in the background.

Mr. Dixon: Those projects, of course, rely on firm capacity on the grid to be in place in order to be effective and useful, so it's clear then that the IPP won't be the solution to filling the dependable capacity gap — at least that's my understanding from what we have heard today.

I'll move back to the GRA then. The GRA includes a specific section — for the first time that I have seen in a GRA for some time — which is a business case for renting diesels. It's clear from this submission that the board directed the Energy Corporation to develop a business case for rental diesels. What the Energy Corporation has done here is to compare the idea of renting diesels for the next two years with the idea of buying rental units or former rental units and then reselling them. I don't think that is exactly what the YUB had in mind when they directed the board to take a look at the rental diesels.

I will ask: Why did the corporation not compare renting diesels to the construction of permanent thermal when they included their business case for rentals in their GRA?

Mr. Milner: The business case for renting or owning diesels is based on a levelized cost of capacity, which is essentially the cost of obtaining a kilowatt of capacity over a period of time — over a year. The business case would look at the financial metrics associated with that, and previous research into this has shown that the number is very similar.

I'm trying to get the detailed number here; I do have it in this package somewhere.

Essentially, what we need to do to put detail to the GRA submission as being requested is to go through a study, which is exactly what we're doing with Colliers right now, and that will be available early in 2024. We will be happy to share the detailed results at that time. It's going to look at options that look at the levelized cost of renting versus owning over the 40-year lifecycle, because when you build a permanent facility, you look at 40 years. It's going to look at selling that during the lifecycle and it's going to look at ongoing rentals.

Mr. Dixon: Can the witness tell us a little bit more about this work that Colliers is doing? It's the first we have heard of it. I am certainly excited to hear about it. What's the scope of the work that Colliers is doing? When will that report be available? When was it tendered and when was it awarded? What other information can the witnesses tell us about this new project that Colliers is doing for YEC?

Mr. Milner: Thank you for the question. I can tell you that, at a high level, the scope of work that Colliers is doing for us is basically doing that analysis on the financial metrics around renting versus owning over different time periods so that we can be sure that the costs of renting and the costs of owning are known to us when making decisions.

Mr. Dixon: That is a novel concept, indeed, that we would consider that. I think that's very interesting.

I will note, in the GRA that we have done here — and this is obviously absent even Colliers' work — it notes that the LCOC over a 40-year life for the 5-megawatt diesel replacement at Faro is significantly less than the rental diesel costs. So, it's clear that even just at the five-megawatt level — forgetting any economies of scale for going to a larger project — the replacement there proved to be a better price than the rental units.

Can the witnesses tell us a little bit more about the replacement diesels projects that they are doing both in Faro and Dawson? What is the status of those projects? What is the budget for those projects, and what is the timeline for those projects coming online?

Mr. Milner: The question is asking for the status on the thermal replacement program. We have units going to three places — Faro being one of them, Whitehorse being the other, and Dawson being the third. In Faro, we are retiring 5.1 megawatts and adding five megawatts in a new unit. That is forecast to be in service for Q3 of 2024. In Whitehorse, we are doing the same — replacing five megawatts of retired units with five megawatts of new units. It's going to be in place in Q2 of 2025. For Dawson, we have a retirement of a 2.5-megawatt unit and a 3.25-megawatt unit is going in its place. That was the only size available for that particular size and that will also be in place for Q4 of 2024. The total budget for the three projects is \$49 million.

Mr. Dixon: When did all three of those projects have that money expended? When did that \$49 million get spent on those three permanent diesels?

Mr. Milner: The \$49 million will be spent as per the terms of the contract as the projects move through their milestones. The reason why the Faro unit is in the GRA for this year is because it is coming online first.

Mr. Dixon: When would we see the new permanent thermal capacity that is being installed in Dawson come to rate?

Mr. Milner: Madam Chair, it will come to rate in the next rate application.

Mr. Dixon: Do the witnesses have an estimate of what that will result in by way of rate increases?

Mr. Milner: Not at this time.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to hone in on the work being done in Dawson on the thermal replacements. I note that in the

GRA before the YUB right now — on page 3.1-3, which is the appendix dealing with the diesel rental business case — it notes that — and I quote: “Additional new dependable capacity is forecast to be commissioned in 2024 (i.e., the Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) project, plus 6.5 MW of new diesel at Dawson)...”

My question is: How much of the 6.5 megawatts of new diesel generation in Dawson is new capacity that wasn't there before? It is not simply replacing existing generators, but it is actually new capacity — how much new capacity are we getting?

Mr. Milner: The new capacity, not replacing existing generators, will be another 3.25-megawatt unit.

Mr. Dixon: I had previously been under the impression that the Yukon Energy Corporation — the Yukon government — was unwilling to invest in new permanent thermal capacity, and yet we see more than 3 megawatts coming on through this project. If the corporation is willing to add thermal permanent capacity in this project, why not extend their lens beyond simply Dawson and look at adding thermal capacity throughout other parts of the Yukon?

Mr. Milner: The capacity in Dawson serves a specific function in that Dawson is isolated, needs to operate on its own, and is experiencing some pretty rapid growth.

In terms of the second part of the question — Why not consider that elsewhere? — these are the kind of questions that we are going to have to answer through this analysis in the short-term supply plan.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that.

Given the time, unfortunately, I am going to have move into some specific questions. I would like to ask about the impacts of the hydro project in Mayo. Owners of a property at Minto bridge between Minto and Elsa have seen increased flooding since Mayo B came online. Can the Energy Corporation give us a sense of what planning is being done to mitigate damage to the property caused by high or fluctuating water levels in Wareham Lake?

Mr. Milner: Yukon Energy has been working with the property owner for a number of years on this question. Several things have happened in the past in terms of mitigations to protect gardens and whatnot. The most recent interaction with the property owner provided an option for applying for grants through the Yukon government, and that is where we have left the conversation so far.

I will say that, as part of the re-licensing project, there is a hydrologist looking at the overall impacts in that area of the hydro facility and the management of water, and that information will be available through the re-licensing process as it evolves.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that response from the witness. We will follow up with questions to the Yukon government at an appropriate time in the future.

I would like to turn now to the capacity available in different Yukon communities. For example, the witness has indicated that they have increased thermal capacity in Dawson because of the growth of that community.

Do communities that are more isolated have sufficient amount of backup capacity in each community in the event that the line goes down? For example, in Haines Junction, if the line goes down between Aishihik and Haines Junction, is there sufficient backup generation capacity in that community to sustain the demand that would be in place, even in the event of a line outage between the main grid and that community?

Mr. Milner: Thank you for the question. Specific to the Haines Junction example, there is ATCO capacity in Haines Junction to support that community while isolated.

Mr. Dixon: Just to be clear, if I understand the witness correctly, there is sufficient capacity in Haines Junction to meet the demand for that community if the line were to be down between that community and the main grid; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: For a fully complete answer there, we will have to go to ATCO.

Mr. Dixon: My time is quickly elapsing, so I will conclude by thanking the witnesses for their time today. Of course, we look forward to seeing you back here in the future. I appreciate the candor and information that they provided today and I look forward to hearing more. I will hand the floor over to my colleague from the NDP.

MLA Tredger: I will start by welcoming the witnesses. Thank you so much for taking the time to be here and bringing your expertise to us.

I want to just start by asking a little bit about the general rate application that is in right now. What is the net revenue that is expected from that rate increase? I would take that answer in either per year over the next few years or the total for the next few years — whatever format is the most convenient.

Mr. Milner: I will answer that question using a regulated rate of return answer, and that is 8.7 percent. In terms of net revenue, that varies according to operational expenses, but an important consideration with Yukon Energy and how they manage net revenue is that it is reinvested in capital to build up a system. In often cases, we require grants on top of that reinvestment in order to do the work that we need to do.

MLA Tredger: I might not have used exactly the right term there. I'm wondering how much money is expected to flow into Yukon Energy as a result of that general rate application and the rate increase.

Mr. Milner: Thank you for the clarification. The revenue target is near \$90 million.

MLA Tredger: How many years is that over, or is that per year?

Mr. Milner: Per year.

MLA Tredger: My understanding of the Yukon Energy budget is that you don't receive any money from the government directly to support operational expenses and that those are entirely covered by the rate; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: That is correct.

MLA Tredger: Is there any reason that it has to come from the rate, or is there the possibility of that coming through grants through YDC through the government?

Mr. Milner: I'll answer with the utility's perspective on this. In terms of operations, the rate does cover that. Where our needs are, moving forward, is really on the capital side of

things. That's where grants really can minimize impacts to ratepayers. Basically, you are buying down the cost of capital projects and passing on less of that to the ratepayer.

MLA Tredger: What I'm moving toward asking is — the decision was made to go to rate to cover the needs of Yukon Energy. I'm wondering if there were conversations or if there was the possibility of some of that coming from government rather than going to ratepayers. Have there been conversations to that effect? Is that a possibility?

Mr. Milner: I'll answer the question with an example of how government has lent support recently, and that's through the battery project. That essentially has a positive impact on rates in that it lowers the rate exposure. Again, it's on the capital side of things and that's where we can have more impact right now.

MLA Tredger: I think it's a good example because, from what I understand from the previous questions, none of the money for the battery project actually came directly from Yukon government but only as flow-through from Canada. Have there been requests to the Yukon government for grants to cover the shortfall for the battery project?

Mr. Milner: Not at this time.

MLA Tredger: Is Yukon Energy considering making any requests to the government for more funding in lieu of putting things to the rate?

Mr. Milner: We know that our capital program will put pressure on rates and that the best way to reduce pressure on rates is to work with government funders and other partners to support capital development. That's a conversation that is starting today and will continue.

MLA Tredger: I was looking through the numbers in the 2022 annual report about the return on equity. Could the witnesses provide the ROE for Yukon Energy for the years since 2016?

Mr. Milner: I will have to get back on the detailed numbers since 2016.

MLA Tredger: I want to go back to the question I was asking before, just so I really understand. Is there anything in the act or the regulatory mechanisms that prevent the government from providing funding for operational expenses of the energy company, or is it just practice that they provide it for capital instead of operational funding?

Mr. Milner: I will answer that question in a high-level format. Really, the importance of maintaining autonomy on the operation side of things is to maintain good status with our general business enterprise, and that's why the practice is typically done that way as a Crown corporation under the Yukon government.

MLA Tredger: What would the consequences be — I believe it is a general business enterprise — if that wasn't the case — if they had less independence and were receiving money for operations from the Yukon government?

Mr. Berry: To answer the question in terms of how the Yukon Development Corporation helps to reduce costs to ratepayers as a result of first capital investment, you can look at the Mayo-McQuesten line, which was a significant

investment — \$38 million — that was negotiated through YDC from the federal government.

In terms of your broader question about where the Energy Corporation is in terms of its operation expenses, it is nested within the Yukon Development Corporation, which is the sole shareholder and, of course, is owned by Yukon government. But I would say that those discussions about the energy company and where the costs come from — those are live discussions perhaps better directed toward the minister in terms of that. What I would say is that YDC staff and YEC staff meet weekly to talk about the cost to ratepayers and how we are finding and sourcing dollars for investment. First and foremost is the reliability of energy and second, of course, is the affordability of that energy. Those discussions happen in real time.

MLA Tredger: I won't ask questions about what should be done by the minister. I will leave those for the minister.

I am trying to understand what the consequences might be of a different way of thinking about doing this. The witness had specifically said that if there is less independence because they are receiving funding through the government for operational expenses, it would affect their status as a general business enterprise — I believe that is what he said, but I might have misheard the exact words. I was hoping for more clarification on that.

Mr. Milner: I am not able to answer that question in a fulsome way today.

MLA Tredger: I will ask about something else for a bit. I am wondering who the contractor is who is responsible for the grid-scale battery project.

Mr. Milner: The contractor's name is SunGrid Solutions.

MLA Tredger: Do they have experience with previous projects that are similar?

Mr. Milner: SunGrid Solutions has a number of battery energy storage solution projects on their resumé, so yes.

MLA Tredger: That's great to hear. Were there other bidders on that project and what were the relative prices of their bids?

Mr. Milner: There were two bidders that met the criteria on that project. SunGrid Solutions was the lower of the two.

MLA Tredger: Was it the highest scored proposal?

Mr. Milner: Yes.

MLA Tredger: I would like to turn and ask a little bit about the effects of the dam on chinook salmon. I am sure that the witnesses saw the CBC article this morning. I have some follow-up questions about that. The article referenced some possible mitigation strategies, because the most recent study found such a high percentage of the salmon were dying in the turbines, and one of those was fish-friendly turbines that were designed to be less fatal to fish. Is that something that the Energy Corporation is familiar with or looking into or is a possibility?

Mr. Milner: The study that was discussed this morning on the radio was aimed at doing a number of things, and it is actually an outcome of a working group that involves the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council,

and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, along with Yukon Energy, and they are tasked with providing a number of recommendations on how to improve fish passage at the hydro facility. They are going to be working together to sort of refine and define those recommendations over the coming months. I know that there are additional studies and additional work that is going to happen next summer, so we look forward to learning more about that.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the witness. I won't try to make any recommendations about what the mitigation strategy should be, but I just want to understand some of the options a little better. When we talk about fish-friendly turbines, is there a sense of how much that would cost? Is that possible to install at this dam? What might the price or the timeline be for that?

Mr. Milner: Thank you for the question. At this time, there has been no detailed research on what that would involve.

MLA Tredger: What about some of the other suggestions? There was talk of a bubble curtain or lights that would help fish to find the fish ladder. Is that something that has been looked into or is possible?

Mr. Milner: These kinds of mitigations are exactly what this technical working group is looking at. The report issued recently gives them some foundational information. From there, there they will start refining more detailed strategies.

MLA Tredger: I am just wondering what those strategies might be and then I will, of course, leave it to them to make recommendations about which would be best. I just want to understand a little bit about what the options are.

Is a bubble curtain or lights something that has been explored at all? Is there a sense of how much that would cost or whether that would be effective in this situation?

Mr. Milner: The study results were issued very recently, so the follow-up work is going to answer all of these questions that are coming in now. Yes, we'll leave it for the detailed work that must follow the study.

MLA Tredger: One of the things that was said in the article was that there have been repeated requests for the fish ladder to be rebuilt to make the entrance more accessible. Have those requests come to Yukon Energy in the past? What has been done with them? Has there been any work to scope out what that would entail?

Mr. Milner: The things that we have been able to do so far are to adjust operations to the fish ladder, so improving flows so that fish can find it easier and use it easier, and that's an important part of safe passage through the facility.

In terms of rebuilding or redoing the fish ladder, that work hasn't been looked at in any detail to date, but it certainly is coming in as a recommendation through the committee work.

Just in addition to that, we keep the gates open at night, so there have been some adjustments to how things operate there — keeping the gates open at night and there are fish grates that go in front of the turbines on the upstream side and redirect fish toward the fish ladder itself — ones swimming upstream.

MLA Tredger: I just want to read the quote from the article. This is a quote from Maria Benoit, and she said — quote: “‘C/TFN wants a total redo of that fish ladder,’ Benoit said, ‘and it needs to be opened up all year-round. We’ve asked

[Yukon Energy] to do that, and have to keep asking them.” That makes me think that this request has come in before. I’m just wondering: Does that mean that there hasn’t been any work done to respond to that request and scope out what that possibility would be and that it’s going to start soon? Or has that been done and decided to be not as useful as adjusting the flows? Could he explain a bit more?

Mr. Milner: The study itself is part of a broader effort in just improving fish passage through the hydro facility. The specific recommendations that are coming through the newspaper article are all part of the scope of this technical working group as they explore options that are both feasible and effective to help improve the situation for fish.

MLA Tredger: I want to turn a little bit to renewable projects. I am particularly thinking about pump storage projects. As discussed, Moon Lake is not on the immediate horizon until things change with Carcross/Tagish First Nation. I am wondering about what kinds of projects the Yukon Energy Corporation or Yukon Development Corporation are looking at outside of Carcross/Tagish First Nation territory. Have they revisited pump storage proposals from other parts of the territory? Could they tell me what their plans are around that?

Mr. Milner: As mentioned earlier with earlier questions, there are two parts to the resource plan that is going on right now. There are the 10 years out and beyond — so, the generational, multi-decade projects that are going to meet larger loads and larger demands. That process has to look at pump storage facilities in other areas. It has to look at whether or not hydro remains feasible in other areas. It has to look at things like the grid-connection intertie to British Columbia and emerging technologies that may be appropriate for the Yukon in the future, once they are market tested and available.

Those are the kinds of things that this resource plan does. How it does that is that it looks at the Yukon in terms of regions and regional needs, because it is different across the Yukon as well. It takes load forecasts and different scenarios. As you can imagine, load forecasts and scenarios can vary pretty widely in the Yukon, depending on your industrial forecast or your population forecast, and it matches what kind of project can meet that need. That process takes a little bit of time. It is going to be largely completed by 2025. Between now and then, we will be looking at the more short-term, urgent needs and that likely will be aiming at testing the feasibility of wind, battery, and firm capacity backup.

MLA Tredger: I know that Yukon Energy works quite closely with the Yukon government on *Our Clean Future* and particularly the energy side of that. How much additional generation capacity is needed in order to support the level of electrification that is planned for *Our Clean Future* between now and 2030?

Mr. Milner: I don’t have an actual number on the amount of capacity needed to do that by 2030. We are starting from a good place, though, with 92-percent renewable energy today — last year. As demand grows, obviously the need for more renewable energy grows. We are starting from a good place.

MLA Tredger: Maybe we could have this discussion a little bit more in generalities than the specific numbers. My impression of the current situation is that we have enough generation capacity but not by a lot. We are looking at a lot of electric cars, a lot of electric heat pumps, and a lot of electric heating coming online in 2030, and that’s so important. We need that. We really, really need that. I am trying to understand how we are going to meet that energy need. I am hoping that the witness can comment on that.

Mr. Milner: I spoke earlier of a 36-percent increase between now and 2030. These are the targets that we will need to address through new projects in order to support electrification. Now, the pace of electrification can change a lot of things, and I think that this is what we are seeing — that the demand on the system is significant and it’s today. We are meeting developable generation with the tools that we have today, and we need to come together on some renewable energy options for tomorrow.

MLA Tredger: I have a question about the grid-scale battery. I am looking to the future. If we were to add an additional grid-scale battery, would that also displace another four diesels, or is there a limit to how much the battery capacity will help the system? Are there diminishing returns on that?

Mr. Milner: That is an excellent question. The answer is complex and related to grid-impact studies that are currently underway. Again, that’s another study that is underway, but we will have that information and a better, clearer picture next summer.

Grid-scale batteries do provide a non-emitting source of energy and are definitely part of the picture moving forward.

MLA Tredger: Something I was really excited to see was the peak smart program coming online again. I know a lot of us were very hopeful that a new provider would be found for those hot water and thermostat controllers, so I am very excited to see that happening.

How much energy does the Yukon Energy Corporation estimate that this program is going to save in the coming years?

Mr. Milner: I am glad the member asked that question, because we missed that in terms of programs and activities that will decrease pressure between now and 2030. The target for DSM by 2030 is a 7-megawatt reduction. We did announce recently the peak smart home with a target of 400 homes to start. We just did this a couple of days ago, and as of noon yesterday, there were several dozen homes already registered, so it’s showing promise. There is a lot of interest. Yukoners clearly care about electricity and how they use electricity. The DSM is definitely a way to reduce winter demand.

MLA Tredger: What sort of work is the Yukon Energy Corporation doing to educate people about that program? I really think that would help with uptake. I have had the opportunity to learn a lot about it and I think that it’s amazing, but if I didn’t know anything and someone said: Well, we’re going to change the heat in your house — I think I would have a lot of questions.

Could the witness tell us about what work is being done to inform people about what the program means so that uptake is driven up?

Mr. Milner: Thank you for the question. We currently have quite a lot of material on our social media avenues. The website is there. We spent the summer at the market in downtown Whitehorse engaging with people. We will be running advertisements throughout the winter. We encourage anyone who is interested in learning more about this program to reach out to any of those places to find our contact information and learn more.

MLA Tredger: The witness mentioned a 7-megawatt reduction by 2030 from, I believe, the entire demand-side management program. What other elements are going to be part of that program other than the peak smart?

Mr. Milner: Just some additional tools that we're using to get the word out: general advertising, as I mentioned; we were at the #ElectrifyYukon Event at present on Sunday — yesterday; there is another event at the Canada Games Centre on November 21 and a lot of other community events; and we will be sending mailouts to homes — that's currently being planned.

The two other elements of DSM that can carry value are peak smart drive, which is related to electric vehicles, and peak smart work, which would be more on the commercial side of things — much like home but at work.

MLA Tredger: That estimate doesn't include any possible reductions if smart metres come online; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: I'm not sure of the answer on that one at this time.

MLA Tredger: I'm going to ask one last question and then I'll pass it back to my colleague to ask some more questions. How much energy did Minto mine specifically use during winter operation before it closed?

Mr. Milner: I don't know the exact number, but it was certainly in the megawatts.

MLA Tredger: I'll conclude my questions today by thanking the witnesses for making the time in their, I'm sure, very busy day to come and talk to us. I appreciate all the information. Thank you.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to close out today. I'll pick up where my colleague left off on DSM. If I understood correctly, the witness indicated that their hope was to have a target of seven megawatts of DSM by 2030. Can he confirm if that's the case? How much are we getting through DSM currently?

Mr. Milner: I can confirm that the target is seven megawatts for 2030. Having the program just launched, we don't have stats yet on what's currently in play.

Mr. Dixon: What is the estimated budget for the DSM program? How much will it cost?

Mr. Milner: The budget for the DSM program for the year 2024 is \$2.8 million.

Mr. Dixon: So, that is the 2024 budget. Will that amount be captured in a future general rate application?

Mr. Milner: The budget for phase 1 is included in the current rate application.

Mr. Dixon: So, the current budget is \$2.4 million and that is for the next year, but there must be more beyond that to

get us to seven megawatts. What is the budget beyond the current budget for the DSM program?

Mr. Milner: Future phase budgets are currently moving through our internal approval processes and will be before our board shortly.

Mr. Dixon: We would anticipate that a future budget would be in a future GRA beyond 2024; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: Madam Chair, that is correct.

Mr. Dixon: My colleague also asked a question about Minto. Is there anything outstanding by way of money being owed as a result of Minto coming offline?

Mr. Milner: The total amount claimed from Minto coming offline is \$4 million.

Mr. Dixon: What happens with that \$4 million? Is that something that the corporation has to eat? Does YDC make it whole? Does it have to go to rate? What is the story with the \$4 million that is owed by Minto?

Mr. Milner: We are seeking to recover the \$4 million through the court process.

Mr. Dixon: If the corporation is unable to recover the full \$4 million through the court process, what happens with the amount owed?

Mr. Milner: At that time, we would have to decide whether or not to move that through rate.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to move on now to the Southern Lakes transmission project. Can the witnesses give us a sense of where that project is at, what its estimated cost is, and what the timelines are for the project?

Mr. Milner: The Southern Lakes transmission project referenced in the question serves a specific function to connect the Atlin project with the Moon Lake project inside the renewable energy plan; therefore, it is not advancing at this time.

Mr. Dixon: Has any money been expended on this project so far?

Mr. Milner: I will have to bring that answer back.

Mr. Dixon: I have some questions now about the debt instruments indicated in the annual report of YDC. I note on page 61 that the corporation makes reference to accessing lines of credit. In particular, I will quote from page 61 of the annual report: "As of January 1, 2021, the line of credit was \$51.0 million. Effective April 22, 2021, the line of credit was increased temporarily to \$58.0 million. Effective July 1, 2022, the line of credit was increased temporarily to \$80.0 million."

Can the witnesses tell us what that line of credit is used for and what the increase for this year has been? As well, what can we anticipate for next year?

Mr. Milner: The line of credit is used to finance capital projects. As capital projects are completed and moved into rate, then the line of credit is paid down through long-term debt and equity based on the ratio 60/40. The current limit on the line of credit is \$65 million. That allows us to deliver capital programs in play.

Mr. Dixon: If I understand what the witnesses told us, that line of credit is used to balance the expenditure on projects currently between now and when they can go to rate. How

many projects currently have money allocated based on that line of credit?

Mr. Milner: The line of credit supports our entire capital plan, so there are a number of projects inside of that plan.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on to grid connection. We have talked previously about the idea of joining the BC grid. We understand that some talks are underway, but I would like to know what the Energy Corporation's role in this project is — what its status is from their perspective and what work has been done to date.

Mr. Milner: I will start with a general sort of high-level perspective on the overall project, as it will roll eventually into the considerations in their resource plan and then pass it over the Yukon government for the reason that, at this time, the grid-connection conversation is happening between the Yukon government and the BC government, and we will be supporting as necessary when the time comes.

Mr. Dixon: Will the project be encapsulated in the energy planning exercises that you're doing for beyond 10 years from now?

Mr. Milner: Yes.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to return to the Colliers report that we have learned about today. Can the witnesses tell us more about the genesis of this report and the hiring of Colliers? Was the work that they are doing to compare rental diesels with permanent diesels something that was directed by the Yukon government, something that was directed by the board, or some other source for it?

Mr. Milner: The purpose of the report referenced is to update the analysis on the overall costs for rental generators and the overall cost for building new facilities. It is just part of due diligence moving forward.

Mr. Dixon: Was any work like this or similar to this done in 2018 or 2019 when the decision was made not to proceed with a permanent thermal generation facility?

Mr. Milner: Yes, similar work was done and, again, based on the leveled cost of capacity.

Mr. Dixon: Who did the work for the corporation back then?

Mr. Milner: I don't recall. We do have an analyst inside Yukon Energy to help us analyze various options as we move forward as well. It is possible that they did that internally.

Mr. Dixon: I will move back to the battery project. The witness has indicated that the battery project would give us a total dependable capacity of 20 megawatts for two hours. I will stand to be corrected if that's incorrect. Can the witnesses describe the capacity that is achieved by the battery?

Mr. Milner: The grid-scale battery project is 20 megawatts for two hours — 40 megawatt hours.

Mr. Dixon: Perhaps the witnesses can help me understand what that will mean for our grid once it's online. I will give the example of last year's prolonged outages here in Whitehorse. We saw power go out across the capital city for anywhere from six to seven hours, depending on which neighbourhood we're talking about. What role would the battery play in a situation like that? What would we anticipate its contribution to be?

Mr. Milner: The battery, in that situation, would serve the function of a very quick start and return restoration of the system.

Mr. Dixon: But its contribution would only be for two hours; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: It would depend on the number of megawatts that we're asking it to provide.

Mr. Dixon: I presume that they would call upon the full amount — 20 megawatts. If the full amount was required to be drawn on by the battery, it would only last for two hours; is that correct?

Mr. Milner: That is correct.

Mr. Dixon: How many grid-scale batteries would be required to fully provide the necessary dependable capacity gap that we currently have? Obviously, it would be in conjunction with generation that comes from wind and solar and perhaps others, but ultimately, when we think about a grid that has a significant portion of backup provided by grid-scale batteries, how many more batteries would we need to fill the entire grid?

Mr. Milner: That is exactly the kind of question that the resource plan answers, but I will take the opportunity to say that the battery does several things. It allows for the integration of renewables because renewables come in a variable nature. The battery will smooth that out through conditioning. It also helps us with black starts and restoration. It's a very valuable tool for our system and we look forward to having it in place.

Mr. Dixon: I will return with one final question on Atlin, just because I know that our time is almost out.

My understanding is that Atlin hasn't completed the permitting process in British Columbia yet, so even if we were to receive the \$106 million that the witnesses have indicated is the current funding gap, the project wouldn't be able to proceed right away. Can they confirm that and can they tell us, if we were to learn tomorrow that the Prime Minister had allocated \$106 million to this project, when it would begin construction?

Mr. Berry: What I can confirm is that, on the Yukon side, all permits are in place for the work that we are doing currently on the geotechnical work, as well as all the permits for the geotechnical work currently underway in BC. Permitting in BC is currently underway. It is underway. I do not believe they have everything in hand, but it is with the regulator and that work is happening in real time.

Mr. Dixon: I will repeat the second part of my question: If we receive \$106 million from the federal government tomorrow, how soon would the project be able to be under construction?

Mr. Berry: Well, the construction season is two to three years. I would say that the work could probably immediately begin, because we would have to purchase penstock and a whole bunch of related material that would arrive on-site. The geotechnical work will be complete — I am hoping — by the end of this fall. As soon as the money began flowing, they could begin working.

Yukon's commitment, of course, is to come to the table as well, so if the federal government came to the table with the money, I imagine that work could start as early as the spring or whenever we could start getting material to site, but that is a

broader question for the proponent, and right now, I am largely guessing, if you will, professionally.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, given the time, I will wrap things up and close by thanking the witnesses for joining us today in the Legislature. I appreciate their time and information that they have provided.

Chair: Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I will just try to confirm one thing. Earlier, when there were questions from the members opposite asking about the Investing in Canada infrastructure plan funding, that is typically 75-percent federal dollars and 25-percent territorial dollars. I don't know whether the witnesses have this information, but are they able to confirm about the territorial government's dollars in the infrastructure fund which are going toward the battery energy storage project?

Mr. Berry: I can confirm that it would be 25 percent of the overall pie of the project.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: With that clarification, I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing before the Committee today. I appreciate that this was the first time for our two presidents in their roles, so I appreciate them answering all of the questions for the members opposite and thank you, Madam Chair.

Chair: Thank you. The witnesses are now excused.

Witnesses excused

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

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 Chair of Committee of the Whole?

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 13 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operations of the Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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 5:25 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 6, 2023:

35-1-127

Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees (November 6, 2023) (Clarke, N.)

The following documents were filed November 6, 2023:

35-1-162

Non-profit sector requests, letter re (dated August 2, 2023) from Wendy Morrison, Chair, Yukon Nonprofit Advisory Council, to Hon. Ranj Pillai, Premier (Dixon)

35-1-163

Takhini River Road maintenance, letter re (dated August 28, 2023) from Hon. Nils Clarke, Minister of Highways and Public Works, to Brad Cathers, Member for Lake Laberge (Cathers)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 154

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 7, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 7, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 At this time, we will proceed with prayers.

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask all members to join me today in welcoming to the gallery family and friends of Al Falle, the former Member for Hootalinqua, for the tribute today. They are: Al's wife, Irma Falle; Ray Falle; Maddison Falle; Seth Falle; and Lesley Gardiner-Falle; friends Tom McCaw; Gordon Steele, a long-time Yukon Party caucus employee who worked with Al; Chris Young, former leader of the party; Mel Brais, Yukon Party president; and Paul Brais.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Al Falle

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party caucus and the Yukon Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to long-time Yukoner and former MLA Al Falle.

Al Falle was a political trailblazer in the Yukon. He helped shape the Yukon Progressive Conservative Party, which later became known as the Yukon Party.

Al was born in Québec near Montréal on February 26, 1943. He passed away on November 25 last year at the age of 79. Al lived most of his young life in Gaspé and went to school there. There, he learned to be a mechanic and a welder, and his early work included working at a mine in Murdochville, Québec.

He worked his way across Canada, including working in Saskatchewan, Fort Nelson, and on the W.A.C. Bennett Dam project in British Columbia. His work included being a drill doctor, responsible for pneumatic drills.

In April 1967, he married Irma in Pouce Coupe. After hearing about a hydro dam being built in Whitehorse, Al and Irma moved to the Yukon in 1968 but found other opportunities instead.

Once in the Yukon, Al worked in construction as a mechanic and at Whitehorse Copper. Along with a partner, he began placer mining in the Atlin area. Al and Irma's sons, Ray and Leonard, were born in 1969 and 1970. The family moved to the land at Grizzly Valley where they made their home in about 1971. Through years of hard work, they turned it into a farm.

Sourdough Sodbusters, commonly known to neighbours and long-time Yukoners simply as "the sod farm", began operating in the early 1980s. In the decades since, their farm has been a well-known institution in the Yukon's agriculture sector.

Al was a well-respected member of the Yukon's farming community and volunteered in a number of roles, including as president of the Yukon Agricultural Association and a board member for many years.

Family came first for Al, and in addition to Irma and their sons, his family includes grandsons, Noah and Seth, granddaughters, YoHanna and Maddison, and his daughter-in-law, Lesley.

Stepping back to the 1970s, Al was one of the people who founded the first territorial Conservative Party, then known as the Progressive Conservative Party. Al was one of the first PC MLAs elected to the Legislative Assembly during the historic territorial election of 1978, which was the first election recognizing party politics.

The next year, the Epp letter established the basis for responsible government, so it was a time of big changes in the Yukon as MLAs for the first time took on the responsibility of government by Yukoners for Yukoners. Al won a second term for the riding of Hootalinqua in 1982 before retiring in 1985. Hootalinqua was a large riding that encompassed rural areas all around Whitehorse.

Even after retirement from elected office, Al remained interested and involved in politics. He was a respected member of the Yukon Party and served in a number of volunteer roles on both the party's central board and his local riding association of Lake Laberge. He remained involved on the board of the Yukon Party Lake Laberge association until his passing and helped out in every territorial election, including reliably volunteering as a scrutineer to help ensure the integrity of our democratic process. Al encouraged many people to get involved in politics and passed that interest on to some of his grandchildren.

On a personal note, Al was a good friend of mine for decades and provided helpful advice to me on many occasions. Al was one of the first people to encourage me to run for office and he stood beside me throughout the ups and downs of my time as MLA for Lake Laberge, helping out in every election campaign and always coming down to the party's election night headquarters.

My mom and sister Jeninne also worked with Al during multiple elections and asked me to share their condolences too. We all appreciated his help and enjoyed working with him.

Al loved his family, was passionate about the Yukon and Yukon politics, believed in the Yukon and tried to help make it better. He was a farmer back when many people thought you couldn't be a farmer in the Yukon and worked hard for the Yukon farming community. Al enjoyed farming, enjoyed prospecting, and worked hard to the end.

On behalf of the Yukon Party, my family, and me, our sincere condolences to all of Al's family and friends.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter that I have written to the Minister of Education regarding mandatory Holocaust education curriculum in the Yukon.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

PETITIONS

Petition No. 22

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a petition with 88 signatures that reads as follows:

The petition of the undersigned shows:

THAT housing is a human right;

THAT under the Yukon Residential Landlord and Tenant Act 27(1) The landlord must provide the residential property free of rodent, vermin, and insect infestations and must take appropriate measures to exterminate infestations, should they occur;

THAT Yukon Housing Corporation tenants continue to experience frequent bedbug infestations in their units;

THAT bedbug infestations are mentally, physically and financially distressing to Yukon Housing Corporation tenants; and

THAT the Yukon Housing Corporation has not taken adequate action to prevent bedbugs and treat infestations in its buildings:

THEREFORE, the undersigned ask the Yukon Legislative Assembly to urge the Yukon government to:

(1) Offer use of a bedbug oven to incoming tenants to prevent bedbugs from travelling between buildings;

(2) Respond to all bedbug infestation complaints within 48 hours;

(3) Bear the full cost of treatment, cleaning, and furniture replacement for tenants whose units have been infested with bedbugs.

Speaker: Are there any other petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House recognizes International Inuit Day, which celebrates the unique culture and identity of Inuit people.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give notice of the following motion for the production of papers:

THAT this House issues an order for the return of the full report done by Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance Inc. regarding the financial management of the Yukon Hospital

Corporation, including any and all analyses and opinions they provided to government.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to table the 2022 *Our Clean Future* annual report prior to the end of the 2023 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation that would require the following for all Yukon schools and licensed childcare facilities:

- (1) mandatory CO₂ monitors in all classrooms;
- (2) public reporting of average CO₂ levels during class time; and
- (3) set safe standards for CO₂ levels in all classrooms.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, on May 5 last year, the Yukon government awarded a \$160million contract for the Nisutlin Bay bridge, which, according to the Yukon government's news release, was the largest capital project in Yukon history. The five-year capital plan earmarks between \$110 million and \$125 million for this project. Last fall, the Minister of Highways and Public Works insisted that the project was on schedule and on budget, but earlier this spring, he conceded that the project was now overbudget.

Can the minister now tell us how far overbudget this project is?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, this is a great opportunity to provide an update on this project. As of October 24, 2023, the following work has been completed by the contractor: site mobilization and permanent pilings for the north and south abutments; the south abutment, along with its seat, back wall, and wing walls; the south embankment has been built up to subgrade level; rip-rap has been placed on the north-facing slope of the south abutment; at pier 2, all eight permanent piles are complete with concrete infill; at pier 3, all eight permanent piles are complete with concrete infill and pile cap that has been cast; piles at the north abutment are complete with concrete infill; the north embankment has been constructed up to the bottom of the abutment seat; the installation of cofferdams for piers 2 and 3 are complete; the insulation of the cofferdam for pier 4 is ongoing; and clearing and grubbing for the new road on the south side is complete as well. As well, Mr. Speaker, granular pit development and rock production near Teslin and environmental measures, such as hydroacoustic monitoring, fish salvage, and water sampling, are ongoing. I look forward to further questions.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as per normal, the minister is again evasive about the budget.

When we asked about this on March 9 of this year, the minister admitted that there were cost increases but suggested that the department was able to manage those increases within the department's overall capital budget, but that doesn't answer the question that I asked.

The contract that was awarded for this job was approximately \$160 million. We know that the project is going to come in higher than that, so, again, what is the total project cost for this project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question from the member opposite. Yukon government and Graham Infrastructure LP have been negotiating a change order to reflect the impacts of the *Fisheries Act* authorization for the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement project. Negotiations such as these are confidential, of course, because of their commercial nature and to maintain confidential positions.

The Yukon government has done its due diligence in handling this matter and in mitigating risk due to the original *Fisheries Act* authorization. When the Nisutlin Bay project was tendered, there was no reason to expect any significant deviation from similar previous *Fisheries Act* authorizations from the regulator, which, of course, is Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

However, the Yukon government did receive a *Fisheries Act* authorization that had a new restrictive limit to cumulative noise impacts on fish. Together, the Yukon government, the Teslin Tlingit Council, and Graham Infrastructure LP worked on an amendment to the authorization. This took some time and good work. The amendment was received in March 2023, at which point negotiations began between the Yukon government and Graham Infrastructure LP about a new schedule and work plan reflective of the authorization.

Mr. Hassard: But the fact of the matter is that if the government had actually done their due diligence, we wouldn't be in this situation today. So, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about the sources of funding for this project. We know from the minister's briefing notes in the spring of this year that the government had secured \$41.25 million from Building Canada and \$52.5 million from the national trade corridors fund. When we asked about this in the spring, the Premier said that the Yukon would be able to access ICIP funding that was unspent from other jurisdictions in the country.

How much additional funding have we secured for this project from other jurisdictions' ICIP funding?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this file. Just to finish my answer with respect to the change orders, change orders, both large and small, are a regular part of contract management. Work on the bridge replacement continues to progress as planned, with creative adaptations designed by the contractor, the Yukon government, and Teslin Tlingit Council in order to ensure that the requirement of the *Fisheries Act* authorization and water licence are met.

The Yukon government, of course, remains committed to delivering the construction of a new Nisutlin Bay bridge.

Last year, in excess of \$500 million of infrastructure out the door for Yukoners — the last year of Yukon Party government, 2015-16, \$180 million.

We were left with an infrastructure deficit. We are in the process of meeting that infrastructure deficit, whether it is the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, all of the fantastic work that is being done in the national trade corridors funding on the north Klondike Highway, all of the retrofits, all of the green infrastructure — solar arrays at Klondike and Ogilvie, turbines in Burwash, or solar arrays in White River First Nation. This is an exciting time for infrastructure development.

Question re: Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is a new question, so let's hope for some new answers.

Let's move on to timelines for this project. In the spring, the minister said — and I will quote: "We will continue to work with the contractor to complete this project by September 2026." However, his own briefing note indicates that they awarded the project without a water licence and they didn't receive a federal *Fisheries Act* authorization until October 2022 — almost six months after awarding of the project. Then, earlier this Sitting, on October 19, the minister said that the government had only received an amendment to the authorization in March 2023.

Can the minister confirm that he still believes that this project is on track to be finished completely by September 2026?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, yes, all indications are that this project will be completed by September 2026.

Mr. Hassard: Another thing with this is it's the largest capital project in the Yukon's history and many local contractors were hoping to participate on this project. When we last asked about the project, the minister promised that it would provide incredible opportunities to Yukoners in general. However, we have heard from many in the contracting community that, despite the minister's promises, it appears that there aren't many local contractors actually working on the project.

Other than the agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council, can the minister indicate how many Yukon companies are currently subcontracted to work on the Nisutlin Bay bridge project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would like to take this opportunity to indicate the government-to-government relationship that we have with the Teslin Tlingit Council which we have with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, with respect to the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport project, and with respect to the Carmacks bypass — in contrast to the former Yukon Party government.

With respect to the solar enumeration transfer pay agreement for the Teslin Tlingit Council, environmental protection in the Nisutlin Bay bridge area is a major component of the project, and under our *Fisheries Act* authorization, we are required to establish a sonar enumeration project to make sure that the construction work is not negatively impacting fish

populations or migrations. I am happy to report that we have signed a transfer payment agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council that provides funding to support this sonar work.

The sonar enumeration project will last until the Nisutlin Bay bridge project is finished. This project helps researchers with Teslin Tlingit Council count chinook salmon passing through the Nisutlin River Delta National Wildlife Area. This important natural area is also the migration route for chinook salmon returning to the Nisutlin and Wolf rivers and tributaries. The sonar covers a relatively narrow and shallow section of the river.

We are certainly glad to have signed this transfer agreement recently with the Teslin Tlingit Council and we look forward to other opportunities.

Mr. Hassard: The largest capital project in Yukon history and we have a minister who doesn't even appear to have been briefed on this. It's very disturbing, Mr. Speaker.

Last spring when we asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works about the Nisutlin Bay bridge, he claimed that it would provide incredible opportunities to the Teslin Tlingit Council and to the Yukon in general. In fact, the minister said — and I quote: “Our Liberal government signed a project charter in 2019 with the Teslin Tlingit Council. This will ensure that we maximize economic benefits for local residents when it comes to this project.”

Again, my question is very simple: Can the minister tell us how many TTC citizens and Teslin residents are currently working on this project, the Nisutlin Bay bridge?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Highways and Public Works continues to work collaboratively with the Teslin Tlingit Council and engage with the Village of Teslin, the public, and specific stakeholders on this project as it moves forward. The Yukon government project team meets with the Teslin Tlingit Council on a biweekly basis in order to discuss the project and troubleshoot challenges ahead. As well, the Yukon government, Teslin Tlingit Council, and the primary contractor, Graham Construction, meet on a monthly basis to review the project and discuss potential community issues and solutions.

What I can say is that I have been to Teslin. I was in Teslin three times this summer, twice on this topic. I met with the Teslin Tlingit Council and the Village of Teslin, and we had a combined meeting. I certainly heard all of their issues with respect to opportunities and I am assured by my project team that, as I indicated, those meetings are occurring on a biweekly basis. I will, of course, be alerted if there are any concerns. The most recent briefing I have, Mr. Speaker, with respect to this matter, is that this project is proceeding.

The only question I would have perhaps for the member opposite is: In his opportunity to serve in Cabinet between 2011 and 2016, how many of these mega projects was he or his government responsible for: the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, national trade corridors funding? Zero.

Question re: Municipality funding and support

Ms. White: The comprehensive municipal grant is a funding formula used by the Yukon government to provide critical funding for municipalities. This funding is used by Yukon municipalities to provide many services that Yukoners rely on. The Association of Yukon Communities recently completed a review of the grant that shows that the funding is far from adequate for the needs of municipal governments. We have seen the impacts of this inadequate funding in Dawson City this spring when mayor and council had to make some hard choices. They had to increase the fees for recreation and water and sewer and make a big reduction in the seniors grant.

The report makes several recommendations for changes to the funding formula to ensure that important municipal services remain sustainable in the long term.

Will the minister provide a clear timeline for his review of municipal funding in response to the AYC report?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the question on the comprehensive municipal grant this afternoon. We've had many conversations about this in Committee of the Whole as we are discussing our budget this year as well. As I indicated at that time, the Yukon government is currently in negotiations with the Association of Yukon Communities. They have appointed a representative to sit on a committee to actually do the work of reviewing this important funding piece. It's the Yukon government's grant to municipalities to help them sort of bolster the municipal tax revenues that they collect on their own. It helps these municipalities. I have heard from municipalities how their funding is under constraint because of the inflation we are seeing in the territory, across the country, and across North America.

We are working with municipalities to make sure they have the funding they need to carry on the good work on behalf of their citizens. I can just say that recently we issued a news release that talks about how the comprehensive municipal grant formula has helped municipalities in funding their municipal operations more than 10 percent higher than it was last year. So, the current municipal grant that my colleague set in motion while he was minister has actually added more than 10 percent to municipal finances in the last year. I think that was a good step forward. We are going to do more work on this file.

Ms. White: Last week during debate, the minister said that he would have an answer in 2025, but municipalities have been clear that they can't wait that long. From water treatment to waste collection, from parks to maintenance, buildings, and bylaw enforcement, even the smallest municipalities have a big job to do. While the Yukon government received a six-percent budget increase from the federal government in 2022, Yukon municipalities received only a 1.5-percent increase — well less than the rate of inflation. There is a real worry in some municipalities that cuts to important services and substantial property tax increases will be necessary if the municipal grant is not increased, and I know that the minister would not want to be responsible for the loss of more services in rural Yukon.

Will the minister agree to implement the recommendations from the municipal grant review in time for the 2024-25 budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated in Committee and on the floor of the House here during Question Period and even today, there is a committee that has been struck with the Association of Yukon Communities. They have put representatives forward and we are currently discussing the proposal that they brought forward. It's a proposal; it's a first mark. We are looking at that proposal, we are assessing it, we have questions, and we are going to find those questions through the work that we are doing with the Association of Yukon Communities.

But the important piece that I think really needs to be highlighted is the work that my predecessor did on the comprehensive municipal grant, which was static. So, he did work, he heard the same concerns from municipalities, he put in an escalator, and we changed the comprehensive municipal grant in about 2018, and now we are seeing a constant increase to the comprehensive municipal grant on a yearly basis. The member opposite talked about a six-percent increase to the Yukon territorial government — the municipalities got a 10-percent increase this year on the comprehensive municipal grant. That was a sizable increase. Even the AYC said that it was a great first step. We are going to continue to work with municipalities to make sure that they have the money to run their arenas and run their municipalities. That's important.

The grant is an augment to the municipal tax revenues that they collect, and it serves that purpose, and it goes up every year, Mr. Speaker — indexed to inflation.

Ms. White: Although we understand that a full review will take some time, it's why AYC included some short-term recommendations in their report as well, so I hope that the minister is open to that. The report notes that, since 2013, the municipal grant has only increased by 17.5 percent, while inflation for Whitehorse has increased by 20.8 percent. The amount has not kept pace with inflation, let alone allowed for any increases to services. The AYC report contained three simple short-term recommendations that the minister could make while the full review takes place. The three changes are to increase the amount of funding per resident and per property, to increase the amount of asset maintenance to keep up with inflation, and to not penalize municipalities for offering development incentives. These simple and immediate changes would ensure no disruption to services next year.

Will the minister act immediately on the AYC's three short-term recommendations to have them in place for the 2024-25 budget?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive municipal grant is important. The comprehensive municipal grant goes up every year — since my good colleague changed the formula.

The comprehensive municipal grant provides core support funding for municipalities based on the principles of adequacy, certainty, equity, transparency, and accountability. Those are the principles under which this agreement was struck with the Association of Yukon Communities. The grant formula

accounts for inflation; we are working on that to account for inflation. This year, we increased it by more than — it has gone up to almost \$24 million. I have indicated in letters to all of the municipal mayors that we received the resulting study and have assigned staff from the department to continue working closely with the representatives from the Association of Yukon Communities to understand the advice of the consultant and to recommend changes to the grant formula that could be considered for the 2025 budget cycle.

Question re: Municipality funding and support

Ms. McLeod: Municipalities have made it clear that financial and long-term sustainability are the most pressing issues currently facing Yukon communities. If these issues are not addressed, they will result in service reductions, a lack of infrastructure maintenance, and property tax increases throughout the Yukon. What they are seeking are immediate changes to the comprehensive municipal grant. Unfortunately, that is not what they have received from the Minister of Community Services. Rather than that, the minister recently issued a press release that simply outlined the increases that municipalities will receive under the current formula, which municipalities have said is inadequate.

My first question is: Does the minister think that announcing next year's CMG funding, which was already owed to the municipalities under their current formula, will satisfy municipalities' calls for increased funding?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to continue talking about the comprehensive municipal grant on the floor of the House this afternoon. It is an important subject. It is an important subject to us all — certainly to the municipal partners. I have heard about the constraints in my community tours and everything else. I was very happy to put out the news release to let mayors know. I have written to them all and I have phoned them, talked to them — I have certainly communicated with them — about the amount of money that they are going to see in increase this year. I have heard and seen media reports from the Association of Yukon Communities that they were happy with the increases here, but it probably doesn't go far enough. That is why we have a committee struck to look at this in the long term, to see what improvements we can make — in a negotiation between the Association of Yukon Communities, all the communities, and the Yukon government — and how to make this comprehensive municipal grant, which we improved to make sure that it went up every year, after years of stasis under former governments — to make sure that municipalities were made whole.

I have said that I am open to those conversations. We are actually working on this — and have been working on this since 2020, to be honest with you — and we are going to continue to work with municipalities to make sure that they are whole and that they receive the money to operate their municipalities but with the caveat that this is a grant from the Yukon government. The municipalities run their own shows and they raise their own money.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Association of Yukon Communities has commissioned a report which looks at

changes that are needed to the formulas and structures of the comprehensive municipal grant. While everyone acknowledges that some of the longer term changes will take some time, the report offers some immediate short-term changes that could be made right away. According to the report, if those immediate changes were made, it would result in the amount of funding going to municipalities increasing by just over \$30 million.

Will the minister agree to implement these changes in advance of the next territorial budget so that these increases can flow to municipalities as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am committed to working with my municipal partners in a collaborative, courteous, and respectful way to come to an agreement about what a new formula looks like and how we can actually make sure that municipalities have the money that they need to deliver services to their citizens — the augmented funding, the grant that we provide, which is just a portion of the funding that municipalities get. This year, that grant went up 10 percent — more than 10 percent — and municipalities didn't know that prior to the release going out. They knew that — indexed to inflation. That was a big, big increase. It is roughly one-third of what they are asking for in this new comprehensive municipal grant, and that is in one year. So, yes, it went a long way to making up some of the distance. I had advised them that it was probably going to be the case because it is indexed to inflation and they get a bump, and they did get that bump.

We are still, though, carrying on the good work of negotiating with municipalities in a respectful manner, building on the good relationship that we have to improve things again. Like my predecessor — he made it escalate annually, in stark contrast to the Yukon Party, which kept it at the same rate for years and years and years.

Question re: Yukon Hospital Corporation funding

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, in May, the Premier issued a sole-source contract for \$300,000 to the Ernst & Young Orenda corporation to review the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The Procurement Support Centre recommended against issuing the contract, but the Premier personally overruled them. We know via ATIPP that the government had the final report from Ernst & Young on August 1. We requested it via ATIPP months ago, but the government has refused to give it to us.

Will the Liberal government agree to release this independent report on the financing of the Yukon Hospital Corporation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, from time to time, when there is important work to be done, we do issue contracts in that form. In this particular case, it was working with the Executive Council Office and working with the deputy minister's office to ensure that we had the appropriate expertise — being able to look at spending with the Hospital Corporation. We wanted to ensure that the work was being done with the best value for Yukoners — again, supporting our health care system.

We have heard the calls and we continue to work with the Hospital Corporation, and I will confer with our public servants and also with the Minister of Health and Social Services. We

will be back to the House when we have made a decision on that request.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has a history of chronically underfunding the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The Premier personally sole-sourced a \$300,000 contract to Ernst & Young to review the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Now the Premier is refusing to commit to the release of this report, so I will ask again: Will the government agree to release this report that looked at the financing of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and if not, what are they hiding?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I love getting questions from the Member for Lake Laberge — the drama, the buildup.

Look, we are not hiding anything and I certainly didn't say that we weren't going to release the document. I said that we undertook some work. We think it's important to ensure that the funds that are being spent — whether it's in Highways and Public Works or it's with Health and Social Services or with the Hospital Corporation — are spent with the needs of Yukoners in mind.

We have just come back from a meeting with leaders from across the country to talk about making sure that we get best value for money when it comes to investment in health care. I would hope, as a former health minister, that the member opposite would also want to make sure that the money is being used appropriately and in the best way.

Nobody over here is hiding anything. All we are doing is making sure that we ask the tough questions, that we get the expertise that we need, and that we get the best value for money. We have done that already and we will continue to do that.

Question re: Mineral exploration industry

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I have some questions regarding mineral exploration in the territory. At last year's Yukon Geoscience Forum, a government geologist with the Yukon Geological Survey warned that the number of companies and prospectors active in the territory could drop to a 57-year low and that new project numbers continue to decline. Since this warning was issued publicly by the government's own scientist, I am assuming that the Liberals took it quite seriously.

What policy changes has the government undertaken in the last year to reverse this troubling trend in our mineral exploration industry?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I do remember hearing the statement. There was a statement made — a warning — but then that individual, I think, left the government to actually become part of the private sector and work inside of that industry, because they have a commitment and they are looking optimistic about it. So, on one hand, it is saying there is a warning. On the other hand, it is: I'm actually going to work in that industry because I think there is great opportunity in it. It's a bit of a challenging one, so I will leave it there.

Mr. Kent: At the time that this individual geologist made these comments, he was working for the Yukon Geological Survey. As I mentioned, these words came directly

from a Yukon government scientist and were presented to delegates at a major mining conference here in the territory: Our mineral exploration industry is in trouble as the pipeline of new projects is drying up and reaching historical lows. We need a course correction by the Liberals to reverse this trend.

I am going to ask again: What policy changes has the government enacted in the past year since these statements were made publicly by a Yukon government geologist aimed at reducing this disturbing trend?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, the premise was that there was a statement made by this government geologist, and what I saw last week was that this government geologist was out promoting the industry that he has now joined with a company that I think is doing very well, so that is counterintuitive to the statement from last year. Now that individual is out there actually promoting investment in the Yukon.

I think that the question has kind of fallen on the table here, and it doesn't seem to be landing with any substance. Again, it is a situation where that individual has now gone into the industry and seems to be doing quite well in the industry. Maybe I am wrong, but I think that is what is happening with the part of the industry that they have just joined.

Again, when you hit the button with the individuals across the way, they all start to talk off-mic, so I guess we're hitting something because they're talking off-mic.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, last year, a Yukon government geologist at the Yukon Geoscience Forum said that the number of companies and prospectors active in the territory could drop to a 57--year low and that new project numbers continue to decline. On November 1, the Premier and I heard from one of the most prominent mining claim holders in the Yukon. In that e--mail, they stated that they would not be spending any more exploration dollars on properties in the Yukon until issues surrounding land use planning and compensation for expropriated claims were settled. This should raise a major red flag for the minister and his colleagues, I hope.

Has the Premier spoken with this company since they sent that e--mail last week, and what policies will the government change to assure this mining company and others that it is still worthwhile spending money here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think it was a letter that was sent to me and the Member for Copperbelt South. I have had the chance to do a little bit of due diligence. I have communicated with those within the organization — what I am aware of. I haven't spoken to the CEO directly, but what I am aware — it speaks to a legal decision — a court decision — and my understanding is that it is the court decision that has come down in British Columbia, not in the Yukon, where the BC government has 18 months to respond. It is a bit of a challenge for us to deal with court cases that are happening outside of our jurisdiction.

We know that the members opposite are used to dealing with court cases when it comes to mining, but I will dig into this a bit more and will be reaching out to get a better understanding of how the BC legal case has defined how the individuals will be investing here in the Yukon.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

MLA 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, November 8, 2023. They are: Motion No. 821, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King; Motion No. 823, standing in the name of the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin; and Motion No. 798, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse Centre.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, 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 on Wednesday, November 8, 2023. It is Motion No. 775, standing in the name of the Member for Watson Lake.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Speaker: Motions respecting committee reports.

MOTIONS RESPECTING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 8

Clerk: Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 8, standing in the name of Kate White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform's final report, presented to the House on October 31, 2023, be concurred in.

Ms. White: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the ability today to speak on what I view as a very important motion. I want to say at the beginning that my whole lesson in electoral or democratic reform has happened actually since I became a member of this Assembly more than 12 years ago. I have such a belief that things can change and can be better and that people can feel more represented that, during the confidence and supply agreement that was first signed in 2021 by the Member for Klondike, there was a commitment to create the Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

I am also going to be very honest and say that this was an important learning process for me, and had you asked me at the beginning to process my feelings on citizens' assemblies, I would have told you a hard no; I'm not interested. I have to say that, over the span of, I believe, nearly 18 months of hearing from people across the territory and from professionals talking about the importance of, for example, the electoral system as it stands and looking Outside, the one thing that became clear for me is that when we make decisions, they probably shouldn't be decided by the people in this room — those who either stand to benefit or those who stand to have a loss from whatever that decision is. The only true way, in my mind, then — what I learned — is through a citizens' assembly. I think that the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and I both came

away with very similar ideas that really, in order for changes to happen, they would have to be made from people outside of this Assembly. So then, with the motion that was adopted — Motion No. 711 — on April 25, 2023, the Assembly established the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. That started the process that brought us here today.

During that span since April, the committee was represented by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, the Member for Copperbelt North, and me, and we met five times. Over the course of those meetings, a lot of different things were discussed and a lot of different paths forward were considered. In our deliberations, we talked about the information that we had collected or had been collected by the previous committee — the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. There were examples and we discussed the examples of citizens' assemblies on electoral reform that were held in other parts of Canada.

It's important to note here that the committee didn't reach a consensus. I think that the goal always is that we are going to try to reach consensus, but the recommendation that came forward was actually made by a majority of the committee. We did not reach consensus, and I will note that here.

One of the things that was required of the committee in the motion from this April was actually to come forward with terms of reference for what this committee would do. I'm pleased to say that the committee came up with terms of reference that were discussed with us and the committee, and we were able to get the report tabled in time. We had a deadline of October 31 in that motion and we were able to do that.

It's important to note that the terms of reference are taken across a spectrum. In part, there was a citizens' assembly in Ontario; there is one in British Columbia, and some of those recommendations from both of those committees were actually adapted and then used for our recommendations here.

We believe that the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform — or the YCA — should be a representative body of Yukoners that is established to recommend a model of electing members to the Yukon Legislative Assembly. That's the first part.

Their mandate — that they shall examine electoral systems and that, once they examine those systems, they are to issue a report recommending whether we stay with the current model that we use right now — the first-past-the-post model — or whether another model should be proposed. If that's the case, then they can only recommend one model and they have to tell us the reasons for it.

But it is really important — and it was important to the previous committee on electoral reform — that no matter what discussion we had or what happened — regardless of the voting system — it must reflect the importance of the balance for rural and urban representation. It's critically important for rural Yukon — anyone outside of Whitehorse — that all decisions made by this Assembly not be outweighed by the voices of Whitehorse. It's important that this be considered — the balance of rural and urban representation.

It's important to note that the YCA — the recommended model has to be consistent with both the Constitution of Canada and the Canadian parliamentary system, and that's our current set-up., the way things work where we have Cabinet — the way the system works right now. We can't reinvent that and start again. It has to follow both the Constitution of Canada and the Canadian parliamentary system, which is part of the background model, I would suggest.

If the YCA recommends adopting a model that is different from the current system, it can only recommend one such model and then it has to provide a detailed description and explanation of the proposed new electoral system in its final report. It has to be very clear. We learned from the example of British Columbia that if you give people too many examples or too many choices, it really muddies the water. What we asked for is clear — we go with the current model, we go with a different model, and tell us why and how it's going to work.

We decided that the YCA should be able to consult with Yukoners and provide them the opportunity to make submissions in writing or orally at public meetings. They can go back through all the records of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. They have the ability to hold public hearings, and they can choose to build on the experts in the field, and they can also build their learning. I think that's really important. We saw with the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly — it was very successful — the work and the learning that happened for the citizens' assembly, because they were able to direct their learning. They were able to understand the current system that they had in British Columbia and look to others. We believe that the same thing should be here.

We also came forward with the recommendation that the YCA should be established by a specific action of the Legislative Assembly — so there will be an additional motion, I hope, coming through here — and that — this is important — the YCA shall present its final report to the Speaker of the Yukon Legislative Assembly by October 31 of next year. They can issue interim reports if they are finding different learnings, but we need that final report by next year if we're looking at making any changes prior to 2025.

When they table that final report during or before the 2024 Fall Sitting of the Assembly, it's to give sufficient time for this Assembly to pass referendum legislation, because right now, we don't have that ability. We don't have the ability here in the territory to hold a referendum of this nature. One of the things that we saw in the Special Committee on Electoral Reform was the belief that no change should happen without a referendum, but it should be a two-part referendum similar to what they did in New Zealand, where they had the referendum to ask the question first and then, after two elections, they had another referendum to ask if it worked or didn't work — should we keep it or should we not keep it?

So, the Special Committee on Electoral Reform made that recommendation. Therefore, this special committee on the citizens' assembly has said that we have to make sure that, if they come forward with the recommendation, there is enough time to pass referendum legislation.

We did get into further details and we talked about membership of the OICA. There was — if folks remember — a survey that went out from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and it actually very specifically talked only about the citizens' assembly. It gave people the option to choose one, two, three, or other members of a riding or an electoral district to be included in the assembly. Based on the information that we got from that, the committee settled on two. So, two members from each current riding would be selected for this committee. It is important to say that they are going to be selected randomly and it is also important to say that 1,793 Yukoners declared their willingness to participate in a Yukon citizens' assembly in the survey that the Special Committee on Electoral Reform completed. The fact is that 1,793 people said that they would be willing to participate. The makeup — the two members from each of the 19 electoral districts of the Yukon citizens' assembly — will be from those folks, and the Yukon Bureau of Statistics is going to help with that process.

It is really important to say — and this has gone toward Ontario — that Ontario said that they wanted as many people as possible to participate, but they had a few caveats. I think that it is important that we talk about that. As an example, you need to be a Canadian citizen to be able to participate. If you are going to change our voting system, you have to be a Canadian citizen. You have to be a resident of the Yukon.

One of the questions that we have talked often about is: Should the voting age be lowered? That was one of the questions we had during the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. I will tell you my personal thought. I think that if you are 16, you should be able to vote. You are going to be affected by the changes that we make here. That was a bigger conversation, but within this, we said that anyone who is under 16 couldn't participate on the citizens' assembly, but if you are 16 and over, you absolutely can. We want to hear the voice of youth in this as well.

You cannot be a justice or a judge; you can't be a member or officer of the Parliament of Canada or the Privy Council of Canada; you cannot be a member or an officer of the Legislature or the Executive Council; you cannot be a candidate in the last two federal or territorial elections; you cannot be an official representative or agent of a person identified as a candidate in either of the last two territorial or federal elections; you cannot be an immediate family member of someone who is currently in this Assembly — so, although my dad may be very interested in electoral systems, he would not qualify for this — and you cannot be a current officer or official representative of a registered territorial political party. We think that is important. That still leaves an awful lot of people available in the Yukon.

We looked at that, making sure that there were some restrictions. Some people may have different opinions and I am happy to hear them, but this is what we recommended.

Then, out of all of the folks — the two people selected from the 19 electoral districts — two spokespersons will be selected by the group themselves to speak on behalf of the Yukon citizens' assembly. We also note that alternate members may

be required, so we are going to have them identified in case someone drops out, but they will just be identified.

It is also important to note that in some committees — and we see this here in the Assembly. But we want to make sure that every member who is on the citizens' assembly has the ability to vote, which means that we don't want one of those folks to be the chair. So, a chair shall be appointed to facilitate the establishment of the Yukon citizens' assembly. The chair will have the administrative responsibility but won't be a voting member. They will really be like the facilitator. That person will be there in support of the citizens' assembly and to walk them forward and through other things.

We also note that — what we are asking people to do is to take a pretty substantial amount of time out of their life to learn about electoral systems, both here in Canada and outside of Canada, to see whether or not we should go ahead with our current system or whether an alternate system should be brought forward.

It is important to note that we believe that, because of that, travel and accommodation expenses for people travelling outside of Whitehorse should be reimbursed and that members should receive an honorarium of \$200 per meeting day, and that is similar to category D for boards and committees with high impact on government or public decisions or where recommendations are made. So, within the classification of people who sit on boards and committees, category D is the highest, and it is those folks who make pretty critical decisions about what happens in the territory.

Ultimately, all this is to say that the committee met; we came forward with recommendations. It is not by consensus; it is by a majority. My real hope is that Yukon can blaze the trail, that we can say that we learned from examples that happened in Ontario and British Columbia and we can look outside of Canada, but that we can take the lessons learned from those jurisdictions and we can support our citizens' assembly — individual Yukoners, just ordinary folks who are going to learn about systems — and if they come forward with a recommendation that things should change, I think that is the way to do it. It has to be decided outside of this Chamber; it can't be politicians who stand to benefit from these decisions.

I am proud to stand here as the chair of this assembly. Of course, that report is available online for anyone who is interested in seeing it. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues — if they have thoughts either for or against — but more importantly, I look forward to a vote on this motion and I look forward to the next steps of this citizens' assembly.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the first thing to note is that the report that we're debating today and trying to see if we have concurrence on was a majority report; it wasn't consensus. I am going to talk about consensus for a bit, but I will just begin by noting that we are supportive of the report that came from the special committee. You can run the math pretty quickly. If the NDP is supportive and the Liberals are supportive, it remains to be seen what the Yukon Party will say.

The main points about a citizens' assembly and why we are thinking about them — the number one point is that it's a way

to listen to Yukoners. It's a way to engage Yukoners. I don't know whether I would say that it is the only way that this can happen — whether it's part of this House or not — but it's a non-partisan way and it's a form of direct democracy. Here in this House, as we are representatives, we have representative democracy. We go, we talk to constituents, we talk to Yukoners, we listen to what their concerns are, and then we try to bring them into our debate in this House, whether it's developing legislation or developing policies.

But a citizens' assembly is not just about electoral reform. It's a way to bring together, in this case, Yukoners to talk about issues that Yukoners might care about and get them to come up with ideas. In this case, it's about electoral reform, but I am hopeful that this will be a successful exercise and that we see it as a tool that we can use in the future on other big topics for the Yukon.

What we're asking is that the citizens' assembly report back to the Legislative Assembly — to us, the members here who are elected to represent Yukoners. As the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has noted, the chair of the special committee, it would then come to us to establish — if the citizens' assembly came back and said that they think the Yukon's voting system could be improved and this is the system that they believe would be best for Yukoners, we would then go to a referendum — so, a referendum if needed. As I've said, we didn't reach consensus on that.

Let me back up for a second to talk about the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. The committee was established in, I think, May 2021, here in this Assembly. I note that, back then, the Yukon Party voted against establishing the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. I went back and re-read some of that debate to try to think about it. The Yukon Party highlighted three key points, in my mind: (1) we should listen to Yukoners — they said that is important; (2) however we deal with our electoral system, we need to have all parties involved — it can't be just one party that's doing something; and (3) any decision on a potential new voting system needs to go to a referendum for Yukoners. Let me quote for a moment. This is from the Member for Lake Laberge on May 26, 2021 — quote: "... the Yukon Party continues to believe that our democracy belongs to Yukoners and that any proposal that would significantly change the way by which members are elected to this Legislative Assembly should be presented to Yukoners in a referendum. It should be up to Yukoners to consider both the status quo and any proposed change and to cast their vote and choose whether they wish to accept the proposed changes."

The Yukon Party, at that point, was not supportive of creating a special committee, but one was created. I would like to acknowledge the work that the Member for Lake Laberge, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and I did on that Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

The time in between has been roughly two years. We listened to 14 expert witnesses on electoral systems. We travelled across the Yukon. We went to half a dozen communities. We had a couple of big meetings in Whitehorse as well.

As a special committee, we had over 30 meetings to look at electoral reform and try to come with our suggestions. We put out over a dozen press releases to the Yukon public about electoral reform during that period of time. At every stage, that was done with consensus among all parties. There was a point toward the end when we came back to this Assembly and asked for a little bit more time. Again, by consensus, we had agreed that we needed to go back and talk to Yukoners again.

We had done one big survey asking about the main points of electoral reform and Yukoners' opinions on that. We then had one question that was outstanding, and that was about whether or not we would establish a citizens' assembly, and the special committee agreed by consensus to go back and do another specific survey to Yukoners and ask them that specific question: Do you agree? Should we have a citizens' assembly — yes, no, or unsure? We got that back and it was a clear yes to that survey — 63 percent said yes, 8.4 percent said no, and roughly over a quarter said that they weren't sure. So, it was a clear yes, but at that point, that special committee no longer had consensus, and when we see the report that comes to this Assembly that just predates the creation of the special committee whose report we're debating today, it was a majority decision on that one point.

We heard in debate that day that the Yukon NDP was supportive of a citizens' assembly, the Yukon Liberals were supportive of a citizens' assembly, but the Yukon Party, in fact, put out a press release saying that they are not supportive of a citizens' assembly.

It was consensus all along, it was listening to Yukoners, it was all-party, and we had established that we all agreed that we would need a referendum if there was any suggestion of changing the voter system — that it should go to a referendum. As the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has noted, in fact, it was a referendum and then, after the system had been in place for a period of time, a referendum again to check in with Yukoners to make sure that they agreed that it is the correct system, and yet we did not agree on whether we should establish a citizens' assembly.

What the Yukon Party stood up and debated about this past spring — no, we don't want a citizens' assembly — and what they put out in their press release was that we had not heard from enough Yukoners. That was the basic message.

I just want to go over a few moments in time when we have had some of these ways in which we have engaged with Yukoners. The Premier sought to give a ministerial statement last week talking about engagement of Yukoners. The Engage Yukon site has just hit over 100 significant engagements of Yukoners, but I am only going to discuss a couple other than electoral reform.

The first one was when it came time to legalize cannabis. When we went to do that, we put out a survey to Yukoners and we got over 3,000 respondents to that survey. That was a record. We set a record for how many Yukoners came back and talked to us. Overwhelmingly, they said that, yes, they were in favour of legalization. I know the Yukon Party voted against that legalization, but their point at the time wasn't that we hadn't talked to enough Yukoners; it was that they disagreed

with the model. They said that we should use Saskatchewan's model. By the way, we still outperform Saskatchewan both in terms of private sector sales and in terms of black-market displacement. I think the last numbers I checked showed that we were 60 percent better than Saskatchewan, so that's great, but never did the Yukon Party say: You haven't talked to enough Yukoners; we haven't heard from enough Yukoners; we disagree with this.

In 2020, we ended seasonal time changes here in the Yukon and we had a survey when we talked to Yukoners about those time changes. This time, we heard from 4,800 Yukoners and that set a new record for engagement with Yukoners. Yukoners were clearly in favour of ending seasonal time changes. Ahead of that survey, I would just note that the Yukon Party here in this House brought forward a motion that we debated one day on ending seasonal time changes. I think it was brought forward by the Member for Kluane. We all agreed on that and we all agreed to do that. In that debate, I noted that one of the key points that the Yukon Party said was that we really need to hear from Yukoners, so we went out and did the survey and we really did hear from Yukoners — 4,800 Yukoners.

Then we get to electoral reform. With the first Special Committee on Electoral Reform, we did a survey in the spring of 2022. We set a new record for the number of Yukoners who responded to a survey. Over 6,000 Yukoners responded — just over 17 percent of Yukoners — and they shared their thoughts on our voting system. There was a whole range of questions. It's up on the Legislative Assembly website and anyone can check it out.

The one question that didn't land cleanly was about a citizens' assembly. Again, as I noted, we decided through consensus of that special committee to go back and ask Yukoners again. We did — in the spring of this year or early this year. We got those results and, in that second survey, we got 6,354 responses — again setting a record for the number of Yukoners who responded. What did we hear? So, 63 percent said yes, eight percent said no, and 28 percent were not sure, so it's a clear yes. The Yukon Party said, however, that it is not enough Yukoners — that we didn't hear from enough Yukoners. They suggested, for example, that we go to a referendum.

As part of preparing for today, I went back in time and tried to look up when the Yukon Party looked at electoral reform. This was under the 31st Assembly, under Premier Fentie. As part of the throne speech, there was commitment to consider electoral reform and to strike a commission on electoral reform.

That isn't how it happened; it was a past Commissioner and past MLA of this House who was assigned a task of investigating electoral reform. Mr. Ken McKinnon — I will just say to the Assembly that I miss Ken and I was sad when Ken passed away. He was a constituent. I am not sure whether he ever voted for me, but I will say that he always gave me great advice and I thought he was very level in his considerations.

The Yukon Party said that they would do a commission; they didn't. They assigned it to one person. I recently read through his report, which was tabled in the Assembly in 2005. I have only read it a couple of times and I am going to

paraphrase a bit here, but early on in the report — I am looking at page 2 — Ken talked about the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly and he said — quote: "... I was hooked." He said that when he looked at that notion, he thought it was a good idea. Throughout the report, he goes on to talk about a range of things. He didn't recommend a citizens' assembly at that time — and I am quoting again: "I felt only one important process should be followed in the Yukon before we also went to a Citizens' Assembly to involve the Yukon public in discussions about the future of Yukon's electoral system." What he was saying was that we weren't quite ready for it when he made his recommendation back in 2005. He talked about needing to do a little bit more work. He suggested that we watch to see how the citizens' assemblies play out in British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, et cetera, to see, to learn from those, and to think about how we could do it here.

He talked for a period of time about whether there should be a referendum to decide whether we host a citizens' assembly, which is exactly what the Yukon Party recommended in their press release when they said that we shouldn't have a citizens' assembly; they said that we should have a referendum to consider whether we have a citizens' assembly. Ken McKinnon said no, that he didn't think that a referendum was ultimately the right way to go. He just said that we just needed to talk to Yukoners; we needed to see more Yukoners who were telling us that we needed a citizens' assembly.

I will give my final quote from that report. It is just at the end of his summary, and it says — quote: "At some future point in Yukon history, the Yukon public will loudly and clearly let their leaders know that the time has come to examine 'electoral reform.'" That is when he said that it would be the right time to have a citizens' assembly, and lo and behold, here we have a survey of Yukoners where they have told us clearly that is what they think should happen.

I will just finish up on a couple of points here. I look forward to hearing from the Yukon Party on this. I will hope that they will agree that, having heard from Yukoners that it is important to give Yukoners a chance to come together and to listen to them — there was a phrase that I heard today during the tribute to Mr. Al Falle by the Member for Lake Laberge. He talked about the integrity of our democratic process. I think he was complimenting Al and his commitment to our democracy, and I think it is so important that we engage with Yukoners, that we talk with them.

Again, I know that, last week, we have this new rule in place about ministerial statements — that they are not always going to happen. Again, the opposition parties disagreed with allowing us to talk to Yukoners here in the Assembly through a ministerial statement about engagement with Yukoners. We see it as an incredibly important commitment to Yukoners; it is basically a promise to Yukoners to keep them involved and included in our decision-making and those things that affect them the most. That is pretty darn important, I would say.

My basic understanding of where the Yukon Party went with this in the spring was that they were saying that they have not heard from enough Yukoners about whether or not we

should set up a citizens' assembly to listen to Yukoners. Fundamentally, I just don't understand the logic in that.

It's incongruent, and I don't think it really gets to the heart of it. I think that the heart of it is that the Yukon Party is just not interested in the topic of electoral reform, but the real question should be: What do Yukoners think? That's why I encourage us to vote for concurrence on this report and thus to get to a citizens' assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the time today.

Mr. Dixon: I would like to thank my colleagues for their comments so far. I think it will probably come as a surprise to no one that the Yukon Party will not be voting in favour of this motion today. The final report of the Special Committee on the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, which is before us today, is one that we do not support. There is at least one general reason and several specific reasons why that is, and I will explain some of those today, but going back to the initial establishment of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform, the Yukon Party has been against the expenditure of time and resources on this endeavour right from the get-go. We voted against the initial motion creating this Special Committee on Electoral Reform. Despite that, we had representatives sit on that committee and participate in good faith and participate for the two years that the special committee was underway. As a result of its work, there were a number of conclusions that were drawn.

We voted against the creation of this special committee of the Legislature to look at the terms of reference for the citizens' assembly. We didn't believe — and still don't believe — that it's in the best interest of the territory to have a citizens' assembly and certainly not one with the structure being outlined in this report looking at conducting this work.

As a general comment, we remain somewhat skeptical of the overarching trend toward attempts at electoral reform that we've seen since the 2021 election. The general reason for our opposition is simply that we feel that Yukoners want their representatives to focus on issues that matter to them. We consistently hear from Yukoners that they are concerned about a number of things. They are concerned about the cost of living; they are concerned about our education system; they are concerned about housing; they are concerned about their lack of access to health care and family doctors; and they are concerned about a whole range of other issues that are facing the territory right now.

In the course of my time here since 2021, I have never once knocked on a door in my riding and had someone say that what we really needed was a citizens' assembly. I have never heard that before. I know there are some Yukoners out there who do feel strongly about electoral reform. There are some who feel very strongly about it, but my view is that, for the bulk of Yukoners, there are more pressing concerns than this today.

There are a number of specific concerns I have with the terms of reference that the committee has come up with. I acknowledge — as my colleagues have noted — that the NDP are in favour of this; the Liberals are in favour of this. We are not in favour of this. I think you can probably determine who

was the odd person out in the vote in the committee. We, of course, are the odd ones out on this, and that is for a number of reasons.

First of all, I think that there are a number of problems with the terms of reference, as they have been articulated by this report. First of all, I think that there is a problem right from the get-go. The first line in the terms of reference is — and I quote: “The Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform ... shall be a representative body of Yukoners established to recommend a model for electing Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.”

Mr. Speaker, the term is “a representative body of [all] Yukoners.” I don't think that this citizens' assembly will be that at all. In fact, it will be representative of 1,793 Yukoners. That is the number of eligible Yukoners who are able to sit on this committee, based on their self-selection in a public consultation that occurred between January and March of this year.

I don't believe it was ever communicated to Yukoners adequately that this was their one opportunity to say yes or no to participate in the citizens' assembly. I think the intent of that survey was to seek Yukoners' feedback on the creation of a citizens' assembly. The result of that was that we got a number of different viewpoints, and those have been discussed, but one of the outcomes as well was that 1,793 Yukoners said that they would be willing to participate on a citizens' assembly.

I don't believe it was ever properly communicated that was the only opportunity they would have to put their hand up and participate on a citizens' assembly. I think that, by limiting the pool to these 1,793 Yukoners, who have — without even realizing this was their only opportunity to put their hand up — will limit the pool available to this citizens' assembly.

I also have a problem with the number overall. I think that we are choosing two members per the 19 ridings that exist, so there will be a 38-member committee. In my time here, I have participated on a number of different committees of the Legislature, and in my private life, I have participated on a number of committees for other things. I can never imagine what a 38-person committee would look like when it comes to trying to engage with Yukoners. I participated in select committees with five or six members, and that has been very difficult. It has been costly, and it has been difficult. I can only imagine 38 individuals randomly chosen coming together and trying to sort out how to consult with Yukoners, how often to consult with them, and what those meetings might look like. I think that the 38-person committee will be unwieldy, and it would be difficult to function.

There is also a point, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to make about the selection process from those eligible Yukoners whom I cited earlier. On one hand, it says that these Yukoners should be selected randomly, and, in fact, we asked for the Yukon Bureau of Statistics to help with that random selection. However, on the other hand, there is an indication that there needs to be some sort of diversity reflected in this. I fail to understand how you can simultaneously have the selection process be random but then also ask that the diversity of the Yukon be considered and offered. To me, those are inconsistent at best, and I don't think that they will be achievable —

certainly not by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, which is being asked for their help on this.

Another piece that I have a concern with is that it's based on the current electoral boundaries. We have — just as recently as a few weeks ago — all acknowledged that the current electoral boundaries of the territory are flawed, that they are, in some cases, disproportionate, that some ridings are disproportionately small, that some ridings have far more constituents or citizens in them than others, and while there is an allowance for some rural-urban divide between those ridings, it's clear that the current allocation of ridings is inadequate. That's why we all have agreed to launch a boundaries commission and have these boundaries reconsidered. So, I think that to base something like this on a current electoral map that we all view to be inadequate and flawed is misguided and wrong.

Finally, this 38-person committee is going to be tasked with consulting Yukoners, and as I have said, I think that having a 38-person committee go off around the territory and conduct itself — having public meetings, hearing from Yukoners individually, giving them the opportunity — according to this, both in public meetings and providing oral testimony, as well as written testimony — I think will be unwieldy and difficult to manage.

I am also deeply concerned about the cost. I don't know what the ultimate cost will be, but I think that — based on the travel accommodations, honoraria, and consultation commitments that we see in this report — it is very likely that the cost of this endeavour will be well over a million dollars. That is the information that I think is relevant now, as well, because the cost ultimately is a reflection of our priority on this, and as I said before, I don't think that Yukoners would like to see us spend a million dollars-plus on an endeavour like this.

I have concerns specifically with the terms of reference, as laid out before us. I have concerns with the general lack of priority, I think, that Yukoners carry for this issue. The Yukon Party will be voting against this motion today, and if there is a future motion around the specifics of adopting these terms of reference and creating a citizens' assembly, we will be voting against that as well.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that we are the odd ones out on this and that there is a somewhat predetermined outcome here, given the fact that this commitment comes from the confidence and supply agreement, ultimately, and both the Liberals and the NDP will be supporting it. So, we look forward to seeing how it progresses, but the Yukon Party will not be voting in favour of this motion today.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: There are some things to unpack, but I am not going to do a lot of that right now. I will say that the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly — 161 people, successfully run — came out with a final report and a recommendation; Ontario — 103 individuals sat on that —

and one could say that they also came forward with recommendations, and so that is substantially more than our 38. I have the utmost faith in the citizens of the Yukon to be able to work together toward a common goal.

It's also important to note that the Special Committee on Electoral Reform was part of the confidence and supply agreement, but this year, it's because I fundamentally believe in the importance of representation and I believe that for this place — this Assembly — how we elect politicians in the Yukon could reflect better what people think and how they feel.

I have been accused of voting in lots of different ways for lots of different reasons, but I can clearly say right now that the three of us in the Yukon NDP caucus will be voting in favour of this, because we believe that there is an opportunity to do things in a better way. It has nothing to do with previous agreements or commitments or any of these things. Similar to when I vote with the Yukon Party, I do it because I think that it's the right thing to do. So, I look forward to the members voting with their yeas or nays, and I look forward to the next steps.

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: 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.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, eight nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion respecting Committee Reports No. 8 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 (MLA Tredger): Order. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Community Services — *continued*

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, I have a few minutes. I'm not going to take much time this afternoon. I want to get at it. We have already spoken about five hours on this department. I am really anxious to hear the questions from the members opposite this afternoon.

I want to thank my officials, Matt and John, for coming again. Let's get at it, shall we?

Mr. Dixon: Deputy Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to return to this topic. I would like to just confirm a few things based on our last discussion. Can the minister reconfirm for us — I have seen a few different numbers now, both from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and CS about the better building program. Can we just have the minister reiterate the total number of applications so far and the total number that have been approved?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I was going through Hansard just trying to find what was said last week, because I don't want to contradict myself. My good colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is actually on the file, so during the Energy, Mines and Resources debate, I encourage the member to please ask this question of him, as he is actually the one handling the applications for this program and has the most up-to-date information.

I am getting this from my departmental officials. I believe that the last time I spoke on this was as of October 25; now it is

as of October 29. My colleague has just reminded me that we had an event on Sunday that gathered a whole bunch more information, so these things are changing on a consistent basis. But as of October 29, there were two completed applications, five in progress, and 49 approved but not yet started work. All applications received have been reviewed and approved by the PAT, which is the Property Assessment Taxation branch. Most approved applications are pending, waiting for the client to decide whether they are going to commit to the project or not. By community, we have: 35 in Whitehorse, three in Dawson, two in Faro, three in Haines Junction, six in rural Yukon — not in a municipality. There are three new clients to end the program between July 1 and September 30. That may have changed recently. That is the information that I have and is more up-to-date information than what I gave you last week, so it may not jive with the numbers given last week because this is changing. I encourage you to talk to my good colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources when he is back in this House. He handles those applications and may have updated information as well.

Mr. Dixon: I will indeed follow up with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources at the appropriate time.

I would like to turn to an issue that is affecting a number of folks in relation to McConnell Lake. We know that residents in that area continue to be frustrated with the situation that they find themselves faced with regarding water that is affecting their properties. I know that the minister has engaged with them before and that he has heard from them. I know that, at various points, the Department of Community Services has engaged with these folks. I was wondering if the minister can give us an update. What work has been done to address the issues that are facing those folks? Are there any further mitigations or efforts that can be taken by the department to help to address the situation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member following up on this issue. It has to do with drainage and water in the McConnell Lake area. There have been some shifts in the terrain there. We had hired an engineering company to give us a report. After receiving that report, we needed more information. We have actually gone to a new engineering company. We're expecting the report fairly soon and I hope to be able to share that with homeowners and the local advisory council once we get it. It should be due fairly soon, but I haven't got any more on that. It's going to recommend some options for residents. I haven't even seen those recommendations yet, so once I get those recommendations, I will be able to assess it more, but we haven't got the report back yet — so, more to come on that file.

Mr. Dixon: Is the minister considering permanent mitigations in the area to prevent the water from impacting homes?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm not going to get ahead of this process on the floor of the House today. I've just said that we have an engineer hired to study this issue and come back with some recommendations for us. I haven't seen those recommendations. I haven't seen the report yet. Those engineers have been working closely with the residents. I heard

that from the local advisory council. They wanted to work more closely with the engineer. That work, I am told, is happening — that they are in touch with the residents and working with the community. The few residents whom we are talking about — I think there are two or three homes affected in this area.

I just met with the local advisory council in the last couple of weeks. This issue didn't come up, but they do know that we have hired an engineering firm; we are working with that. I am not going to get ahead of the recommendations coming out of that engineering firm. I haven't got the information to answer any questions from the member opposite until I see that report.

I will have more to say once that report is delivered. It is expected sometime in the early new year.

Mr. Dixon: Can I get the minister just to repeat that? He said that it was going to be due early in the new year; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I am told, it is expected sometime early in 2024.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that information from the minister and simply note that the folks in that area who are affected by the flooding in the area are looking for some support and I think would be very appreciative of the minister's commitment to offer support. I know that he doesn't want to get ahead of the engineering studies, as he said, but I do think that the folks there would really appreciate a commitment from the government that they will help them out and that they will engage in whatever measures are necessary to help them protect their homes.

I will move on. I would like to move on to the renewal or replacement of ICIP. It is something that we talked about previously and I asked the minister a question about it, and we moved on fairly briefly after that, so I would like to return to it.

Can the minister tell us: Is there any unallocated money available currently from the current federal infrastructure programs — the small communities fund or ICIP? Are there any funds available in those that are currently unallocated, or am I correct in my assumption that they have entirely been allocated and that we have tapped out that federal infrastructure funding?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We did have a conversation about this just in the last couple of weeks. I appreciate the member's interest in our historic infrastructure investments that the federal government made in the territory over the last several years. We, on this side, wanted to embrace that investment and we have done that. Unlike many jurisdictions across the country, we actually used all of our ICIP money. We have deployed all of those infrastructure funds that came to the territory. We have allocated all of the money that we have received from Ottawa for infrastructure investment across the territory investing in our municipalities, investing in our unincorporated communities, making sure that Yukoners have the best infrastructure they possibly can with this historic investment that we have seen from the federal government.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the clarity of that answer from the minister. I would like to ask a follow-up question, though. Earlier this year, on April 5, the Premier said — and I quote: "First of all, there was language in the federal budget —

language that we were pleased to see — and it really talked about the reallocation of the ICIP funding across Canada. It talked about how regions — as our interpretation — that have fully used their ICIP funding have the opportunity to again have access to funds that haven't been used across the country."

What the Premier was talking about was the idea — and I have heard this reference from other ministers before — that unallocated ICIP funding would be available to jurisdictions like the Yukon that have fully allocated their ICIP funding. Can the minister confirm that this is the case, and if so, when can we expect to see additional ICIP funding from other jurisdictions that was unspent?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So very exciting — this government embraced the infrastructure funding coming from Ottawa. We know the members opposite were reluctant to take that money on, but we took it on and we are doing it. Now I guess there has been a conversion that the members opposite are now interested in this historic investment that we have seen across the territory. I am glad to hear it. I am glad to hear that now there has been a change of heart from the members opposite. Their excitement and their interest in this subject is really heartening to me.

I will say that very little has changed in the last couple of weeks since we last had this conversation. It may even have been on Thursday. It's hard, because we have had these conversations — we have talked for almost five hours — over the last couple of weeks.

Yes, there has been very little change since the last time I stood to answer this very similar question. We are working with our federal counterparts all the time, seeking more information about the new tranche of infrastructure money coming and what the conditions of that money will be.

The Premier was just recently with his federal compatriots talking about funding for our confederation. I have been talking to infrastructure and municipal leaders across the country on this very subject. It's something on everyone's mind. We will have a fiscal update coming from the federal government in the next little while. Maybe that will shed some light on this whole thing. Until then, there is very little new to report.

I am glad to hear that the members opposite are now interested in the infrastructure funding that they were kind of tepid about earlier.

Mr. Dixon: While I appreciate some of that information, my question was specifically about the current ICIP funding, not the replacement or renegotiated — or whatever was coming down the line as a replacement for ICIP. My question is about the current ICIP. We have been led to believe that some jurisdictions have not fully allocated their ICIP funding. We know, from what the minister has just said, that the Yukon has indeed allocated all of our ICIP funding. Previously, the Premier and other ministers have indicated that jurisdictions that do not fully allocate their ICIP funding will have that money then go to jurisdictions like the Yukon which has. I just would like some explanation as to whether or not that is, in fact, federal policy, and if so, when can we expect that reallocation to occur?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, the enthusiasm and the interest in this is heartening. I have nothing more to add. We

have allocated all our money. We are not one of those jurisdictions that held back. We saw an opportunity to invest in our communities across the territory in a historic manner. We embraced that historic opportunity and we have spent all the money. I think that is tremendous for the territory. It sets us apart from many of the other jurisdictions in the country. So, we did that.

The federal government has at times said that they may look at unspent money in other jurisdictions and reallocate it. That is what we have been going on. We haven't heard any more about that — certainly not in the last couple of weeks — so, we are waiting for more information on the new tranches of infrastructure money. We haven't heard from the feds how that is going to be allocated — where the money is coming from. This may be an impossibility, but we are still waiting for the federal government to provide some guidance on this, some more specific guidance on the ICIP money — the next tranche of infrastructure money — that may be coming to the jurisdictions across the country. I know that there is interest in this across the country. There is a huge hunger for more infrastructure investment, climate resilient infrastructure — all sorts of really, really important work to come.

We're all anxious about this — certainly I am; my colleagues in this government are; apparently the opposition is. I know that this is echoed across the country in jurisdictions — in meetings I have been at all summer. We'll have to wait and see. I haven't heard details — specifics — about what's coming and how it's going to be funded, where it's coming from. It might be from reallocations of old money; I don't know. We've been told this; we've been working with the federal government; we will continue to do that to make sure that we get as much money for Yukoners as we possibly can from the federal government on the infrastructure file.

Mr. Dixon: The minister said that the federal government has talked about reallocating unspent ICIP money from other jurisdictions. Can he provide a little more clarity as to what they have said? He said that they have talked about it, but I would like to know what exactly the federal government has said about this. Have they indicated that they would reallocate unspent ICIP money from other jurisdictions to a jurisdiction like the Yukon, which has fully spent or allocated their ICIP money?

I ask this because a number of folks in the communities have asked this very same question as well. They have seen comments like the one made by the minister now and by the Premier earlier this year that have suggested that there is unspent ICIP money out there in other provinces and that the federal government is deciding whether or not to reallocate that money. What the Premier had led us to believe in April was that money would be reallocated to the Yukon, so I just want to get a better sense of what that process would look like. How much money can we expect to see coming from other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Let me very clear: We don't have specifics to share with the opposition today on the floor of the House. That hasn't changed in the couple of weeks since the question came up before. We don't know yet, but we're waiting, and we're working with our federal counterparts, and

when something becomes available, we'll certainly let this House know however it is — be it a news release to the public, or a ministerial statement, or however we do it, we'll let the members opposite know, because we understand that their constituents — like my constituents, like everybody's here — are interested in infrastructure spending.

We have committed to spend the money we receive from Ottawa. That is a differentiator — that is a difference between our two parties. We are going to spend the infrastructure money we get to improve lives for Yukoners in every community. We have done that for seven years, and we are going to continue down that road. When I have more information from the federal government to share with this House, I will certainly do so. That hasn't happened yet.

Mr. Dixon: On April 1, the Premier said that there was language in the federal budget — language that we were pleased to see — and it really talked about the reallocation of ICIP funding across Canada. Does the minister know what the Premier was talking about when he made that comment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the member reiterating what he has said several times over the last couple of weeks. I hear him; I hear the member opposite. I have nothing further to add on this. That was information that we received from the federal government. We are waiting for more clarification, for more information. I haven't received that yet. There has been no federal announcement on new infrastructure funding or where that money is coming from. When that information comes to me or the Premier, I am sure that we will tell Yukoners, because there is a hunger for that infrastructure funding across municipalities, and we are happy to help to provide better infrastructure for Yukoners on this side of the House.

Mr. Dixon: I will let the annals of Hansard reflect the minister's answer. I think that what the Premier was referring to is something that caught the attention of a lot of people, and I think that the answer from the minister is telling. I will move on, because we are limited on time here today.

Can the minister provide an update on the Dawson recreation centre, please?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I did answer the last question. The answer is the same as it has been. There is no new information yet to share, but I will certainly share more information when it comes available. The member opposite said that I didn't answer the question, and he said that the answer I gave was telling.

As far as the Dawson City recreation centre goes, we have schematic options completed, and they are currently being discussed with the Dawson City council. We are refining options to fit the existing budget and to ensure that operating costs can be managed by the municipality now that they have a schematic before them. So, we are going to finish that schematic design with detail design following in the next few months. The schedule includes tendering to begin in 2024 and construction in 2025.

Mr. Dixon: So, if I heard the minister correctly, tendering was planned for 2024. Can he confirm that is correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The tendering for site preparation is expected to begin in 2024. That is the plan.

Mr. Dixon: Will that be tendered by the Yukon government, or will it be tendered by the City of Dawson?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As with most projects in municipalities, we serve as the project manager for such projects, so we will be putting out the tender and project-managing this project for the municipality of Dawson.

Mr. Dixon: What is the current budget for the project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The five--year capital plan is the source of information like this; I encourage the member opposite to use it. I believe that the current budget range in that five--year capital plan is \$65.5 million.

Mr. Dixon: My understanding is that the schematic that Dawson has developed so far would come with a capital cost higher than \$65 million. So, where can we look to make up the balance?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The capital budget is laid out in the five--year capital plan at \$65.5 million. I don't know — the rest of it is a hypothetical. We will work with the municipality of Dawson on the schematic plan, refine it to meet the municipality's needs and desires, and we will put it out to tender. At that time, we will know how much it will cost, but the estimate is in the five--year capital plan — \$65.5 million.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister tell us the source of the \$65.5 million that is budgeted? Is it 100 percent from the Yukon, or is there federal infrastructure funding that is intended to be spent on this project?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Dawson City recreation centre is an Investing in Canada infrastructure program project. It has been submitted to the federal government, and that makes it eligible for a 75/25 split in costs.

Mr. Dixon: Will the City of Dawson be responsible for 100 percent of the O&M costs of this building?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The municipality of Dawson City is a municipality. The council is elected by members. It runs the municipality of Dawson. I have said many times that I don't get in the way of municipalities running their business. When it comes to infrastructure that is built in the community, we build the infrastructure and the municipality pays for the operation and maintenance costs. That is currently where we are at. We are working with the City of Dawson to make sure that they have a recreation centre that they can afford to operate. That is where we are at right now, which is working with that municipality to design a project that they are comfortable they can afford.

Mr. Dixon: So, just to be clear, then, is the City of Dawson responsible for 100 percent of the operation and maintenance costs?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said just two moments ago, the City of Dawson is responsible for the costs of running and paying for the operation and maintenance of its infrastructure. It has been saddled with a really problematic ice surface for far too long. There have been too many fits, starts, and false starts on this project. The current ice rink in Dawson is costing the municipality an awful lot to maintain. We are looking to make sure that we build a new facility that actually serves the town and that the town can afford to run on its own.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on. It has been discussed significantly previously, but we know that the minister has sent a letter to the City of Whitehorse regarding a new water treatment plant for the City of Whitehorse.

Can the minister tell us how much funding the Yukon government intends to provide to the City of Whitehorse for a new water treatment plant?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At the moment, we don't know how much a new water treatment plant for the City of Whitehorse is going to cost. I haven't received a firm estimate of the costs. I have said to the City of Whitehorse that I will help with efforts to secure federal funding for such a project. Right now, it's in the design stages. Once we have a design before us that shows the need within Whitehorse, we will have a much better idea how much such a facility will cost, and we will look at how it will be funded.

Mr. Dixon: The minister has indicated that the answer to these questions is often found in the five--year capital plan. Is there any money allocated in the five--year capital plan for a new water treatment plant for Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are currently in the process of designing a budget for next spring. I encourage the members opposite to keep an eye on that for all sorts of projects and the next list of projects we will be funding in the territory, and it will certainly update the five--year capital plan.

As the member opposite knows, this request for a new water treatment plant in Whitehorse just came up in literally the last couple of months. We haven't even got a cost for that project. There is so much yet to determine with this project. Of course, it's not in our current five--year capital plan, but that plan will be updated in coming years, and it may or may not be on there, depending on where the project is with the City of Whitehorse when that budget lands next spring.

Mr. Dixon: The City of Whitehorse continues to contend with issues related to the slides on Robert Service Way. We have heard from the mayor that there is the possibility of a large capital project that may be needed to mitigate future slides. Has any work been provided by the Department of Community Services on this? If so, how much funding has been provided to the City of Whitehorse? If there is a need for a larger scale, permanent mitigation, the mayor has indicated that would be a costly endeavour. How much funding will the Yukon government provide to the City of Whitehorse for this?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, we had a slide on Robert Service Way two years ago that closed the road and opened our eyes to the changing climate and how it is affecting infrastructure in municipalities across the territory. The slide in Whitehorse, of course, closed a major access route to the city for several months. We actually contributed \$2 million to that effort to open the road again and risk-managed the application to the federal government for disaster funds for the work that was done on the south access. The City of Whitehorse has, over the months since then, spent all of that \$2 million. That was where we stepped in.

Now they are looking at a much bigger infrastructure investment to make sure that this access route to the City of Whitehorse down the south access is open. They put in an

application to the disaster mitigation and adaptation fund with the federal government. Community Services was right there with the City of Whitehorse, hand in glove, helping them with that application. We contributed more than \$50,000 to that application to the federal government. We will see. It is a competitive process to get access to those funds. Whitehorse has applied to try to compete for and win some of those disaster mitigation and adaptation fund dollars.

We will see where Whitehorse gets with that application to fund their project from the federal government to help to improve the south access and make sure that access to Whitehorse on that route is open all year-round. We just don't know yet how successful the city will be with that application, but we have helped, at Community Services, with that application process.

Mr. Dixon: The minister mentioned the \$2 million that was provided by the Yukon government to the City of Whitehorse. That was done immediately after the first time the slide happened in 2022; however, a slide occurred in a subsequent year. Did the government provide \$2 million the second time a slide occurred?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: No, we did not.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister explain why they provided \$2 million one year when the slide occurred but not the second year when the slide occurred again?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The very first year was a disaster, with potential recoveries from the federal government. The second time that happened, it was not eligible for disaster funding. It is up to the City of Whitehorse to deal with and adapt to the climate crisis that we are now facing. It was not something that we had funded.

Mr. Dixon: So, because the City of Whitehorse didn't take action to — in the words of the minister — respond to the climate crisis in the subsequent year, that is why they didn't receive any additional money?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This has nothing to do with Whitehorse; this is just the way that the disaster mitigation funding works. We are approaching Ottawa. We don't know if the second year is going to actually have any effect for funding the second year.

Mr. Dixon: In the first year, the Yukon government provided \$2 million because they felt it was recoverable from Canada but didn't provide \$2 million the second year because that wasn't going to be eligible for federal funding; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said, in 2022-23, we committed \$2 million to the City of Whitehorse to deal with that initial slide. The City of Whitehorse has ultimately claimed \$1.25 million of the \$2 million that we provided to the city. To date, that is an eligible cost. There still remains \$750,000 available in this fiscal year — that is 2023-24 — to support the City of Whitehorse. We have not yet received any claims on that \$750,000 outstanding from the initial \$2-million tranche that we gave them. I have spoken to the mayor and they say that they have spent all that money, but they still haven't claimed any of the \$750,000 that was left from the initial \$2 million that we gave to the City of Whitehorse for the initial slide.

Mr. Dixon: So, just so I am clear, the government provided \$2 million to the City of Whitehorse, but they haven't submitted the right paperwork to receive the full \$2 million so far; is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is the information that I have before me today. We made \$2 million available to the City of Whitehorse in the aftermath of the initial slide. We believe that this money is recoverable from Ottawa. We have made that \$2 million available to Whitehorse. Whitehorse has so far remitted claims for \$1.25 million of the \$2 million that we gave in that initial year. They have not yet claimed the remaining \$750,000 from that initial \$2 million that we provided them for the first slide. I have been told by the city that all that money is spent. We have not yet received the remittances for the remaining \$750,000 from the initial \$2 million that we gave to the City of Whitehorse, but we expect them to submit those receipts and the justification for that spending, but we have not received that yet.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that answer from the minister.

I will move on to recycling. When my colleague the Member for Watson Lake asked the minister about recycling, he indicated that he has recently received — or his department has recently received — a letter from the City of Whitehorse. Can the minister tell us the nature of the current discussions around the creation of a curbside recycling pickup service in Whitehorse and how much money has been requested by the City of Whitehorse from the Yukon government for this program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This falls firmly into the improvements that we are making throughout the territory in our landfills, the investments that we are making in rural Yukon, and our efforts, which were begun by the member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, to improve the way we handle the trash — all of our garbage in the territory.

Recycling, of course, falls firmly in that, because the efforts that we make on recycling will help our landfills last longer, because we will be diverting recyclables out of the landfills and into the recycling stream. It's very important.

Earlier this spring, Raven ReCentre told us that they were no longer going to be keeping their 24-hour drop-off for residential recycling open. It was an effort on the part of Raven to boost the amount of recycling that is diverted out of our landfills in the City of Whitehorse and an effort to restart a curbside collection within Whitehorse. That was the goal of Raven's initiative. We immediately struck a committee with Raven, the City of Whitehorse, and Community Services involving, at various points, other recycling-adjacent or recycling businesses and activists in Whitehorse in that initiative. We have met several times over the last several months to come up with a solution for this. Those talks are going very, very well. In anticipation of that work, the City of Whitehorse has asked the Yukon government how much we are willing to pay toward a curbside recycling effort in the City of Whitehorse. They have asked for a response by November 30 — the end of this month. We are considering that and actually working through the committee and with the Department of Community Services on figuring out how much we are willing

to pay for recycling for the City of Whitehorse. We will have more to say to our partners on this endeavour in due course. I am not going to do it on the floor of the House today.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that the minister can't say more before the end of the month, but I will just simply ask: Is there any money in the current budget — either the main budget or the supplementary — that would accommodate this? If not, would we look to the next budget in the spring for this money to flow?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There are a number of things in play here. We have diversion credits that we currently give to Raven ReCentre for handling residential waste. There are other recycling centres. P&M is another one that would take some of those diversion credits. That money is really what we are looking at diverting to the City of Whitehorse. Currently in the budget is roughly \$600,000 that we pay for diversion credits. That is a pool of money that could theoretically go to Whitehorse — it's in the neighbourhood of \$600,000 — were they to take up curbside collection and start handling the recycling themselves. These are the conversations that we are having with Raven, with the City of Whitehorse, and with our other partners in recycling.

As I said, that money is in the budget. It is what we spend on diversion credits every year, so that is what is currently available, but we are having these conversations with our partners.

Mr. Dixon: Would the \$600,000 dedicated to diversion credits not already be somewhat spent because Raven and other processors have received diversion credits throughout the year so far?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We pay for diversion credits to the people handling the waste. This is part of the discussion that we're having with the City of Whitehorse, Raven, P&M, and other recyclers inside of the Whitehorse municipal boundary. It is currently diverted — it is spent — to the people doing the recycling. That system is currently in flux because we are looking at new models. We will see where it lands. As I said, I'm not going to go into minute details here on the floor of the House. We are actually dealing with our partners on this file and we will continue to do that in good faith until we find a solution with the City of Whitehorse, with Raven ReCentre, and with the other recycling handlers in Whitehorse.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on to a different solid-waste issue. The minister has indicated previously that both Beaver Creek and Old Crow are slated to be phase 3 of their waste management initiative. We will see the installation of gates and tipping fees in both of those communities.

The minister said that there would be engagement prior to that. Can he tell us whether or not there is a timeline for the imposition of gates and tipping fees in Old Crow and Beaver Creek, and is there a timeline for engagement with those communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, we are currently in phase 2 of our improvements and investments in our landfills across the territory. We are still working on that. We have some communities that haven't signed on to this yet. I believe Haines Junction — I will be meeting with Haines Junction fairly soon.

Once we get phase 2 solidified, then we are going to start work on phase 3. I don't have a timeline for that at this time.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on. The minister has previously indicated that the Yukon government is in the process of developing a disaster financial assistance program. The minister previously said that the policy and program would be implemented in the spring of 2024. Can he provide an update on that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, we have certainly seen — this is an important subject and I appreciate the question from members opposite. This is why we have carbon pricing in the territory — one of the reasons is that we see the effects of our changing climate all of the time. Part of *Our Clean Future* is to actually take action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions in the territory, of which carbon pricing is a central tenet, and we are committed to keeping that price signal in our use of fossil fuels.

On this, we differ from the members opposite, but we have seen the cost, both financial and personal, of climate change in the territory. This summer, of course, the Yukon saw flooding again up in the Klondike. We saw fires in the territory. A couple of communities had to be evacuated. We saw the dramatic footage from Yellowknife. We saw what was happening in the rest of Canada and in Alberta, BC, and the Maritimes. These are unprecedented natural disasters. Of course, our thoughts go out to everyone affected by wildfire and flood events. It has been a central topic of conversation at most of my federal-provincial-territorial meetings this summer where everybody was battered and bruised and struggling with this and trying to find a way to make our communities more resilient and help those who have been affected by our changing climate. At that time, there was consensus that we had to do more.

I really want to thank the residents, volunteers, contractors, and dedicated emergency responders for their efforts to protect people and properties throughout these events. We are currently, as the member opposite has asked, developing a territorial disaster financial assistance program to support recovering from natural disasters. We are not the only ones doing this, but we are certainly taking this seriously. We are working this winter to put on a program that will provide funds to help Yukoners who suffer extensive property damage and disruption to the delivery of essential goods and services as a result of a natural disaster.

I feel very strongly about this. We want to get a plan in place so people know what to expect when disaster strikes and we are not trying to find ways to compensate people in the midst of a disaster. I want as much laid out ahead of time so people know what to expect: what they can expect from their government, what they can expect from their municipalities, and what they can expect from themselves.

We are trying to make sure that this work dovetails with the federal disaster financial assistance program so we actually complement the federal system, so we actually work in tandem with the federal system.

We are coordinating with affected departments and the Climate Change Secretariat to develop a comprehensive disaster financial assistance program for Yukon and align it

with action item H11, which is in our mitigation funding for homes and buildings before a disaster. This program will be aligned to the federal disaster financial assistance arrangement with Yukon, and it will allow individuals, businesses, and communities to receive a refund for disaster-related costs from the Yukon government.

The Yukon government would in turn receive a refund from the federal government through its DFAA. So, we want to make sure that our program aligns with the federal program so that we are not compensating people for costs that would not be covered by the federal government and that we could not get back from the federal program.

Mr. Dixon: The minister has previously said that the policy and program would be implemented in the spring of 2024. Is that still accurate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That is the goal.

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I think we will have to leave it there for now. Thank you very much to the officials for joining us, and I look forward to moving on.

Ms. White: I just have some follow-up questions about diversion credits. I was under the impression that diversion credits right now — for example, we know that P&M and Raven ReCentre are able to collect diversion credits, but back in the day, the Salvation Army store also collected diversion credits. Those credits are used — the money that is collected by both of the recyclers is used to help ship the non-refundables south.

Can the minister help me to understand how taking away the diversion credits from the processors and giving them to the City of Whitehorse would then help to get the recycling sent south to where it would need to go to be processed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question. The member is absolutely correct — the diversion credits do go to shipping, to diverting recyclables from the landfill. It does go to shipping.

We are currently in talks with partners — both Raven and the City of Whitehorse — on how the system is going to change to meet the needs of Whitehorse residents into the future. In this case, it would be — what we are discussing is whether or not the City of Whitehorse would take on the role of collecting — however it decides to do so — recycling to divert material from its landfill, which the city operates. So, we would pay the diversion credits to the City of Whitehorse, and the City of Whitehorse would then handle those diversion credits and decide where it allocates them — to which recyclable ally it uses. It would then flow — instead of YG funding the diversion credits, it would go to Whitehorse, which would then fund the diversion credits. It would take on the role of handling the recyclables within its boundaries. So, those diversion credits that we currently pay out would go to the City of Whitehorse to then pay out, however it deems appropriate.

Ms. White: I am just going to ask for a bit more clarification, then. Am I right in understanding that the minister has said that the diversion credits that Yukon government pays right now to anyone who is able to divert recyclables, for example, from the landfill — so, right now, two examples would be Raven ReCentre and P&M — that the minister is

saying that all of the money that is used right now as diversion credits would then be taken and transferred, possibly to the City of Whitehorse, and the City of Whitehorse will make the decision as to where those diversion credits go and, for example, to what processor the money would go, as far as sending recyclables south?

Can the minister please walk me through that process again?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: These are the discussions that we are having at the committee; we're getting into the weeds here of recycling. It's a very complicated industry in the territory. There are several players. Raven ReCentre wants to increase the amount of recycling that is diverted from our landfills within the City of Whitehorse — which is why it decided, several months ago, to end the public, free drop-off of recycling at its centre within Whitehorse. So, we are now looking at options to replace that public drop-off and getting the City of Whitehorse to start handling curbside collection, which is the goal. So, we're in talks with the City of Whitehorse — with Raven and P&M — to come up with solutions for the City of Whitehorse.

The diversion credits that we're talking about this afternoon are the diversion credits that would go toward residential recycling within the City of Whitehorse. That money would go to the City of Whitehorse, because they would be taking on — that's a potential — is that money would potentially go to the City of Whitehorse, because it would be taking on the recycling business, and it would then — however it decided to do it — would use those diversion credits to fund — whether it goes to a processor like Raven or P&M or whether they decide to take on the processing itself, but the money we're talking about is the money that is for the City of Whitehorse for residential recycling within the City of Whitehorse. The diversion credits for that specific item would go to the City of Whitehorse, because they would be taking on that responsibility.

We don't know how that would go, once the City of Whitehorse takes it on. The City of Whitehorse is working on that, and as I said before, this is a municipal responsibility. If it becomes a municipal responsibility, I will respect the decisions that they take as a government.

Ms. White: I think that was a lot of interesting things that the minister has just said. I guess the bigger conversation becomes — the part that I'm not sure I understand from the minister is that currently the recyclers use the diversion credits to pay for the transportation of things, for example, that are not purchased by a company. For example, aluminum cans — pop cans, as an example, are purchased when they get south, but there are many things that are not purchased, and the diversion credits help offset the cost of that.

In a report that the government released in 2021 called Part 2: Introductions and basics, Extended Producer Responsibility in the Yukon: exploration and implementation considerations, there is a section where it says: "Current challenges with waste management" in section 2. It says — and I'm reading from it: "An integral part of the waste management system is end-of-life management for products and materials

that are recyclable. A full assessment of recycling concerns for the Yukon can be found in the ‘Supporting a Sustainable Recycling System in the Yukon’ report prepared for the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste (2020). Further economic, social and environmental benefits of recycling are laid out in the MH Report ‘Assessment of the Impacts of Yukon’s Recycling’ (2021). The current challenges with the collection and processing of the recyclable materials in the Yukon include: Fiscal vulnerability of the system to recycle non-refundable materials — Raven Recycling and P&M Recycling process these materials voluntarily and diversion credits funding model is not sufficient to ensure their long-term operation.”

I guess the concern that I have is that it sounds like the minister has just said that the City of Whitehorse may make the decision to then be the processor of recyclable items by, for example, running their own curbside collection. I guess the question that I have for the minister is: If the plan is to take away the diversion credits that the two recycling processors in Whitehorse are able to access, is he saying then that it will be the responsibility of the City of Whitehorse to ship the full spectrum of recyclables south? That is what it sounded like, so I am just looking for clarification.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First of all, I commend the member opposite for all of her research on this matter. She is clearly deeply invested in recycling, as am I, and I appreciate this. She has an understanding of this system.

We plan to continue diversion credits to bridge to extended producer responsibility, which is estimated to be coming in 2025. The processors — Raven and P&M currently — will continue to get credits based on the volume of material that they ship south. If city recyclables don’t go through Raven or P&M, then there is less volume and less credit paid to the processors. They will continue to divert material. We have unincorporated Yukoners and Yukon municipalities. We are talking about the material, the recyclables, inside the boundaries of Whitehorse, and the City of Whitehorse is taking on that responsibility and will pay to ship materials south — whether they pay themselves or pay a recycler, I don’t know. I don’t know what the city is going to do. The city is currently examining this and coming up with a plan for recyclables and I trust the work that they are doing. We are working with Raven, we are working with the city, and we are working with P&M to come up with a system of the City of Whitehorse dealing with recyclables within its municipal boundaries. That portion of the residential recycling will be paid to Whitehorse, which will then deal with either the existing processors or some other system that it decides it is going to use to get those recyclables out of the landfill and to destinations down south. That is all that we are talking about. I don’t know what it looks like yet. That is what we are currently talking with the City of Whitehorse and with these recyclable processors about. So, that process is ongoing.

We have until the end of December to come up with a solution or at least to come up with a tangible solution that will satisfy Raven that this is moving in the right direction, and then we will figure out a way to bridge between the time when that

December 31 date happens and the time when the actual city recycling efforts kick in.

So, that is it, but we are looking at changing the way this is done and the city is looking at taking on that responsibility within its municipal boundaries for residential recycling, which is what Raven has announced it is no longer going to continue to do.

Chair (Ms. Blake): Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Order. 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 No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I just want to follow up on something the minister said earlier. I am just going to walk away from diversion credits right now. It has to do with between Beaver Creek and Old Crow. One of the reasons why I want to ask this question right now is the concerns around the realities of both of those communities. In one case, it is the western northernmost border of Yukon as far as accessing into Alaska. Of course, Old Crow is a fly-in community, keeping in mind, of course, that the gasifier that the Yukon government installed in Old Crow hasn’t worked for just about five years.

When the minister gets ready to have those conversations with the community of Old Crow, will the approaches in other municipalities and unincorporated communities be followed there, or is there the recognition that Old Crow is not like other jurisdictions in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, we have two communities; Beaver Creek — as the member opposite said, is right on the border with Alaska — and Old Crow. They are both unique communities and that is why they are part of phase 3 of this plan. You can’t have a territory-wide waste management system without including all of these communities, like Old Crow and Beaver Creek. They are certainly unique, though, and have unique challenges to deal with. That’s one of the reasons why they are the last of the regional landfills that we are going to be dealing with. Of course, we will work with communities. Once we get through the second phase, we will start scoping out how to engage with and work with the two communities as part of phase 3.

As I said on the gasifier, it has been out of operation and we are hoping to have the damage to that unit fixed and have it back working in the spring of 2024.

Chair: Is there any further debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all

lines in Vote 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

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 51, Department of Community Services, cleared or carried.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures
Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$21,347,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures
Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$6,239,000 agreed to
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$15,108,000 agreed to
Department of Community Services agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Chair: Committee of the Whole will now come to order. The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

MLA Tredger: I will start by thanking the officials for being with us again today, as well as all those listening in on the radio.

I have a few questions left that are mostly to do with *Our Clean Future*. We had just started getting into that when we wound up the other day, so I want to start by asking about item T13 from *Our Clean Future*, which is “Develop Yukon-specific design guidance and a plan for active transportation facilities by 2024 to guide investments in active transportation infrastructure into corridors near communities.”

So, 2024 is coming up quickly and I wonder if we could have a progress update.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to be back in Committee of the Whole answering questions on the Highways and Public Works supplementary budget request.

I have some general comments here, and I will see whether my officials have any more late-breaking news with respect to active transportation. Promoting active transportation is a focus of our government, and we aim to incorporate active transportation elements wherever possible in major infrastructure projects. Active transportation not only helps to support healthy living but also supports a cleaner and more sustainable future for the Yukon.

Highways and Public Works strongly supports and is actively incorporating active transportation options into our highway infrastructure projects wherever possible. For example, the department recently completed construction of a paved multi-use trail between Lodestar Lane and the intersection of Robert Service Way and the Alaska Highway. I know that probably a number of Members of the Legislative Assembly over the course of the summer — in any event, I had the opportunity to do the whole bike circuit along the top of the Alaska Highway. I can report that it is in good shape and certainly promotes active transportation across the top of Whitehorse.

We are planning to extend this active transportation trail from the Robert Service Way intersection to Philmar RV Centre at the same time as the reconstruction of this section of the Alaska Highway occurs. As well, Highways and Public Works is in the process of developing options to enhance the safety of active transportation on the Takhini River bridge on the Klondike Highway, for which I know that the Member for Lake Laberge is a strong advocate over the course of the last number of years.

\$8.5 million is budgeted for upgrades to the existing bridge, of which the Government of Yukon will receive approximately \$6 million in federal funding through Canada’s active transportation fund. We are looking into what options would be available, including the estimated cost for the improvement upgrades. The options will include a sidewalk or active transportation route on one or both sides of the bridge and modifications that are necessary to improve the structure and increase its lifespan.

Another example is the Nisutlin Bay bridge project, which will include a pedestrian walkway across the bridge and a trail underneath the bridge that will provide all-season access.

Active transportation planning is also incorporated into how we design and construct new buildings. The new Whistle Bend school will have a widened sidewalk to accommodate children riding bikes in front of the school and the trails behind the school will be integrated into the Whistle Bend trail system to allow students to commute to school. Construction of a new staff parking area behind Selkirk Elementary School started during the summer break. This design has allowed for the addition of a trail alongside the parking lot to connect with the City of Whitehorse’s active transportation plan.

We are also working closely with the City of Whitehorse on these projects. We are committed to incorporating active transportation options as much as possible.

The Government of Yukon, along with the City of Whitehorse, is participating as a stakeholder in a community-led study that will assess the feasibility of two active transportation underpasses beneath the Alaska Highway within Whitehorse. This study is funded by the Government of Canada.

The Government of Yukon is also partnering with the City of Whitehorse on the Hamilton Boulevard-Alaska Highway-Two Mile Hill intersection and the Range Road combined intersection upgrades, which I believe has the acronym of HART. This joint initiative, which is currently in the public engagement phase, will focus on developing designs to improve the Hamilton Boulevard-Alaska Highway-Two Mile Hill intersection and the Range Road-Two Mile Hill intersection with an emphasis on making travel more efficient for all transportation modes.

The last of my comments right now, but certainly not least, is about the community of Watson Lake. \$1.5 million is budgeted for Watson Lake pedestrian safety improvements, and of that, \$1.1 million is funded through Canada's active transportation fund. This project includes the installation of street lighting, pedestrian-activated beacons, and pathway connections to the crossings and will improve the safety for active transportation users and pedestrians within Watson Lake.

In August 2023, Highways and Public Works met with Watson Lake's chief administrative officer regarding a needs assessment for connecting pathways to the new crosswalks for construction in 2024.

Just briefly then, reducing emissions from the transportation sector is a critical element of *Our Clean Future*. The Government of Yukon is committed to making our roads more accessible for active transportation so that Yukoners have the option to walk, bike, or even kick-sled to their destination wherever possible. In general, it is best practice to build active transportation infrastructure at the same time as highway reconstruction — which I have set out in some of the examples. That way, the two assets can be designed to work together. Construction of both assets at the same time is cost effective, as materials from the highway reconstruction can be reused for active transportation trail and contractor costs are reduced, as they are already on-site.

That occurred, as well, two seasons ago at the Pine Lake-to-Haines Junction connector, and I understand that has been very well-received by the Village of Haines Junction and by the users of the Pine Lake campground, and it has received a great deal of use. Those are my comments for now on active transportation.

MLA Tredger: A couple of follow-up questions. The beginning of that item is to develop Yukon-specific design guidance. I would assume that means a manual or some sort of principles that are followed. Is that in the works of being developed yet, or is that going to start soon? And because the minister mentioned the connection on the Alaska Highway

between Robert Service — and I can't remember exactly where it goes to — who will be maintaining that in the winter? Is it the city, or is it the Yukon government? And if it's the city, is there any support being provided to expand their trail-clearing capacity so that they can maintain it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has two specific questions, and I will try to be brief on this.

With respect to additional trails that are created in the City of Whitehorse, in furtherance of the City of Whitehorse and the Yukon government's active transportation policy, yes, the member opposite is correct that the City of Whitehorse is responsible for snow clearing. I am advised that HPW meets regularly with the City of Whitehorse with respect to ongoing potentially overlapping maintenance issues and that this issue of additional responsibility has not been raised as yet, but certainly, we are open to those ongoing discussions. The lines of communication between the City of Whitehorse and HPW are frequent.

May I just have a moment with respect to the issue of —

I believe that, within the timeline as set out with respect of creating an active transportation strategy, I am advised that the transportation planning branch at the City of Whitehorse is creating an active transportation strategy and that there will then be design guidelines which can and will be followed. Yes, it's the highways Transportation Planning branch.

In my previous answer, I did indicate some of the best practices that the Department of Highways and Public Works, in conjunction with others but also on its own — there are principles by which Highways and Public Works is already guided and best practices with respect to the implementation and furtherance of active transportation projects that have been advanced over the course of the last two or three years, which I have outlined in my prior response.

MLA Tredger: The next question I want to ask is about item H1, which is the retrofitting of Government of Yukon buildings to reduce energy use and contribute to a 30-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and I do hope that will be updated to 45 percent in line with the Climate Leadership Council's guidelines when that is released in, I believe, November or December.

So, I am wondering how we are doing on that item. What percent reduction has happened so far? I have seen lots of projects underway. I have to say that the Social Services building is looking quite beautiful with the new siding. So, I am not looking for a list of projects; I am looking specifically for: What percent reduction have we achieved so far compared to 2010 levels?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have some somewhat specific information with respect to projects that have been completed over the course of the last two or two and a half fiscal years. My notes indicated that a total of 23 energy retrofits had been completed during fiscal 2021-22 and fiscal 2022-23. Just for the record, I can indicate that they aren't full wraps of some of these structures, but they are retrofits, which have improved energy efficiency.

Madam Chair, they include Holy Family Elementary School, Hidden Valley Elementary School, the F.H. Collins

technical education wing, the airport terminal at Haines Junction, Robert Service School — which, among other things, has a brand new addition to the school — St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School, the supervised consumption site, the grader station at Dawson City, the fire hall and garage in Keno, the crew residence in Tuchtua, and the Yukon Arts Centre. Once again, I recognize that there may be follow-up questions as to what was actually done, and we can certainly get information on that, but these are structures that have received at least some sort of energy efficiency upgrades. They also include the crew residence at Blanchard window replacements, the crew residence at Blanchard grader station heating system, the workshop and offices at the Parks building, and a mechanical workshop in Marwell. As well, the Yukon Justice Centre has received HVAC upgrades. The Yukon Justice Centre, within the last year or so, had the atrium skylight replacement. It also includes work done at the Watson Lake Secondary School, the community school in Carcross, the grader station in Beaver Creek, Supply Services and Stores, the Tourism Business Centre, the VIC — unclear where it was, but the Tourism Business Centre, the visitor information centre, and the administration building in Mayo.

In addition, just walking around Whitehorse, I understand that the Lynn Building actually isn't a YG building, but I see it is being wrapped and retrofitted. As the Member for Whitehorse Centre has indicated, the Social Services building opposite Whitehorse Elementary is being wrapped as well.

I can provide more detail to the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but the total indicates — and once again, we will confirm the measurement indices here — but it looks like the estimate is 148 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. Once again, I can confirm the methodology and what that actual number is going forward, but the bottom line is that this government has — there are a lot of projects that have been completed in the last two fiscal years, and there are more being assessed this year as well.

That is a pretty significant investment too. For those 23 projects, the estimated total investment is just under \$20 million — so, significant.

MLA Tredger: I appreciate the number that I think the reduction so far has been 148 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. I assume that is annually. What is the total CO₂ emissions of the Government of Yukon building portfolio, and what was it in 2010? I am asking for those so that I can understand how close we are to achieving that 30-percent goal.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for their specific question. That is important, and it's a number that I am likely able to get, but I will have to undertake to provide a legislative return with respect to that specific question.

MLA Tredger: I look forward to receiving that. I assume it is being tracked, because otherwise, we don't know how close to that goal we are. We are about a third of the way into the timeline of this action, so progress doesn't have to be linear, but it would be good to know where we are on that scale of where we are trying to go.

I am going to skip now to section L of the plan. I am looking at L15, which is to develop and implement a framework to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions and

climate risk into government infrastructure investments in 2024. That's a new action as of 2021. The deadline is coming up quickly, so I was hoping to have a progress update.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Highways and Public Works has developed a prioritization framework based on several factors, including GHG reductions and climate impact cost-savings and operational impacts. We currently use these to prioritize and to select meaningful retrofit projects, and that is the list that I provided in my prior response. This prioritization process is part of our new ISO 50001 energy management system and was officially launched earlier this year.

Just to clarify because it wasn't entirely clear — and I will sit down — but was the Member for Whitehorse Centre referring to L4 or L14? I don't think that it was L15; I think it was either L4 or L14. I know that the member opposite has asked questions about incorporating greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency into the process of identifying and prioritizing Government of Yukon building retrofits and new construction projects by 2023. I know that this question has been asked before, but just on the off-chance that I misheard which letter and number were being referenced, I will sit down.

MLA Tredger: I am happy to clarify. I am asking about L15, which is — quote: “Develop and implement a framework to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions and climate risk into government infrastructure investments in 2024.”

I was hoping for a little bit more information about what this item is, because we already have T28, which is — quote: “Continue to conduct climate risk assessments of all major transportation infrastructure projects above \$10 million...” It's a little bit longer than that, but that's the short version, and we also have C5, which is — quote: “Continue to conduct detailed climate change risk assessments of all major community infrastructure projects over \$10 million...” That seems like that would cover most of the infrastructure investments, so maybe there's a category I'm not thinking of right now. I'm wondering what L15 adds to those two that are already ongoing and what the work is that needs to happen before it can start in 2024.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yes, I was a little confused. I can't say that I know every action item of *Our Clean Future* by rote, but in the original draft, there is not an L15, but there is an L15 now.

With respect to that, just to answer the question directly — develop and implement a framework to incorporate greenhouse gas emissions and climate risk into government infrastructure investments in 2024. The report card indicates that HPW is on track. HPW is reviewing capital planning processes to identify opportunities to quantify greenhouse gas emissions and to assess climate risk in upcoming government infrastructure investments. The impacts of climate change on the Yukon are being felt everywhere. Whether it be wildfires, flooding, landslides, increased precipitation, permafrost thaw, or avalanches, our territory is changing quickly and we need to be prepared for more changes to come. That is why it is so important that the infrastructure we are building today will withstand the climate impacts of tomorrow.

Of course, just this summer, we had the flooding on the north Klondike Highway and on the Dempster. I will give a

shout-out to the Klondike division of Highways and Public Works for their yeoman service in getting the north Klondike Highway open at Clear Creek far before what was anticipated and also getting the Dempster Highway open again. We have also had landslides around the Dempster Corner, both toward Dawson and away from Dawson. We know how challenging that road section is from Henderson into the Dempster Corner area. It's a road that's right on — well, sometimes it's a hillside but sometimes it's more of a cliffside — so recognizing that you have some sort of aggregation so that there is sluffing off the hillside or off the cliff. Of course, that area is very much prone to that.

We have seen that. We have also seen that on the road out to Haines Junction — the significant permafrost lens and the movement there that was going to impact on the Alaska Highway — and Highways and Public Works had to move quickly and provide a procurement on an almost \$4-million project, I believe, for the two-kilometre bypass just outside of Whitehorse toward Haines Junction.

This is absolutely real. These are real dollars, and Highways and Public Works is agile and responsive. I say that it's the “department of getting stuff done”, and they absolutely do get stuff done, but this was unexpected and it was significant.

To support our understanding of how climate change is impacting our infrastructure, the Yukon government recently released the first Yukon climate risk assessment, which can be found on yukon.ca. The report will help guide our actions so that we are more resilient to the impacts of climate change. As the member opposite correctly indicated, our government is conducting climate risk assessments of all major transportation and building infrastructure projects over \$10 million.

Climate risk assessments evaluate infrastructures' vulnerability to climate change and use that information to incorporate adaptation measures into the design to mitigate climate change impacts. The assessment considers the potential damage, how likely it is to occur, and what options exist to mitigate that threat.

Highways and Public Works completed climate risk assessments for five major construction projects in recent years. The Dempster fibre line, the Carmacks bypass, north Klondike Highway reconstruction, the Whitehorse airport airfield upgrades, and Kêts'adañ Kù — the Burwash Landing school. The department is finalizing climate risk assessments for the Alaska Highway safety improvements through Whitehorse and the Alaska Highway realignment at the Takhini River thaw slump, which I just talked about. We will use that information from these assessments to help build safer and more resilient infrastructure for years to come.

I did have the opportunity to travel around the territory for a bit this summer. I was on the road to Dawson and back at least twice. I am impressed by the potential from Stewart Crossing to Dawson where the earthworks have really raised the roads and profiled those roads significantly. When they are completed, it will represent a significant upgrade and a significant asset for future generations of Yukoners. That is certainly where climate change has been considered by having

all that fill and raising the roads significantly by — and the House has heard me on this before — replacing significantly subpar culverts — culverts that did not have sufficient enough drainage to deal with current snow loads and precipitation — and replacing them with really skookum, big-diameter culverts in that area.

I know that I'm hopefully indirectly answering the question for the Member for Whitehorse Centre, but those are certainly the considerations that are taking place, as I indicated, on the Dempster fibre, the Carmacks bypass, north Klondike Highway reconstruction, and the Whitehorse airport airfield upgrades, which are just in progress now.

The parallel runway is substantially complete and will be the primary Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport runway in the spring, summer, and fall of next year — 2024. There is exciting work that will be done there, and I know that we are working on improving drainage on that plateau, which, of course, the City of Whitehorse is very interested in — that you will have improved drainage, as my colleague the Minister of Community Services answered a number of questions this afternoon with respect to, among other things, the slide that occurred on the south access.

Thank you, Madam Chair. There is a lot of work being done.

MLA Tredger: Just before I cede the floor to my colleague, I will thank the officials for being here and all the folks in the department working to make this happen — thank you very much.

Mr. Hassard: I, too, would like to thank the officials for being here today to assist the minister and getting us some answers to our queries. The first question that I have for the minister today is regarding the Takhini River Road. I know that the minister confirmed in a letter, replying to the Member for Lake Laberge, that design work has been done for the major upgrade to that particular road. So, we are curious: What is the cost estimate for that project, and can the minister give us a timeline on when he feels that project will be moving forward?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for the question. I do have some information with respect to Takhini River Road and Gully Road. I know that there are issues with respect to this road and advocacy from the Member for Lake Laberge with respect to this road. In any event, what I can say is that Highways and Public Works makes it a priority to keep all maintained roads safe and in good condition.

Twice a year, the department grades the Takhini River Road surface and more frequently as required. Highways and Public Works was scheduled to blade this road on or before October 25 — I'm confirming whether that happened — but in any event, so far during the 2023-24 fiscal year, the department spent over \$43,000 on maintenance and upgrades to the road. I am advised that this is a significant investment in comparison to other rural roads of a similar standard. In 2022, the department installed a wooden deck to allow traffic to cross a very soft spot at the far end of the road.

Highways and Public Works is working to improve drainage to address erosion issues on the Takhini River Road near its intersection with Gully Road. The department is

conducting preliminary design work and looking at reconstruction alternatives in order to improve safety and drainage for the Takhini River Road beyond the Gully Road intersection area. The reconstruction design will include strengthening of the road structures, widening the road where it is narrow, installing culvert markers and steam pipes, cleaning and correcting existing culverts, deepening ditches, and correcting soft spots in the road.

In the coming months, a design will be submitted to YESAB for this area. Before the submission to YESAB, the department will contact affected property owners to share the proposed design and any impacts to property owners. Construction on the road will be prioritized in relation to overall upgrade priorities. In the meantime, we will continue to monitor and provide maintenance to these roads, as required.

The member opposite will likely know, but I'm sure that the Member for Lake Laberge knows, that the Takhini River Road was built by local residents prior to the 1940s, and development has, of course, increased over the years. In the past decade, large spring runoffs have caused significant erosion to the Takhini River Road and the Gully Road.

The Yukon government uses a road classification system that considers traffic volumes and socio-economic factors when determining maintenance schedules and planning upgrades. So, the specific — I'm just checking my response to the Member for Lake Laberge in late August. I think it's consistent with what I have just relayed to the House. The final sentence is that, while the reconstruction and/or resurfacing of the Takhini River Road is not currently in the department's five-year capital plan, the department will review whether Takhini River Road has an increased priority based on a condition assessment, which will be concluded this fall. So, I look forward to receiving that assessment.

The other good news I have for the area — which, of course, doesn't entirely relate to the Takhini River Road, but it relates to the area — is that there is funding set aside to improve the access and active transportation elements of the Takhini River bridge, which, of course, is in the area, but I concede that it is not the Takhini River Road.

So, the specific question from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin was what the likely budget is, and we don't have that estimate as of yet, but certainly, I can provide same once I am made aware of this assessment. So, yes to Yukoners who might be listening today. I'm certainly well aware of the challenges of the Takhini River Road, a road that was likely — quote — “punched into the wilderness” in the 1940s and very likely does need some additional work. I'm certainly cognisant of the fact that there are likely a lot more residents there than there were a number of decades ago. Thank you for that question.

Mr. Hassard: That was seven and a half minutes of: I don't know. So, I guess we will try another one and see if we get the same thing.

I asked earlier today in Question Period about the budget for the Nisutlin bridge, so I guess we will ask again. Can the minister provide us with an updated budget for the Nisutlin bridge?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will give a basic outline here.

The contract with Graham Infrastructure LP is currently \$159,000,096. Infrastructure Canada's Building Canada fund committed \$41.25 million to the project. Transport Canada will also contribute \$52.5 million, through the national trade corridors fund, to the project. The capital plan indicates that the approximate spending in 2023 is \$40 million to \$45 million. For fiscal 2024-25, it is \$45 million to \$50 million, and for fiscal 2025-26, it is estimated to be \$25 million to \$30 million. These numbers are subject to change as the work progresses.

So, similar to what I said a number of hours ago, I would just indicate that the Yukon government and Graham Infrastructure LP have been negotiating a change order to reflect the impacts of the *Fisheries Act* authorization for the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement project. Negotiations such as these are confidential because of their commercial nature and to maintain confidential positions. Yukon government has done its due diligence in handling this matter and in mitigating risks due to the original *Fisheries Act* authorization. When the Nisutlin Bay bridge project was tendered, there was no reason to expect any significant deviation from similar previous *Fisheries Act* authorizations from the regulator, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

However, Madam Chair, the Yukon government did receive a *Fisheries Act* authorization that had new restrictive limits to cumulative noise impacts on fish. Together, the Yukon government, the Teslin Tlingit Council, and Graham Infrastructure LP worked on an amendment to the authorization; this took time. The amendment was received in March 2023, at which point negotiations commenced between the Yukon government and Graham Infrastructure LP about a schedule and work plan reflective of the authorization.

As the member opposite will well know, change orders — both large and small — are a regular part of contract management. Work on the bridge replacement continues to progress as planned, with the completion date the same as it was — substantial completion in 2025 — with substantial completion at the end of 2025 and, of course, some work still to be done in 2026, with creative adaptations designed by the contractor, the Yukon government, and the Teslin Tlingit Council in order to ensure that the requirements of the *Fisheries Act* authorization and the water licence are met.

The Yukon government, of course, remains committed to delivering the construction of a new Nisutlin Bay bridge. When the discussions reach their conclusion, I will be in a position to advise both the member opposite and Yukoners generally on the updated status of the project and modifications, if any, to the budget.

One question that the member opposite had with respect to subcontractors and local businesses getting work or receiving work on the Nisutlin Bay bridge project — this is received from Graham Infrastructure LP. They indicate that the Nisutlin Bay bridge subcontractors are as follows. Once again, the caveat is just that they are listed by Graham Infrastructure, but it is quite a significant list: earthworks, Cobalt Construction Inc.; structural steel girders, Central Welding and Iron Works; rebar, Harris Rebar, a division of Harris Steel; precast concrete panels, MSE Precast; electrical work from Arcrite;

environmental consultant, EDI; demolition, Priestly Demolition; logistics planning and execution, 838427 Yukon Inc., carrying on business as EKY Solutions; Go Cobalt Mining; Kilrich Industries; 838427 Yukon Ltd., EKY Solutions, out of Teslin; Lone-Wolf Contracting, Teslin; Tle'Nax T'awei Industrial Limited Partnership, Whitehorse; 836436 Yukon Ltd.; United North Construction Group, Teslin; TKO Enterprises, Teslin; Son Rise General Contracting, Teslin; Chilkahit Holdings LP, Teslin; and Da Daghay Development Corporation, Whitehorse. I am advised as well that there are contracts with local businesses for accommodation which include the Nisutlin Trading Post and the Yukon Motel.

Once again, the caveat that I would provide is that these are names that have been provided by the contractor; they are not necessarily exhaustive. In any event, there is lots of work being done in Teslin. Of course, sometimes there are bumps in the road, but we're going to get this bridge built. All indicators are that it will be built on time.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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 5:26 p.m.

The following document was filed November 7, 2023:

35-1-164

Holocaust education, letter re (dated November 6, 2023) from Scott Kent, Member for Copperbelt South, to Hon. Jeanie McLean, Minister of Education (Kent)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 155

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 8, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 8, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to help me give a warm welcome to a number of leaders in the innovation sector here in the Yukon. There are lots of visitors with us today. I would like to have us welcome: Ziad Sahid, executive director of Tech Yukon; Steve Mooney, CEO of Kluane Dana Shaw LP; Shayna Hammer and Erin Scott, leadership with YuKonstruct; Tiffany Eckert-Maret, with Yukon First Nations chamber, also with Da Daghay Development Corporation; as well as Ben Asquith, with Da Daghay; Dylan Soo, executive director with TIA Yukon; Barrett Horne, with Yukon Venture Angels; Caitlyn MacMaster, with the Yukon University Innovation and Entrepreneurship team; Aiden McRae; Colin Gervais, with Mitacs; and Ben Sanders, with HyperYou.

Let's give a big, warm welcome to everybody here supporting us for our tribute today.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, we are also doing a tribute today on the Yukon Prize. We have several guests. We have Julie Jai, a co-founder of the Yukon Prize, and two of our finalists — and I'm hoping we get a third — Alannah Whachell and Omar Reyna. We also have Mary Bradshaw, from the Yukon Arts Centre and one of the Yukon Prize Committee members. We also have Deputy Minister Sierra Van der Meer here and also a constituent and councillor of the Marsh Lake Local Advisory Council, and I think the new vice-president of the Yukon Employees' Union, Lisa Vollans-Leduc, and if we could also please welcome Kaylyn Baker, the Yukon Prize winner.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Prize for visual arts

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Yukon Prize for visual arts and the 2023 recipient, Kaylyn Baker.

The Yukon is teeming with artistic talent. Julie Jai and David Trick wanted to celebrate the Yukon's visual artists and increase opportunities by showcasing their work to audiences across Canada and the world. In 2021, they founded the Yukon Prize for visual arts.

Working together with the Yukon Arts Foundation and the Yukon Arts Centre, this biennial award is a wonderful achievement for both those who create and experience art.

In 2023, approximately 60 Yukon artists applied for the prize. Applicants represented a diverse array of media: beadwork, illustration, sound, and sculptural installations. The intake showcased the breadth of Yukon's creativity.

From these applicants, a jury of esteemed Canadian arts professionals chose six finalists: Kaylyn Baker, Jeffrey Langille, Rebekah Miller, Cole Pauls, Omar Reyna, and Alannah Whachell.

In September, I had the honour of attending the award gala announcing the winner of the 2023 Yukon Prize, Northern Tutchone and Tlingit artist Kaylyn Baker. Kaylyn's work is absolutely stunning. She creates innovative beaded designs using both traditional and contemporary materials. Whether it is jewellery, garments, accessories, or regalia, Kaylyn's beadwork is breathtaking.

Kaylyn is a Selkirk First Nation citizen. She says that beading is a way for her to connect with her ancestors and to tell stories through her creations. I spoke with her mother and her grandmother right after Kaylyn was awarded the Yukon Prize, and they were beaming with pride.

A reminder that the Yukon Arts Centre is exhibiting the Yukon Prize finalists' show until November 18 — new this year is the introduction of the Viewers' Choice Award where the public votes for their favourite. This award is sponsored by Casino Mining. Tomorrow evening at the Yukon Arts Centre, it will be awarded at a Business After Hours. Please come.

The pieces from all six artists are incredible. The creativity and dedication to their craft is remarkable. Best of luck to the six finalists with tomorrow night's award.

I ask this House to join me in congratulating Kaylyn Baker and each of the incredibly talented finalists. We thank them for sharing their gifts. A big thank you to Julie and David for their passion in raising the profile of Yukon visual arts and artists. The diverse forms of art and vibrant culture found here in the Yukon help form our collective identity and are our Yukon story. The creative practices of our artists deserve to be seen on the world stage.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to this year's recipient of the Yukon Prize for visual arts and to recognize all of those responsible for organizing the prize and the first Yukon Prize celebration weekend held September 14 to 16.

The Yukon Prize for visual arts aims to help Yukon artists gain the national and international attention that they deserve. The prize was first offered in 2021 and is held every two years. The Yukon Arts Centre hosted the opening of a show of art by the six Yukon Prize finalists on September 14.

On September 15, there were 19 galleries and venues across downtown Whitehorse that opened their doors for the first Yukon Prize art crawl among the small businesses and not-for-profits that show and sell Yukon art.

During the day on Saturday, September 16, there were large turnouts for talks, tours, and workshops at Yukon University, the Yukon Archives, and the Yukon Arts Centre.

The capstone of the weekend was the Yukon Prize gala on Saturday evening, September 16 — a spectacular show in the Yukon Arts Centre theatre with special performances by well-known Yukon musicians and dancers. It was such a beautiful event and I had a wonderful time chatting with a lot of old and new friends. The show culminated with the awarding of the \$20,000 Yukon Prize for visual arts to Kaylyn Baker, a citizen of Selkirk First Nation, based in Whitehorse.

Kaylyn Baker is an avid beader, using a variety of traditional and contemporary materials and textiles. She draws on the principles of visual art to create her own designs. In addition to making jewellery, Kaylyn's beadwork adorns garments and accessories. Her work has walked the red carpet at the Emmy Awards. She was a featured designer at Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week 2022, as well as the Adäka art festival fashion show in Whitehorse in 2022.

For Kaylyn, beading is a way to connect with her ancestors through her spontaneous style of what she calls "beaded storytelling". The other five finalists — each who were awarded \$3,000 — included Jeffrey Langille, Rebekah Miller, Cole Pauls, Omar Reyna, and Alannah Whachell.

Six more artists made the long list for this year's prize, including Justin Apperley, Robyn McLeod, Meshell Melvin, Jackie Olson, Nicole Rayburn, and Rosemary Scanlon.

I would like to thank the Yukon Arts Foundation and the Yukon Arts Centre — essential partners for the Yukon Prize. I would also like to give special thanks to the co-founders of the Yukon Prize for visual arts, Julie Jai and David Trick, for what they do for our community.

My congratulations to Kaylyn, to all finalists, and thanks to all 64 artists who applied for this year's prize. It is not easy to put yourself out there, but your art enriches our lives and our communities.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Yukon NDP, it is a real honour to congratulate Kaylyn Baker, who has been named the recipient of the 2023 Yukon Prize for visual arts. Kaylyn is a young Northern Tutchone woman who is a citizen of the Selkirk First Nation and is also of Tlingit ancestry. Kaylyn is a mother to three beautiful children and an active member of the Selkirk Spirit Dancers.

It is so good to see the hard work and artistic talent of Kaylyn receive such esteemed recognition. Over the last number of years, the art, hard work, and beauty of First Nation beading is being recognized not only for its cultural significance, but is finally recognized as a true art form. Today, beading is found on both national and international fashion runways and on walls in high-profile art galleries while also being worn by folks such as actors, advocates, and allies.

Kaylyn's beading not only captures the beauty of colour, her creations capture so much imagery from her traditional territory, including landscapes, animals, fish, birds, and so much more. Kaylyn's creations are recognized globally for the

stories that are brought to life while also shedding light on the power of beading and its cultural significance.

It has been a real privilege for me to witness the growth of Kaylyn and her beading. I can recall sitting in a sociology class with Kaylyn in 2015 and watching her learn her techniques of beading while listening to our instructor talk on sociological theories, and here we are today, honouring Kaylyn's hard work, dedication, and beading. The art of beading is held in high regard in Yukon First Nation cultures, as it unifies beaders from across generations, creates spaces for healing and creation, while also building relationships, connection, purpose, belonging, and identity.

In many cultures across Indigenous communities, it is our beading that can tell the story of what family we come from and who we are as a person. Beading creates space for traditional knowledge to be passed on across generations and creates stronger families and communities.

Congratulations to Kaylyn on an incredible accomplishment. Keep on beading and smashing your goals. You are a great example of the good that comes when dreams are achieved and you grow into your full potential. We are so proud of you.

We also want to recognize the other finalists and all the individuals who were nominated for this prize. Thank you so much for sharing your talent with us across the territory. Finally, thanks to Julie Jai and David Trick, the co-founders of the Yukon Prize for visual arts.

Mahsi' cho.

Applause

In recognition of Yukon Innovation Week

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to pay tribute to Yukon Innovation Week 2023. Yukon Innovation Week began on November 6 and will run until November 10. This year's event centres around the theme of "Connecting Innovators".

Hosted by Tech Yukon, Yukonstruct, the Tourism Industry Association of the Yukon, and Yukon University, Yukon Innovation Week offers a comprehensive schedule filled with a variety of events and workshops open to all Yukoners. These events provide venues for people to meet, make, and grow transformative ideas. There are engaging workshops where participants discover ways to change our future. There are panels to attend where listeners learn about available supports and where discussion thrives. Participants will develop capacity, skills, knowledge, and a mindset geared toward innovation and entrepreneurship. Whether you want to learn a new skill, cultivate your networks, or overcome your fear of heights through virtual reality, Yukon Innovation Week is a prime opportunity for Yukoners to get inspired.

Our territory is home to many inspirational entrepreneurs, leaders, and passionate community members who are dedicated to making the Yukon a better place to live, work, and play. Innovation has the capacity to create new opportunities, break down barriers, and provide boundless possibilities for our communities. For example, Yukon innovators are working on several practical ways to help mitigate and adapt to climate

change. These initiatives range from new ways to monitor climate events to expedite our response times to empowering homeowners and businesses with the knowledge needed to enhance energy efficiency of our buildings. All of these endeavours are part of our collective commitment to building a more sustainable future.

I strongly believe that it is important to support and celebrate the Yukon's innovative thinkers. On Thursday, November 9, the Yukon Beringia Centre will host the fourth annual Hall of Innovators Award Ceremony. These awards recognize the remarkable achievements of innovators throughout the territory.

In closing, I would like to thank all of the sponsors, guest speakers, volunteers, and organizations that make the week possible. There are still events open to all, and I encourage Yukoners to attend. Visit yukoninnovationweek.com to find the schedule. Your ideas can add to the future innovation ecosystem of our territory and, in small ways and large ways, can truly change the world.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Yukon Innovation Week, being held from November 6 to 10. The theme for 2023 is "Connecting Innovators". So many special things are going on to celebrate and explore the world of innovation, creativity, and information as Yukon innovators, entrepreneurs, and community organizations get together to meet, make, and grow. Each of these three categories showcase topics to meet, make, and grow and the times to engage for each event. There is something for everyone. Just the names for the workshops should entice you: "Fail Boldly: Breaking the Failure Taboo" or "Early Stage Investing" and many other topics.

There is a daily podcast that takes a deep dive into entrepreneurs who are leading the way in health and wellness. How exciting to hear from locals who are willing to share their experiences. To cap off the week, the fourth annual Hall of Innovators Award gala will be held at the Beringia Centre. It is a sold-out event and I'm sure the attendees will have an evening to remember as they meet, see what has been made, and grow.

Thank you to all the sponsors and hard-working people behind the scenes who make this event successful and fun for all the participants. It's awesome to see so many creative ideas and interest in the world of innovating and building for a better future. We look forward to hearing about the recipients of the awards this coming weekend and we wish all the best to the nominees. Good luck and keep on sharing your ideas with all of Yukon — well done.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the innovators and the outside-the-box thinkers during this year's Yukon Innovation Week. This annual event offers a variety of platforms for local innovators, entrepreneurs, social enterprises, community organizations, and citizens to meet, make, and grow innovative and

transformative ideas. It celebrates those who are leading positive change in the north.

This jam-packed week invites Yukoners across the territory to meet, make, and grow. It also invites those watching to be inspired and follow the lead with their own ideas to make our communities better places for all.

With a variety of events designed to inspire, inform, and empower, there has not been a single slow day or night this week, and to wrap up the week with a bow, tomorrow night is the Hall of Innovators Award Ceremony — 6 p.m. at the Beringia Interpretive Centre. As we heard, it is a sold-out event.

I look forward to celebrating this year's winners, those who make the Yukon a better place to live, those who see the need for change and step forward, and those who take an idea and make it a reality. Congratulations to all of those who were nominated, and the winners, of course, will be announced tomorrow night.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have an open letter to Canadian premiers from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 22 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 22, of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Member for Whitehorse Centre on November 7, 2023.

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. 22 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. 22 shall be provided on or before November 22, 2023.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that:

(1) the Yukon's health care system, including our hospitals, is of vital importance to the people of the Yukon and that public transparency regarding the financial situation and cost pressures facing the Yukon Hospital Corporation is essential; and

(2) government secrecy regarding the Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance Inc. report related to financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation is contrary to the public interest.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the government to demonstrate transparency and accountability regarding the Yukon's health care system by taking the following actions:

(1) immediately making public the full report done by Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance Inc. regarding the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which was done under a sole-source contract approved by the Premier against the advice of government officials; and

(2) ensuring that the chair and chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation appear as witnesses in the Legislative Assembly during the 2023 Fall Sitting to answer questions about matters including cost pressures, the current financial situation, and their views regarding the report done by Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance Inc. regarding the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Council of the Federation meeting and health summit

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of starting the week by representing the Yukon at the Council of the Federation meeting and health summit in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The regular gathering offers a platform for all Premiers to connect and discuss shared priorities and matters both of concern and opportunity.

Our continued participation ensures that the Yukon's voice is heard and that our unique needs are considered in the broader Canadian context. Over the two days, we discussed strategic infrastructure, housing affordability and health care, reliable roadways, diverse housing options, hospital wait times and everything in between. These are areas that touch all of our lives. While the challenges look different in each jurisdiction, it was clear from our conversations that these are areas of concern for every province and territory across Canada.

Another outcome from the meeting was our repeated request for the Prime Minister to call a First Ministers' meeting to discuss competitiveness and strategic infrastructure. We also emphasized the need for the federal government to provide funding that is both secure and flexible to help provinces and territories deal with their distinct infrastructure challenges.

Investing in infrastructure improves the well-being of our communities and creates the conditions for long-term economic growth.

When provincial, territorial, and federal governments work together, we can help find solutions that fit different needs and situations across the country. Provinces and territories have the opportunity to share knowledge as we address shared challenges such as housing affordability and supply.

We discussed action to address issues in health care such as wait times, access to primary care, mental health and substance use services, and the recruitment and retention of health care professionals. I emphasized the need for provinces and territories to focus on recruiting health care workers internationally, getting those people their credentials, and streamlining people to the front line. We talked about innovative ways to manage health human resources, expand medical education, and deliver health care services so that our systems are efficient and effective and reach the people who need them. This collaboration helps to ensure that we can attract individuals to live and work in the Yukon. We will also be mindful of not drawing essential workers away from other Canadian regions.

Given the evolving national conversation about the federal carbon tax, we also discussed potential implications of the federal government's most recent announcement regarding home heating oil exemptions. Our government continues to stand by carbon pricing as sound, evidence-based policy on climate change, but we share concerns about equity.

As we continue these discussions, including those related to health care, housing, and infrastructure, I look forward to further collaboration with provincial and territorial counterparts.

As Deputy Premier McLean said in a ministerial statement earlier this week, this type of intergovernmental cooperation is essential for tackling national issues, as well as addressing local challenges effectively.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for the update from this week's Council of the Federation meetings in Halifax. It's always important that Yukon has a voice at the national table, but now I have a few questions for the Premier.

The release from COF said that the Premiers agreed to explore legislative frameworks to require provincial authorization before municipalities or public agencies enter into agreements with the federal government. Does he plan to implement that restriction in the Yukon, and if so, when?

Regarding health care, we know that Nova Scotia has been fast-tracking nurses for months; Alberta, as well, has been fast-tracking nurses for months, but the Yukon has only been talking about fast-tracking medical professionals for months.

Right before the meeting, Nova Scotia announced that doctors from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand can now fast-track to get a licence to work in the province. With the Premier's MOU signed this summer, will Yukoners finally see fast-tracked health professionals as well?

However, the main focus at the end-of-the-meeting press conference was the carbon tax and the exemption announced

by the Prime Minister on October 26 on home heating oil. We know this carbon tax exemption for home heating oil was aimed at the Atlantic provinces, but Yukoners welcome the exemption for home heating oil from the carbon tax after experiencing the highest rate of inflation in the country for the better part of 2023. I should remind the Premier that the official communiqué coming from the premiers meeting addressed the exemption.

During the meeting, the premiers unanimously called on the Prime Minister to ensure that federal policies and programs are delivered in a fair and equitable way to all Canadians, particularly in light of the affordability challenges being faced across the country.

I note that the majority of jurisdictions called for the removal of carbon tax on all home heating fuel; however, the Premier's statement just now continues to dodge this issue. Yukoners want to know what the Premier means by "equity". Do the local Liberals want to put the carbon tax back on home heating, which will further place undue financial pressures on Yukoners struggling with the high cost of living? Or do they think that the carbon tax should be removed from all home heating fuels, including propane? It is a very simple question, Mr. Speaker. I hope that the Premier finally clearly addresses it.

Yukoners have dealt with the largest cost-of-living increase in the country for most of this year and are making hard choices. They want to see their government taking action to help them this winter and that starts with taking the carbon tax off all home heating fuels, not just some. The Premier seems to be an outlier on this issue compared to the vast majority of other Canadian premiers who have clearly stated that they want the carbon tax removed from other home heating fuels. So, I think that the Premier should be clear about what his position is on this issue.

Ms. White: It's good to know that the premiers from across the country got together in Halifax for the Council of the Federation meeting and health summit. It's a relief to know, based on a press release, that these leaders recognize that health care workers truly are the backbone to quality, people-centred care. So, I have a few questions about lessons learned and examples shared.

Did the Premier learn how physician assistants are being utilized in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick, with Nova Scotia and Newfoundland running pilot projects, and how these valuable health professionals are helping to bolster health care in these provinces? Is Yukon moving toward including physician assistants in our health care system? Did he discuss with the Premier of Nova Scotia how that province completed an external quality assurance assessment of their midwifery program to understand the root causes of the collapse of their program and the path forward, to where they now have a fully functioning midwifery program? If not, why not? As it stands, Yukoners cannot currently access midwife-led births.

Did the Premier share with his counterparts the Yukon's dependence on agency nurses and the concerns that come with this situation? The Yukon has become particularly dependent

on agency nurses to fill in the gaps. Prior to last week's premiers meeting, the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions wrote a letter to request swift action to save the health care system from collapse. That includes phasing out the use of private staffing agencies, which — quote: "... misdirect health funding to private for-profit interests..." I hope that strategies were discussed to end this dependency as soon as possible.

A well-known issue with staffing in the Yukon is that scheduling can be so inflexible for nurses working in rural settings that they are leaving their positions — sometimes to join agencies — to return to those very same communities to work for far higher wages and the flexibility that they needed to continue to work as nurses in those very same communities in the first place. Sadly, some have left the profession and the territory altogether because of this lack of flexibility. And, finally, I am hopeful that the Premier isn't taking advice from the Premier of Alberta as they embark on a massive restructuring plan, because — let's be honest — they are talking about privatization of health care in Alberta.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you to the members opposite for their thoughts and questions. I would like to emphasize again the importance of building relationships across the country, as we work together to address challenges that impact all Canadians. As mentioned, the focus of the Council of the Federation meeting and health summit was largely housing, health care, and strategic infrastructure. Premiers had productive conversations about effective ways that we can work together and learn from each other to address shared challenges.

In terms of infrastructure, we agree that provinces and territories need access to adequate, flexible federal funding with secure allocations for each jurisdiction, and I voiced the fact that our municipalities have been speaking strongly about the fact that they want to see a new infrastructure program announced. This includes considerations that reflect the northern operating environment, such as scale, fiscal capacity, remote geography, and short construction seasons.

We did discuss the federal carbon tax, and we agreed, as per the communiqué — which I helped structure and feed into — that Yukoners are unanimous in calling on the Prime Minister to ensure that federal policies and programs are delivered in fair and equitable ways to all Canadians — particularly in the light of the affordability challenge faced across the country. Again, the commitment that we want to see is that there is consultation and there is solid support.

We have not veered away. We support the carbon pricing mechanism. We think that the decision that was made degrades the process that was put in place, and we do stand alone in that conversation with the Province of British Columbia and the Yukon, because as the member opposite said, Yukoners want action — yeah, they do want action. They want action on climate change.

The majority of Yukoners are concerned; they see the bills and the challenges that we have. Some of our Yukoners experienced that this summer when they had to leave their homes, when they were evacuated, and the costs that were

driven by the expenses of climate change and how that affects the expenditures of our government. We do know that there are significant costs that come along with those challenges.

We look at some of the comments from the Yukon Party on this. We also look at some of the notable leaders out there who are still speaking out about this. The former leader of the Conservative Party of Canada; CEOs of Husky Energy, Teck Resources, Suncor, Cenovus; as well as the Business Council of Alberta; the Canadian Chamber of Commerce; the Mining Association of Canada; the Business Council of Canada; the Fraser Institute; the Macdonald-Laurier Institute; the Conservative Thought Leaders' Ken Boessenkool; Andrew Coyne; John Ivison — just some other conservatives who have a different view, compared to the member opposite.

Concerning the questions from the NDP, I will try to quickly go through. Physician assistants were not discussed, but it has been a discussion point, and it's something I have been working on supporting the Minister of Health and Social Services. We have had discussions abroad on what ways we can partner and have training done. I was in discussions just last week with the Governor of Alaska, looking to see if we could procure seats for physician assistants for Yukoners. This is something that is very — there are not a lot of seats in this country. So, a lot of people are talking about it, but the pathway is much tighter than people think on actually having physician assistants throughout the country.

We did not talk about midwives, and there was a very large, significant conversation about agency nurses by all leaders, because we think that it has been a huge pressure on the finances of each government. We want to see a streamlined, consistent process in billing across the country, and we have committed to working on that. I believe that British Columbia will be leading a lot of that work in holding the pen.

Again, I thank my colleagues, and I look forward to the continued work on these important issues for Canadians and Yukoners.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Policing priorities

Ms. Van Bibber: We continue to hear from the Yukon business community that they are concerned about ongoing criminal activity in Whitehorse. Recently, several local businesses spoke to the media describing the rash of break-ins, vandalism, and property crime that has been hurting their businesses and making them feel unsafe. One local business owner said she was born and raised here and has never felt so bad.

Earlier this Sitting, the Liberals voted in favour of a motion that called for more resources to hire front-line RCMP officers for the Yukon. Since they agreed to that motion just under a month ago, what steps has the minister taken to increase the resources available to hire new front-line RCMP officers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question by the member opposite. I am not sure what process was undertaken with respect to budgeting during the time that

the Yukon Party was forming the government here in the territory, but our work has already begun on the 2024-25 budget overall for the government. The Department of Justice works constantly with the RCMP to deal with their requests and issues regarding resourcing. We work to ensure the provision of a professional, accountable, and appropriately funded territorial police service — I have said so many times. We work with the RCMP to make sure that their service provision is responsive to the priorities of Yukoners and worthy of the public trust.

Our government funds significant, ongoing investments with Yukon's police resources through the *Territorial Police Service Agreement* with the RCMP, as well as through investments in the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program.

This year, the Government of Yukon approved an overall policing budget increase of 9.79 percent, compared to the previous year, and I look forward to our continued discussions, as we prepare our budget.

Ms. Van Bibber: Every year, the Minister of Justice issues policing priorities to the RCMP, which guide their operation for the year. Earlier this Sitting, I noted that this year's policing priorities, which were provided by the Minister of Justice to the RCMP, did not include any reference to property crime, vandalism, or theft.

Can the minister explain why none of these priorities were included in the policing priorities that she provided to the RCMP this year, and will she commit to amending them to include these concerns?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think that at least one of the members opposite thinks that is a great question, because it was their question during our budget debate with respect to the Justice discussions regarding the supplementary budget for the Department of Justice, which only involved the YEU increases this year, but we entertained a number of questions with respect to RCMP resources and other topics of interest to Yukoners — policing priorities being one of them.

What I said then is that the policing priorities are prepared — unique in Canada — by the Yukon Police Council, who do so by collecting community perspectives across the territory at different places in different years.

They provide those recommendations to me, as the Minister of Justice, to inform the policing priorities, together with those from the Department of Justice, and to the Yukon RCMP. The policing priorities build year after year. What I also said in response to this question previously was that the specific crimes which are noted in the question are not the kinds of specifics that are included in the policing priorities and that the policing priorities involve building public trust, which includes all of those types of crimes.

Ms. Van Bibber: In their 2022-23 annual report, the Yukon Police Council said that they had met with the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce. According to the Police Council, the chamber raised — and I quote: "... concerns related to shoplifting, break and enters, vandalism of private and public property, and public alcohol and drug use." Despite this, none of these concerns were included in this year's policing priorities. These concerns are very similar to what we continue to hear from local businesses.

Will the minister commit to ensuring that the concerns raised by the business community are reflected in next year's policing priorities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The council's recommendations were considered when setting policing priorities. There is a note — I believe from this year — that the council met with the chamber of commerce and, as a result, considered their concerns going forward. The Department of Justice monitors trends in criminal activity and continues to engage with the RCMP, who also monitor trends in criminal activity. We work with them to progress toward the goals that are set within the territory's policing priorities.

The role of the Police Council cannot be understated in reaching out to community members, and I am very pleased with the work that they do on behalf of Yukoners and look forward to that, as I have said earlier, unique-in-Canada perspective being brought forward.

Policing priorities build on those from previous years, and this year, there were a number — three in particular — to the RCMP, including strengthening relationships and increasing public trust. Of course, this is a broad policing priority, but as clearly set out in the letter that was sent to the RCMP, there are a number of specifics under that heading.

Question re: RCMP funding and staffing

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, over the past several years, the federal Liberal government has been cutting support for federal policing positions across the country, which has especially impacted jurisdictions like the Yukon. Since the Liberals made that decision, the Yukon has lost the service of at least three federally funded RCMP members. These cuts are hurting the ability of the RCMP in the Yukon to respond to organized crime, the illegal drug trade, and local issues, as they are now spread even thinner.

What steps has the Minister of Justice taken in response to the federal Liberal cuts to policing in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again a question that was brought forward earlier during our budget debate at the time — I am happy to get the transcript with respect to that. There are certainly concerns brought forward on behalf of our government to the federal minister — the former minister and now the new minister — with respect to the issues regarding the restructuring of the federal policing structure and the funding that goes with that.

It is important to recall that, through the territorial policing agreement, the Yukon spends a large percentage — and it is split with the federal government — with respect to the percentage of payment for each of those positions. It is also the same with respect to the federal policing function that occurs under that, as well as with the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program. The Yukon is 100-percent responsible for the 911 service. The others are split with the federal government.

What I can indicate is that we continually work not only with local RCMP but with the federal government as they consider territorial and federal policing across the country.

Mr. Cathers: Well, I would begin by reminding the minister that we are still waiting for good answers from her.

The minister's own briefing notes outlined the extent of the problems that the Liberal cuts have caused for policing in the north. Her briefing notes from the spring said — quote: "Territorial funding for police is already under significant pressure..." And — quote: "Decreasing the number of federal police resources deployed in the Yukon or significantly changing the reporting structure may compromise the capacity of 'M' Division to counteract organized crime, inhibit trans-border drug trafficking and investigate trans-national crime."

Does the minister know why the federal Liberals have cut at least three federally funded policing positions in the Yukon, and can she explain to Yukoners what impact these cuts that the Liberals have made will have in the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, back in 2018, some time ago now, the RCMP announced that the federal policing mandate would shift from conducting investigations to intelligence gathering. This is something that we have been dealing with, with the federal government, for some five years now. We'll continue to work closely with them to make sure that they understand the impact of decisions that they are making with respect to the federal policing mandate and how they will affect Yukoners.

This change in mandate means that the focus of federally funded RCMP efforts will be rededicated to addressing strategic criminal threats that exist in national and international environments.

I should be very clear with Yukoners — and certainly with the folks opposite here — that the efforts of this mandate will assist in Yukon's policing here in the territory. It is not a matter of withdrawing those services.

The responsibility for investigating crime that impacts the Yukon at the regional level is a transborder issue, in particular with drug trafficking, and we will continue to work with the federal government to make sure that policing in smaller jurisdictions is a priority for them as well.

Mr. Cathers: During the last federal election, the Liberal Party claimed that the mandatory gun buyback program they were planning would cost \$400 million to \$600 million, but recent media reports show that internal government documents reveal the cost to be more than double that and that it could cost nearly \$2 billion.

Spending \$2 billion on this misguided Liberal confiscation plan is obviously a terrible idea, and it's also going to create more problems for the RCMP here in the Yukon. The minister's own briefing note reveals that Yukon RCMP are concerned about this and it says that the federal government's impending firearms buyback program could increase strain on territorial RCMP resources. The National Police Federation and other police organizations also agree that this Liberal plan would divert resources from where they are needed most.

Will the Minister of Justice finally agree to push back against this badly flawed Liberal plan and tell the federal Liberals to cancel Bill C-21 and their plan to confiscate lawfully acquired property from Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I believe that the request by the member opposite with respect to Bill C-21 has already been

addressed by our Premier, who, back in January 2023, made a public statement. We have since been having conversations with the federal ministers responsible that Yukoners are very concerned about the proposed amendments to Bill C-21 and the impacts that it would have on law-abiding firearms owners in the territory as lawful gun owners here in the territory.

The Yukon government, representing all Yukoners, has long made it clear to the federal government that Yukoners need to be engaged about legislative changes that would impact them, including those proposed in Bill C-21. The former minister of public safety was present in the Yukon Territory and had several meetings with Yukoners, attended a public forum that I also attended, and then subsequently made changes to Bill C-21 as a result of the engagement that happened here in the territory.

We continue these conversations because they are critically important to Yukoners.

Question re: Vimy Heritage Housing Society funding

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, for 12 years, a group of dedicated seniors has been working on the Vimy Heritage Housing project. Their dream is to build non-profit assisted living for seniors of all income levels. Right now, there isn't much choice for elders and seniors in the territory. There is living at home independently or there is long-term care when they need more support. Except for Normandy Living, there is no in-between, but Normandy Living is private and not everyone can afford the rates. So, Vimy's proposal seems like a godsend, but for 12 years, the volunteer board of Vimy has been jumping through hoop after hoop after hoop. When they asked for funding, they were told to do studies, applications, business plans, governance models, and more. They have done everything that they have been asked to do, and yet this government still won't commit money to build the project.

When will the Premier stop delaying this project year after year and commit the funding that Vimy needs to get shovels in the ground?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I attended the Vimy AGM this last year. The commitment that we made at that point was either to continue to support Vimy to get a feasible plan in place or, understanding that we still need to build more stock at Yukon Housing, we would partner with them and could actually go in and build the project.

I don't know what else to say. If anybody is listening — we would go into the space, have them help us, and we would build the project for seniors. I don't know if there is anything else to say. I think that is about as committed as you can get.

Again, you can try to make political hay out of this and go down a pathway of questions, but I think that this says it all. That is our level of commitment.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, the need for this project is there — 60 percent of the units are already spoken for, and with an aging population, the Yukon will only need more projects like this. Now the government has asked for yet another laundry list of tasks, including a detailed architectural design, before they will commit construction money. They have offered Vimy

\$300,000 to complete them, but the Vimy board has told this government that the actual cost of what they are being asked to deliver would be closer to \$1 million.

Will the Premier commit to giving Vimy the actual amount of money they need to complete the work that he has asked them to do?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I know it's difficult when you are asking a question and you get the answer on the first one and you have to go to the second one, but here's the deal: I just said that we would step in and build the project. So, I don't know what else to say. You either are going to do a bunch of architectural drawings — because we need to see the due diligence done, because everyone in the opposition, including the individual who is asking me the question, is going to ask me if we did the proper due diligence before we give the money. We have to do that.

If the organization is not in a position or does not have the capacity to do it — because we respect the individuals involved, we have said that we will come in and help build the project, and they can define the governance and the programming in that structure to the point where it can be called Vimy, but it has been very difficult on this conversation because the leads on the project do not want to give up the ownership of the project.

So, we're saying that we can come in as Yukon Housing, partner, and build it. So, really, the question is not relevant if it's about support. There is no greater ability to support than to do what we have said we would do.

MLA Tredger: I don't think that taking over the project counts as supporting it, particularly when this government talks about how much they want partnerships outside of the government to work on housing. It's pretty incredible that we have a group of dedicated seniors who have been working over 12 years to get this project going. They saw seniors struggling in houses in crisis. They knew it would only get worse as the population ages. They didn't see any action from governments, whether it was the Yukon Party or the Liberals in power, so this group of seniors took action. They dedicated years of their lives to try to meet this need. At the end of the day, it's this government's responsibility to make sure that seniors and elders have access to supportive housing when they grow old, but they haven't made it happen, and when a group of volunteers has tried to fill the gap for them, they have been strung along by government after government for 12 years.

How much longer does the Premier expect Vimy's board to volunteer their time to fill the gaps that his government has left in seniors housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that everybody who is here in the House has heard my answers and heard the questions — whether it's media or the rest of us here.

If you are going to take on a project, there's going to be significant work that has to be done. After years of funding, there are no proper architectural drawings. There is not a clear understanding of the cost. The funds that the organization had planned to use changed with CMHC. Then the funds, as I answered during Committee of the Whole, were redeployed — or at least the program was.

So, it's either the organization — we have provided funds — is going to come up with the cost and a plan — a cost and a plan — and then we can help fund or, because we respect the individuals involved, we would come in to partner but lead with the capacity that we have on project management, financing, and procurement. I think those are two really good pathways to move forward. We are committed to it, and we respect the work that has been done for a long period of time. We want to see this project built.

Question re: Yukon Housing Corporation policies

Ms. Clarke: Earlier this summer, the Public Accounts Committee completed a report on Yukon housing following a scathing audit from the Auditor General of Canada, which found that little had been done to address long-standing issues affecting housing. One of the recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee was that the Yukon Housing Corporation should consult with stakeholders about their new tenant allocation policy.

One housing advocacy group told the committee that, due to the new policy — and I quote: “The most vulnerable Yukoners (i.e. survivors of violence and individuals who are currently homeless) will receive less access to Yukon Housing units than in the previous model...”

What steps has the Liberal government taken to act on this recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think we had a long discussion during Committee of the Whole on the process that we use to ensure that our most vulnerable individuals are housed first. I am not going to speak to this particular comment, because I don't have it in front of me. What I can say is that we walk through the process — and specifically for folks fleeing violence — and the work that was there.

We have just seen funds, as well, allocated across this country to offset the rent for people who are fleeing violence — \$200, \$400, \$600, and \$800. The challenge for the federal government — when we sat with them, we said that, because we have made this a priority, the funds that you are bringing into this discussion, exactly for the folks the member opposite is speaking about — that has been our focus. We have prioritized those individuals in housing. That's the way we weight the decisions when we allocate, so I would challenge the premise of the question. If it's about vulnerable folks, that is who is at the top of our list when we are looking for allocation, and we will continue to do that.

Look, there was a broad range of things that we committed to doing better from the OAG's report. We are implementing many of those things. There is still significant work to do, and we will continue to do that work.

Ms. Clarke: I should remind the minister that their recommendation that I just asked about was supported unanimously by the committee that includes two of his Cabinet ministers.

The second part of that recommendation was that the Yukon Housing Corporation should consult with stakeholders about any further changes that are planned to the prioritization system and eligibility requirements for accessing housing. I

would note that the Yukon women's transition home stated that they were concerned that — quote: “... any moves to tighten eligibility may negatively affect women and children in need of safe and suitable housing...”

What steps have been taken to act on this recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As I listened to the question, I think the question was: If there are any further changes to your structure and system of allocation, you have an obligation to have conversations with stakeholders. The commitment that was made by the Yukon Housing Corporation — the government — was that's what we do.

In my conversations — some briefings — with the Yukon Housing Corporation, we have not made any changes; therefore, we would not have to follow through on any further discussions as committed to, because again, there were no changes made. So, I think the premise of the question is a bit off. There are some things that were critiqued in the work that we are doing, and a lot of that was making sure that there was more housing stock for vulnerable citizens. That is work that we continue to do. Some of that work is difficult. We hear, in some cases, that you need to have partnerships, so we are trying to have partnership. Sometimes, that is challenging work. We know that there are at least one or two projects that we have been trying to support to get built. They are for vulnerable folks. We know that the opposition has come out against those projects and those investments. We think they are good.

We continue to work with the Council of Yukon First Nations on their new centre in Whistle Bend. I hope that the member opposite, the MLA for Whistle Bend, will stand up and support that, as well, if that gets built in the neighbourhood that the individual across from me represents.

Ms. Clarke: Another recommendation that was made by the Public Accounts Committee was that the Yukon Housing Corporation should review the eligibility thresholds, including the new asset cap policy. When I asked about the new asset cap policy in Committee of the Whole, the Premier did not make any commitment to review it, so I would like to ask again: Will the Premier follow the recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee and review the new asset cap policy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it is important to say first that the asset cap that we use, which is \$100,000, is the largest — or I believe the highest asset cap — across western Canada. Actually, if you go back and look at the analyses that were done by third parties and the OAG, it was also that we had to have an asset cap that was across the board. So, we had an asset cap before, but we didn't have it for seniors — and so, fun a bit with numbers across the way.

It was actually that we were supposed to ensure there was an asset cap across all tenancies. So, that's what we did. We followed through on what the OAG said.

Now, there are challenges with that, and I will be open. We have heard that, especially in some of the communities that do not have ample opportunities to move into other types of seniors living. I think, again, I've heard it loud and clear. In some cases, — in the community of Watson Lake I would say specifically — there were a number of people who, at one point,

would have been removed from the list. We felt it was important, because their applications were in to Yukon Housing, that we respected that and that we honoured that, so we did. I think there were 35 or 37 applications that wouldn't have been received under the new guidelines, but we honoured those and grandfathered them all in. We will continue to watch and make sure we make the appropriate amendments and watch what the OAG is saying and have integrity with our —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Fuelwood subsidy

Mr. Istchenko: Last year, the Liberals introduced two different subsidies for firewood — a consumer subsidy and a subsidy for woodcutters.

They have announced an extension for the subsidy for woodcutters but not for consumers. Can the minister explain why?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the subsidy for industry was far more successful and more effective. We had conversations with the Yukon Wood Products Association. That was the reason for extending that one. We also did another program where we partnered with CanNor to support industry. All of it is about trying to make sure that we get more wood moving to Yukoners. The reports that I have had into this fall are that there is more wood moving. The reports that I had on the incentive to industry was that it was received very favourably and very constructively.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on greenhouse gas emissions

Mr. Kent: I have some questions for the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources regarding his greenhouse gas emissions targets.

Last year, the *Clean Energy Act* set targets of 45-percent reductions below 2010 levels by 2030. This was part of the CASA between the Liberals and NDP and went well beyond the 30-percent target set in the *Our Clean Future* plan.

Earlier this week, we found out from Yukon Energy Corporation officials that most of the 10-year renewable energy plan projects, like Atlin hydro and Moon Lake, are in jeopardy of not proceeding and the plan needs to actually be rewritten.

For example, the acting CEO of Yukon Energy said — and I quote: “We are not able to put a timeline on Moon Lake right now...” How will the minister meet his greenhouse gas targets by 2030 without these renewable energy projects coming online?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I think it's a fair question, and every time that we have challenges on some projects, then we need to refocus on others. For example, we are further ahead on some things, like electric vehicle uptake, on microgeneration, on independent power producer — those programs are ahead of schedule, moving faster than we anticipated. Some of the projects have seen challenges — the Atlin hydro project and Moon Lake — those projects require us to work supporting First Nations on the delivery of those.

Yes, I did ask the utility to go back and to work with ATCO and to work with Energy, Mines and Resources and the

Department of Environment to continue to review and upgrade our strategic plans so that we can work toward that goal of 45-percent reduction by 2030. It is a hard target to meet, but it's an important target to meet. We never said that it would be easy; we said that we were committed, and we remain committed.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, my question was: Can the minister meet those targets without projects like Atlin and Moon Lake coming online before 2030? So, emissions from the mining industry will be set through mining intensity targets; the Government of Yukon is proposing a target for the mining sector to reduce 45 percent of its greenhouse gas emissions per unit of production by 2035. This target was set in August 2022, but the minister had indicated that this target will soon be written into legislation. Can the minister confirm this and let industry know when these targets will be legislated into force?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If the member opposite feels that I didn't answer the question earlier: Can we meet 45 percent without Atlin and Moon? If the question is “can”, the answer is yes, but I don't have the full pathway to 45 percent. That's why we continue to update *Our Clean Future* and the renewable energy strategy for Yukon Energy, and we will continue to work with Yukoners, with First Nations in investing in renewable energy futures.

We did just cut the ribbon on the Thäy Tāw Haeckel Hill wind project, which is an example of projects. We will work to backfill against other projects if we don't see them come to fruition early enough.

On the 45-percent target, I have always told the industry that we were engaging with industry last summer — that is my recollection — in 2022. I think we announced the target in 2023. We said to industry that we will seek to put this under the *Clean Energy Act*, and I would be keen to see the Yukon Party support that. I would like to see us together, across this territory, all political parties, work to address climate change.

Mr. Kent: We know that, even though the minister has set his own overall targets of a 45-percent reduction in emissions below 2010 levels by 2030, they are not enforceable, so many an industry is wondering how the intensity targets for mining will be dealt with. Are the intensity-based targets the Liberals are planning going to be enforceable, and if so, how will that be done? Will it be part of the mining licence, or is some other mechanism being considered?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, as I have said to industry and am happy to stand up and say here, the *Clean Energy Act* is about holding government to account. It's our job to work to get the Yukon to these targets, working with industry to get to industry-wide targets. For example, we do not say that our grocery stores or our forestry industry — that every one of them has to hit an individual target. What we are trying to do is move us toward 2050 and net zero. I think that it is important that we make those commitments as a territory.

Again, I ask the Yukon Party to please support the *Clean Energy Act* when we come back and amend it with the mining intensity targets, because we need to show that we are going to move there as a territory to give those strong price signals to everyone, and we will work to help industry to get there, starting with *Our Clean Future*. There are several actions

underneath it that I think are going to support the mining industry. Renewable diesel is a big example.

I will just say that we will work with industry to get to those targets, and it will be our commitment to get there.

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

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 821

Clerk: Motion No. 821, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Economic Development to extend the interest-free repayment period on the COVID-19 support loan to September 30, 2024.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, as I often mention in this House, before being elected, I used to run a small business. I operated a coffee shop at the Canada Games Centre and I know that things can get difficult. When our economy was shut down by a global pandemic in 2020, so many business owners wondered how they would survive. They did their part, they played by the rules, and they tried their best to keep our community safe and healthy, but it cost them.

Yukon government, to its credit, quickly offered support. A number of programs sprung up, seemingly overnight, to backstop businesses in a number of sectors to help keep them afloat through some very difficult and uncertain times. The COVID-19 support loan was a lifeline for many businesses in the pandemic and I know that many public servants worked very hard to make these happen so fast. I am sure that those programs saved a lot of businesses that wouldn't be here today without them. While the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic are over, we know that the lingering effects on our economy remain. People aren't travelling like they used to, and many are still nervous about getting on a cruise ship or a plane or hanging out in crowded spaces. Many workers may not have recovered financially from long periods without work and still can't afford to travel or eat out as much as they used to.

I will walk the House through the most recent tourism visitation numbers that show that we are still far from being back to pre-pandemic levels. International overnight visits were still down from the five-year average. International border crossings were up just four percent from the five-year average. Consumer confidence was down a staggering 30 percent, and Destination Canada's numbers show that non-resident tourism spending in 2022 was still only 70 percent of the 2019 peak across Canada.

One person I spoke to in the tourism industry summed things up as being still very fragile as a sector. Citing not just the pandemic but the compounding problems of lack of

housing, rising costs, and staff shortages, they said that the last three years will go down as some of the toughest times in living memory for business owners in the tourism sector. Many have burned through their cash reserves and continue to struggle to make ends meet.

The Yukon government's COVID-19 support loan repayment period should be extended, as this motion suggests. The program provided interest-free loans of up to \$100,000, which were to be repaid by December 31, 2023. After that date, five-percent interest will be added, and full repayment will be due by the end of 2025.

We chose to extend this to September 30, 2024 with the idea that a busy season in the summer of 2024 would be enough to get many back on solid footing.

Destination Canada forecasts that tourism spending will be fully recovered by tourism season 2024.

For business owners, extending the interest-free repayment period by nine months could be the difference between surviving another year or shutting down altogether. This would have very little impact on the government budget but would have a big impact on the small businesses that are still struggling, not only to make ends meet but to pay back their loans and to plan for the future.

The current repayment period for this program will cause undue hardship on small businesses that have not yet fully recovered from the pandemic. Extending the period through another summer season would go a long way to helping them recover.

I invite my colleagues to support this motion or to suggest constructive ways to move forward and help keep Yukon's small business community thriving.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Ms. White: All right. I was hoping for suggestions and changes, but here we are. I guess this is the vote, then.

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. Pillai: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Disagree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Disagree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Disagree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.
Mr. Cathers: Agree.
Ms. McLeod: Agree.
Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.
Mr. Hassard: Agree.
Mr. Istchenko: Agree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Ms. Blake: Agree.
MLA Tredger: Agree.
Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 11 yeas, seven nays.
Speaker: The yeas have it.
 I declare the motion carried.
Motion No. 821 agreed to

Motion No. 823

Clerk: Motion No. 823, standing in the name of Ms. Blake.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation that would allow physicians' assistants to practice in the territory.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this motion, which states:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation that would allow physicians' assistants to practice in the territory.

Nation-wide health care staffing challenges, such as shortages and the high rate of burnout, have had a big impact on health care delivery. It means long wait times, lack of access to primary care, community health centre closures, and overburdened inpatient care units. Physician assistants would be a great addition to team-based models of care, with the expertise to provide services that can significantly improve our health care system sustainability and functioning.

Physician assistants, or PAs, assist doctors in performing routine medical tasks. They reduce the burden on overworked doctors, reduce wait times, and improve access to essential medical care.

They have been used in the Canadian Armed Forces officially since the 1950s, but they have had roles under the title of "medic" since the early 1900s. PAs were introduced into the Canadian health care system in 1999 in Manitoba and now work in every province in Canada. In the NWT and the Yukon, PAs are already working at mine sites through private contracting services. PAs are physician extenders, which means that they extend the services of their supervising physician. They operate with a licensed doctor to increase capacity. Physician assistants do not hold their own patient list; they work under a physician or a group of physicians, or a doctor could have multiple physician assistants.

The scope of practice is versatile. They can lighten a doctor's workload to enable doctors to focus on more specialized patient care as well as take on more patients.

Physician assistants can assist with inpatient care, surgical and trauma assistance, hospitalist coverage, orphan patient

follow-up, cancer clinic support, emergency assessments, and patient assessments in primary care clinics. They can help patients with simple prescription refills but would check in with their supervising doctor if a case is more complicated. Each physician assistant can increase a doctor's patient load by 50 percent, which means that, in the Yukon, a doctor could accept between 500 to 900 additional patients on their patient list. This would remove a lot of people from the family doctor wait-list. They would be especially valuable in underserved rural communities where they can improve access to health care because they can work in community health care centres, issue prescriptions, or manage care for chronic conditions without people having to travel to Whitehorse.

They would still be attached to a physician, but that physician does not have to be on-site, which means more physician assistants could make visits and refer the more complex patients, et cetera.

In primary care, using physician assistants means that acute care patients can often have same-day appointments, as doctors under this model have more time in a day to see their patients and to block time off for same-day visits. If a person has a sudden illness, often they have to wait days or weeks before they can see their family doctor.

Physician assistants can help balance family doctors' workloads so that they can see acute care patients immediately. They improve many facets of a patient's experience when they visit the ER, including wait times, the number of people who can be seen, and how quickly they can get out of the hospital. They can bring down costs significantly. They can do home care and work in nursing homes or community health centres, do hospital visits, and ensure continuity of care for chronic conditions. This would be particularly useful in rural Yukon where we know a huge need exists in terms of home care and aging in place. They can help with mental health by initiating psychiatric referrals and writing prescriptions. They can also help with an aging population by working in long-term care, managing wound care, doing medication reviews, and more.

Physician assistants in primary care settings can be used for 75 percent of all visits without referral to physician-level care. For instance, if someone is coming for a routine prescription renewal, management for a chronic condition, or a referral to other health professionals such as a physiotherapist or psychiatrist, they can see a physician assistant.

When they work in an ER, data shows that they can care for over half of the patients without the need to refer a patient to a physician. This improves ER efficiency and wait times while alleviating pressure and workloads for overworked doctors and nurses. Having physician assistants at the ER also decreases the rate of people who leave without being seen.

An Ontario study on physician assistants showed that nearly three-quarters of physicians working with physician assistants reported that the PA had a positive impact on patient experiences. In the same study, 95 percent of physicians working with PAs said that the physician assistant had increased their own efficiency in providing care. In general surgery, using physician assistants can drastically reduce late discharges and increase early discharge rates. For instance, this

study showed that having physician assistants working at the hospital reduced wait times for surgeries by 14 weeks. We know that wait times for surgeries at the Whitehorse General Hospital have been an issue. Adopting a model that integrates physician assistants would be beneficial for Yukoners who have been waiting for surgeries.

Using physician assistants in infectious diseases services can lead to a decrease in time to a consultation and shorten the length of stay at the hospital. Physician assistants are allowing physicians to increase the number of patients they are able to treat in a day and to serve in their own practices overall. Physician assistants in long-term care settings for seniors decrease hospital admission rates by more than one-third, and re-admission rates drop nearly as much because of home care visits happening more often. Among Canadians who have received care from physician assistants, more than nine out of 10 were satisfied with their experience.

I think I painted a clear picture of the potential and concrete improvements to the health care system and to our access to health care that would come from the government allowing physician assistants to practise in the territory. This gives us hope that the numerous gaps that we hear about could be at least partially filled.

Yukoners are probably wondering why physician assistants are not a part of the health care system in the Yukon. Training takes 24 months, with 12 months in-classroom learning and the rest of the time spent in clinical rotations with physicians. There are currently about 1,000 certified physician assistants working in Canada, but this number is expected to grow quickly, because three additional universities are opening programs of their own. Dalhousie University, the University of Calgary, and the University of Ottawa are each going to be opening their own programs to train physician assistants.

I was so glad earlier today to hear the Premier talking about connecting with Alaskan schools for physician assistant training for Yukoners. CASA commitments include supporting students pursuing studies in medical fields who commit to returning to the Yukon after graduation. I would suggest that the Premier and the Minister of Education see how this commitment could be used in conjunction with the possibility of sending Yukoners to study in Alaska. This could be used to reduce costs and encourage more individuals to apply.

I would also encourage the Minister of Education to connect with the universities opening new physician assistant programs and with the existing programs at McMaster University, the University of Manitoba, and the University of Toronto to ensure that as many Yukon students as possible can access these programs and access funding. There is not only a need but also so many possibilities with the physician assistant profession.

Under the different medical acts that are in place provincially in Canada, doctors can delegate to both regulated and unregulated health professionals. For example, in Ontario, physician assistants are not yet regulated, but doctors are permitted to delegate to unregulated health professionals. This means that there was no need to make legal changes to the *Health Act*. While this option seems simpler than changing the

legislation, it comes with some significant drawbacks. It means that there are no guarantees that the physician assistants have met common entry-to-practice requirements and no guarantees that those physician assistants participate in continuing education. It also means that they have no legally defined scope of practice, which makes much more work for doctors who have to provide lengthy written or verbal orders every time that physician assistants carry out their duties.

On the contrary, in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick, the profession is regulated by their respective colleges of physicians and surgeons so that doctors can delegate to physician assistants. In these provinces, all that was necessary were amendments to their existing medical act. This is what we are proposing in this motion. Changing the legislation allows physician assistants to work as regulated health professionals in all areas of medical practice, while ensuring that they work under a professional quality standard and with continuing education.

In BC and Nova Scotia, physician assistants are working through pilot projects with the support of doctors in those provinces to get permanent regulation in place. This shows how many different ways that physician assistants can be integrated into existing health care legislation and regulation. The changes required to get physician assistants working in the Yukon are not massive changes. It shows that the Yukon can quickly get physician assistants working here in the territory without huge demands on time and effort.

Physician assistants would allow our health care system to develop more team-based, interprofessional, patient-centred care. We know that this is a goal of many health care providers, but it is not always possible due to shortages and burnout but also accreditation, scope of practice, or hospital privileges.

Dr. Alex Kmet, president of the Yukon Medical Association, directly called for a new system of health care in which teams of people work together to provide care. Integrating physician assistants into the Yukon's health care system will be a valuable part of that new model of health care.

The Conference Board of Canada reports that when health care models are designed around teamwork and allow for real and concrete team-based practices on a daily basis, doctors are able to be more efficient, more satisfied at work, and have a decreased risk of burnout. It allows them to have a better work-life balance, which is so needed for many physicians and other health care professionals.

There is strong support from physicians and nursing groups across the country for increased use of physician assistants in the health care system for these reasons. Now that physician assistants have been practising in so many areas of Canada for more than a few decades, there is a lot of data to show that they have high levels of job satisfaction and lower burnout rates than doctors. This means that they are a sustainable way to decrease pressure on the health care system, as well as decrease pressure on the medical professionals themselves.

There is also a lot of evidence to show that there are considerable cost savings for the health care system and significant increases to the ability to access care for patients. In

the Yukon, where we know that access to health care is an issue, where we know that burnout is an issue, this could be a game changer for the health care system.

I hope that my colleagues will vote in favour of this motion, as physician assistants are a powerful tool to address many of the issues and challenges that the health care system as a whole is facing but also health care professionals and patients are facing every day.

Mahsi' cho.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to be able to get up today to speak to this motion, in particular because it is an opportunity to speak about the health care system transformation and recognize issues of ultimate importance to Yukoners.

The motion — I'm sorry; I think I have a copy of it here somewhere — that is before us involves the concept of drafting legislation to permit physician assistants to operate here in the territory. I think it's incredibly important for Yukoners to understand what physician assistants do. I think we have had a good overview by the member opposite who has introduced this motion, but there are some details in particular that would have to be addressed. I look forward to be able to outline those.

I'm going to start — I also intend to speak a bit about nurse practitioners and the difference between nurse practitioners and physician assistants and why, in general, my comments will be that we need to pursue every possible opportunity to improve access to health care for Yukoners. This is not currently unusual in the world, and I will speak a little bit about that too.

I will begin by saying that, from the pandemic to the substance use health emergency to the global health human resources crisis, the past four years have truly been an extraordinary and challenging time in the field of health and wellness and certainly in our lives and in our community.

I know that several comments have been made by members opposite about how there has been inaction with respect to addressing the health human resources challenges here in the territory. That's their perspective, and they are certainly entitled to that perspective, but the truth is that, five years ago when we were sitting here, we weren't dealing with the health human resources challenges that currently exist. Many of them have been exacerbated by COVID and by people choosing different paths, either individually or as a profession. I will have some more comments about that in a bit.

During this time, in the last three to four years, we have continually been inspired by the dedication, the expertise, and the resilience of Yukon nurses, physicians, and allied health care professionals. I truly appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak to that — to them — today and to Yukoners on their behalf. We are truly grateful for the exceptional care that Yukoners receive despite critical, shifting, and challenging conditions.

We're all working in close collaboration — the Government of Yukon and the Department of Health and Social Services are working with multiple partners to problem-solve, to advocate and design innovative solutions in order to improve and strengthen our health care system. That is the goal. The role

of doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals are essential in this transformation and this evolution of our health care system.

We know that, during this last period of time, those nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals have faced personal and professional challenges. Many of us have throughout the time period that was COVID. We fared quite well here in the territory in that we had, despite some commentary, quite a few less restrictions on our personal movement, on the ability for us to move around the territory and access essential services, like groceries, and our opportunities to gather in small groups. While they were restrictive for Yukoners, they were certainly less restrictive than existed in many places in Canada. We all probably have friends and relatives in other places where their restrictions and the impact on their health care and their mental and physical wellness was certainly severely or seriously impacted.

This approach to close collaboration with multiple partners means that the work that we do has a major impact on many areas of our lives, both professionally and personally, and on the lives of Yukoners. The past few years, Mr. Speaker, have not been easy, and I am very sure that there have been times when we have all felt in a state of mental or physical exhaustion or both. We recognize the pressure on our health care system and on our health care providers. We know that the importance of home and work/life balance, self-care, and taking breaks to recharge can truly not be stressed enough. Yet in spite of these constant and evolving realities, health care professionals have continued to meet the urgent and important challenges of the patient care needs of Yukoners.

Each one of them demonstrates qualities that we know exist in good and professional health care professionals. They possess qualities like excellent communication, collaboration, empathy, compassion, curiosity, resilience, and leadership, and those qualities exist here in abundance in our health care system.

I think that there is extensive coverage in the media about the challenges of the health care system across the country — actually, it's across the world. While many of those accounts of the challenges take the view that this is — and they should — a serious and important matter for all Canadians, when I hear many of those stories, I think about how important our experience here in the territory is and how absolutely critical it is that we appreciate the individuals who provide us that professional care every single day. Does it mean that there can be no improvements? Absolutely not — that's what we are here talking about today — improvements. It's actually what the officials at Health and Social Services, the Hospital Corporation, and the Yukon Medical Association work on every single day: improving services.

I just had an excellent opportunity to address the Yukon Medical Association's annual general meeting last Friday, and we had an excellent opportunity to show them the appreciation that we have, to recognize the benefits of the Yukon medical process and services, and to make sure that we focus on patient-centred experiences. Of course, in an annual general meeting like that, people come together for the purpose of representing

their own interests, but I can assure you that the medical professionals in that room are also thinking very carefully about their patient experience and how they can improve that and how we can work together as community members, as the government, as the health care professionals, as the Hospital Corporation and the regulators, Yukon University, the Yukon Employees' Union — all those who came together on the Health Human Resources Steering Committee for the purpose of turning their minds to addressing these very issues.

The attributes that I have noted that we are lucky enough to have here with respect to our health care professionals are essential to providing quality care and to advancing the progress of our health care system today and in the future. I am happy today to take the opportunity to thank them for the valuable work that they do every day — to concentrate and focus on their patients and to make their patients a priority each and every day.

The nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals whom we have here in the territory are dedicated, and their commitment to the health and well-being of Yukoners is key to how we will work together to transform Yukon's health care system and how we will do that together.

We find ourselves faced with extraordinary challenges. Maybe once in a lifetime or maybe once in a century, we have just lived through a world pandemic. Not since 1918 has there been such an impact on the world. I would argue that the pandemic that began in 2020 had an even more critical impact on citizens of the world simply because of the increased population, of technology, of the way in which we gather and do our work — and the impacts on school children. We could spend all day talking just about the impacts that we have had on parents, on patients, on Yukoners, and on those who run their own businesses. We heard earlier today about the impact on small business, on large business, on industries like the airline industry, and on higher education. The list goes on and on.

So, we have had that impact — COVID-19. We have a substance use health emergency that was declared here in January 2022. We have a health human resources challenge like none other that has ever existed in our civilization, and we have system transformation.

Actually, that can probably be broken into at least two — and maybe more, but I'll speak about two — parts of system transformation. We have system transformation that is required by patients and physicians and health care providers alike. It is truly the evolution of health care. We are asking ourselves questions like: What is expected, and how is it to be delivered in a modern world?

We are no longer spending and functioning in a system that was designed in the early part of the last century and has continued, in many ways, since that time. The system and patients — in particular in this case, Yukoners — are requiring that we transform that system.

Then there is another system transformation here in the territory and that is specific to Health and Social Services transforming our system here. It has been undertaken by our government and Yukoners to improve and integrate patient-centred care. It was developed as part of an independent review

of our Health and Social Services system, known as *Putting People First*, and Yukoners have participated in that process and then required that we will need our care to be transformed — our health system to be transformed — to a modern world so that we are integrating patient-centred care. We are removing biases and racism that we know exist and were recognized not only by that report but by our community at large. Yukoners are demanding this kind of transformation.

Some might call the confluence of these challenges overwhelming, and addressing even one of them could send us all home to hide under the covers. But they are here — those challenges are here before us. It's our responsibility to rise to meet them.

Meeting that perfect storm that is before us is also an incredible opportunity. While certainly media reports, opposition, and some individuals who are unhappy are prepared to say that all of these "challenges" — I'll call them — together cannot be met or that our lack of effort in meeting them is unacceptable, we must see these difficulties and challenges as an incredible opportunity.

We have the opportunity for new and improved partnerships that let us design a better mousetrap. We can design a system that can support patient-centred care. It can support balanced physician, nursing, and allied health professional practices and it can be one that uses technology and data to the benefit of us all.

Please know that if I really convey nothing else to Yukoners today, we believe that we cannot be successful in meeting these challenges without partnerships — without partnerships with physicians, the nursing profession, other allied health professionals or without a partnership with the YMA, with Yukoners, or with the Yukon Hospital Corporation — but we are well on our way to doing that.

We worked this summer with the Yukon Medical Association and it's important that this relationship be fostered and be a true partnership — particularly when we're talking about physician assistants, because that concept of introducing physician assistants or doing the work to consider how to enable them to be working here is not possible without the support of primary care physicians.

We met in a town-hall-designed event in August — Premier Pillai and I — with many of our primary care physicians here in the territory. One of the key themes during that event was about some physician billing and payments. The reason why I mention this today is because it is a critical piece of how physician assistants could work. We have formed a joint physician payment advisory committee with the Yukon Medical Association to work together to improve the claims and the payment system, as well as to respond to concerns that have been shared. Insured Health Services in the department has been working to improve the overall billing process and our goal is to ensure that all physicians and locum payments are made within 60 days of submission, specifically.

We have improved the payment system to automatically pay the 20 most frequently used bill codes, including the doctor of the day, which we have heard about this week and how it is being transformed into the hospitalist process.

Our claims team is working to ensure that eligible physician claims 60 days or older are being manually processed, so as soon as they can be, and in the billing system, we have updated the patient name rule to use the last name and first initial, which used to be a date-of-birth process.

We are working with a contractor to develop an auto-process to pay claims more quickly, and there is a fee liaison committee addressing more fee code changes and how those can be modernized and improved.

That physician payment advisory committee is working to improve the overall billing process. I just want to note that these are issues that we work with medical professionals on — in this case, physicians — but this is also time away and their volunteer time to help government and to help the Yukon Medical Association to improve systems for Yukoners. We know that improving the overall billing process will improve — individuals who want to come to work here, perhaps individuals who want to come and set up a practice here. We are currently working, as well, to support that with a multi-year digital health strategy. That also involves physician input.

We have an MOU with the Yukon Medical Association, and we are committed to working and reviewing that process, particularly with respect to the attachment and attraction of family physicians, which was put into that MOU last year. We are committed to family physicians and ensuring that the current and future success of primary care in the territory is absolutely key.

Family physicians and nurses in their clinics and their staff and allied health professionals there are truly the front line of medicine here in the territory and everywhere.

One of the first commitments that we made was to expedite an evaluation of the attraction program, and that work began in earnest with the Yukon Medical Association in October, and we have been working together to develop the evaluation framework, as we move forward, as quickly as we can.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about physician assistants and how they will improve, primarily, the services that are provided by individual primary care providers, often known as “family practice physicians” or sometimes “family doctors”. In order to do that, we talked with the YMA and have done a number of improvements, where we have worked to stabilize primary care.

Health and Social Services is working collaboratively with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and physicians to develop an operational plan for the hospitalist services, which we heard about again this week. To improve equity and transparency, we are also working with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to establish a tripartite policy for recruitment and selection of contract physicians. We are supporting the physician community by leasing space in the two largest primary care clinics in Whitehorse with the goal of integrating allied health professionals to improve patient care, system efficiency, and stability — so, inserting and supporting, in partnership, allied health professionals to assist and start to transform into those clinics and certainly, with the leadership and cooperation of the leaders of those clinics, into wraparound services for patients.

Work is underway with three consultant physicians to co-design the new primary care walk-in clinic. Local physician partners have provided evidence-based recommendations on the clinic model, including what kind of physician services are needed, the compensation, the staffing hours, the layout and the design, the emergency medical services, and policies and work standards that would be and should be required for such a clinic.

Health and Social Services officials have also met with physicians representing local clinics and specialty areas on the topic of digital health to identify priorities and next steps. A project manager within Health and Social Services has been working directly with the Yukon Medical Association to improve the Find a Primary Care Provider program and reduce the number of unattached patients.

We have also met several times with Yukon Medical Association members to identify specific feedback regarding the EMS inter-hospital transfers. An action plan has been identified to make improvements.

The health human resources crisis may be the most serious challenge facing any of us in our careers. The Yukon has struck a Health Human Resources Steering Committee. It was established in March 2023, and the strategy that they have developed will be released as soon as possible, certainly later this year. The strategy is the result of a collaborative — quote: “whole-of-Yukon approach” in participation, consultation, and collaboration with the Yukon Medical Association. The Health Human Resources Steering Committee was led by the Department of Health and Social Services — and the Yukon Hospital Corporation co-chaired — and members include representatives and decision-makers from organizations across the territory. We expect the strategy will address aspects of health human resources, including retention, recruitment, planning, learning, and innovation.

Also, in July, our government signed a letter of intent with the Government of Nova Scotia and are working collaboratively on health human resources issues. Our work with Nova Scotia is underway to develop a strategic collaboration plan that will outline the opportunities to address recruitment, retention, and reducing administrative burdens — something that Nova Scotia has been quite good at.

We are also in the process of developing Health and Wellness Yukon — a Yukon health authority. We are only one of two jurisdictions without a health authority here in Canada, the other being in Nunavut. We are building a solid foundation and creating a contemporary, high-performing health and social system that is integrated, collaborative, culturally safe, anti-racist, and puts Yukoners at the centre, as was a key recommendation of *Putting People First*, which was, of course, issued in the fall of 2020.

As we began down this road, our work was originally centred on information gathering of best practices and forming partnerships with Yukon First Nations for this purpose and people with lived experience for this purpose and health system partners and providers. *Putting People First* recognized that our current system has some flaws, and in particular, we must address racism and discrimination in the transformation of our health care system.

Our first priority in developing Health and Wellness Yukon has been to complete legislation necessary to establish the health authority. Establishing Health and Wellness Yukon will be a multi-year process, and we recognize the importance of working with our nurses, our physicians, and our allied health professionals in transforming our health care system.

Health and Social Services has worked collaboratively with the Yukon Medical Association to develop — also, again, supporting primary care providers — an EOI, or expression of interest, for a medical director. This position will provide medical leadership, a medical perspective, and clinical guidance in planning, development, operation, and evaluation of the delivery of clinical physician services across a variety of program areas as part of the health system transformation.

I look forward to having this individual provide guidance and assistance, medical perspective — sorry, clinical perspective as well — with respect to how we might have physician assistants and integrate physician assistants into our system.

Presumably, it won't surprise anyone that I have had my own personal experiences of late with the individuals who deliver extraordinary health care services to Yukoners. I have, dare I say, done my own little research project by virtue of necessity, and having spent some time recently with health care professionals — both in a personal capacity and separately, of course, in a professional capacity — I have spoken to many, many patients and many health care providers, and I am very pleased to say that, without exception, everyone, when speaking about their personal experiences, has conveyed appreciation for our professionals here in the territory and what great care they provide to Yukoners.

I also appreciate the interactions, and sometimes they are letters that we receive with suggestions for improvements to the system, and we always respond to them. We take them seriously and we very much appreciate someone's experience being conveyed — someone who takes the time to write and convey their experience. It's truly an incredible action and deserves respect and response. We work very hard to make sure that they have the best possible information and that we take into consideration how those recommended changes can improve our system.

I have the honour of being the Minister of the Department of Health and Social Services, and I know our team of officials and staff look forward to continuing to build on the work that I have described, further developing our partnerships and transforming our health care system, seeing it, frankly, in a positive way as opportunities to do better, to support patients and Yukoners who come in contact with the health care system.

When individuals come in contact with the health care system, they are often in a stressed situation. They are often very concerned about the unknown — What will be their experience? — and I know that we have professionals here who take that into account. I know that together we can take action to support the health and well-being of Yukoners, certainly now and in the future.

I will turn now to my comments with respect to physician assistants and the importance of the consideration that is being

brought here. Physician assistants in Canada have a professional organization. They are represented by the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants. They provide support through membership nationally for physician assistants. They also provide certification through the Physician Assistant Certification Council of Canada. They provide examinations to individuals who want to be certified by that council. They provide those examinations after an education process that has taken place at a recognized Canadian program.

Physician assistants are, as the member opposite said, really physician extenders, but I think that it is incredibly important for Yukoners to know that they are not independent practitioners. They cannot operate in Canada independent of a physician. They must have a relationship with a supervising physician — that's essential — which is also why I will speak briefly to nurse practitioners and the importance of the distinction between those two roles.

A physician assistant who is attached to a physician or under contract to work with a physician — the scope of their practice is defined by that individual physician.

In Canada, I think we've heard that there are approximately between 900 and 1,000 physician assistants currently working in Canada. The national organization indicates that they operate in Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario, and New Brunswick. There are also approximately 120 students who are currently being educated in Canada. It is a growing profession and one that we must recognize and consider for the impact that they can have on the care of Yukoners.

Because it's a relatively new role in our health care, they are currently undergoing an evaluation. They are looking at the impact that the physician assistants have on access to health care, on wait times, on the quality of care, and on patient and provider satisfaction.

If someone would like to be a physician assistant, which is one of the questions I had almost immediately — and, again, I note that I think this was mentioned earlier — it's a two-year program at a university. Individuals can enter that program after they have had at least two years of other university education. There are no specifics with respect to what that other education would be or should be. It's open for individuals to apply. It's not a university year program. It's actually two full calendar years, with the first 12 months focusing on clinical sciences and the second 12 months focusing on clinical training.

Also, I think it's very important to know that there are three places in Canada where you could be educated: McMaster University, which provides a bachelor of health sciences with a physician assistant title; the University of Toronto; the Northern Ontario School of Medicine presents and provides a BSc and a PA — which is a physician assistant — and the University of Manitoba has a master of physician assistant studies program.

I am not sure of the tuition at all of those places, but McMaster, as an example, is about \$12,500 a year for tuition, plus other expenses for lab requirements, books, et cetera, of about \$3,800 — so, over \$16,000 per year. It's important because it's at least four years of university — let's start there

— and it is expensive. It's not as expensive as some programs, but it is certainly not inexpensive, if I can say it that way. This is not a quick fix. I am not suggesting that the motion says that it is, but physician assistants require extensive education, as they should, and the goal of that education is to have adaptable, knowledgeable, competent health practitioners who are dedicated to life-long learning. Those are the students they are looking for; those are the students they produce after at least two years of undergraduate studies. Lots of people would have an undergraduate degree if they wanted to go there, or they might have a nursing degree, or they might have some other training that might permit them to be educated as a physician assistant.

Please be clear that I am not at all setting those up as barriers, but I think we need to be able to accurately understand what it is that we are pursuing here.

The health and professional regulatory requirements are different from province to province and territory. Ontario, by way of example, currently has no legislation in place that is specific to physician assistants. After the education requirements, one of the most important things is that all activities by a physician assistant are carried out as delegated under other pieces of legislation. I am using Ontario as the example again. Theirs is called *Regulated Health Professions Act*, but the determination and what this motion is asking for is legislation here in the territory.

There may well be some legislation here in the territory that could be amended and is ready and could regulate physician assistants, and that work has to be undertaken as part of whatever commitment is made with respect to this motion. I should say that we have already begun much of that work to determine how this could be integrated into the Yukon health care system.

It is important again for me to emphasize that all activities undertaken by a physician assistant are a direct delegation of the physician whom they work for. They are a contractual employee of that physician.

There is no decision yet — with Ontario as the example — if there will be a self-regulating college of physician assistants in Canada or if they will ultimately join a college of physicians and surgeons. Those operate differently in different places.

One of the, I think, primary questions for government in relation to this — contemplating physician assistants and adding them to our health care system — is how they are paid. They do not, as far as our research shows, get paid by fee for service, as a physician would. They are paid as a contractual employee of the physician. These are important considerations for us to have in conversation with the medical profession. There needs to be support from the medical profession, which we understand to exist here in the territory — or certainly support for further conversations to happen — but we have to make sure that individuals will ultimately have a role to play because they are supported by physicians here in the territory.

Nurse practitioners are being actively pursued here in the territory because they have a critical role in our health care system. Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with additional education and additional experience. Most registered

nursing programs are four years and then additional education and experience on top of that allows someone to be certified as a nurse practitioner.

The reason I note that nurse practitioners are being pursued here and are such an important aspect is because the extra education and the regulation of nurse practitioners allows them to autonomously diagnose and treat illnesses. They can order and interpret tests; they can prescribe medications and perform medical procedures; they focus on and treat the whole person — something that we are pursuing here in our work to improve Yukon's health care system.

Registered nurses take extended classes to be licensed and certified as nurse practitioners. They are registered nurses with a post-baccalaureate education and clinical experience. Nurse practitioners have the legal authority, including here in the territory, to independently perform a number of authorized acts beyond those that registered nurses are permitted to perform — and I will add or physician assistants — for example, ordering and interpreting diagnostic tests and communicating diagnoses, prescribing pharmaceuticals, and performing specific procedures. Nurse practitioners are required to practise within their legislated scope of practice — that is done here in the territory as well as in other places. Nurse practitioners work collaboratively with many other health professionals, and they consult with physicians, as required by the needs of their patients.

The reason that I am taking the time to draw this distinction is that a nurse practitioner can quite independently provide medical service and is a primary care provider here in the territory at clinics or in a clinic setting in some specialized clinic settings, like the Sexual Health Clinic, and — perhaps most importantly for communities — can do that work in a Yukon community and be a primary health care provider. Unfortunately, based on the way in which physician assistants are currently operating in Canada, that would not be a role that a physician assistant could take on. That said, I am not at all saying that there isn't a role for physician assistants — there certainly is — but our pursuit of nurse practitioners to provide additional primary health care to Yukoners in different settings and in communities is a goal.

Nurse practitioners are independent practitioners working within their legislated scope. In some cases, nurse practitioners and physician assistants may undertake similar types of clinical activity, but the physician assistant is always working in a delegated and supervised role with a physician. Nurse practitioners work to address the needs of relating a person's physical and mental health. They gather medical histories and focus on how an illness is affecting a person's life and family. They offer ways for a person to lead a healthy life and they teach individuals how to manage chronic illnesses. Nurse practitioners are also educators and researchers who can be consulted by other health care team members.

I think the focus here that I really want to emphasize is the idea that ultimately, as we progress and evolve the Yukon's health care system, there is a role for nurse practitioners, there is an independent role for physician assistants, and there are roles for social workers, for behavioural assistants, and for

individuals who work with the whole person and help provide care to individuals. Take it back to *Putting People First* — and the term that is used there is a “polyclinic” — full wraparound services for the purpose of managing a person’s whole life/health issues.

Nurse practitioners work in a variety of health care settings — community care, as I have noted, in community clinics, in health care centres, in physicians’ offices, and sometimes in patients’ homes. There are probably not too many of us here old enough to remember house calls — certainly not you, Mr. Speaker — but nurse practitioners can perform such things. We know that in communities with elders, seniors, or individuals who are perhaps homebound by their medical condition, this would be a welcome service in the territory. They work in a variety of other settings such as long-term care. They work in hospitals, outpatient clinics, emergency rooms, and other patient areas. They also work — and we have some here in the territory now working in nurse practitioner-led clinics, so they can be the primary health care provider.

They provide a wide range of direct care services to people at every stage of life. In addition to treating illnesses, they can, as I said, provide wraparound services or teach individuals and their families about healthy living. They bring together health care in a way that is seen as a bright future for health care in Canada and in other places in the world. They provide a wide range of direct care services to people. They don’t necessarily replace other health care professionals. NPs work and are trained to work in a space where wraparound services are presented and experienced by a patient and by a team.

They are part of a collaborative team that includes, ideally, registered nurses, doctors, social workers, and others. While seeing a nurse practitioner, you could still see your family doctor or other health care provider at a clinic, for instance. Many of the benefits of nurse practitioners, in comparison with physician assistants, which have many, many benefits themselves — we have heard about them from the member opposite. But nurse practitioners and physician assistants bring value to Canadians and their health care system.

Studies about these benefits and experiences inform us that nurse practitioners involve patients in decisions about their care. They improve access to primary health care. They reduce pressures on the health care system and they are valued and trusted by patients. They provide high-quality management of chronic illnesses and other emergency-type situations.

The first nurse practitioners appeared in Canada in the 1960s. Early on, nurse practitioners provided care in rural and remote areas. So, this is not a new concept — the idea that nurse practitioners can provide primary care in rural and remote areas, which is what many of the current challenges here in the territory involve.

By the 1970s, there was interest in the nurse practitioners’ role and it increased with more education programs. Today, nurse practitioners are an important part of the health care system here in Canada.

Now, physician assistants are also an opportunity for Yukoners and the Yukon health care system to be adjusted.

I will turn my last comments to what is being sought by this motion, which is new legislation — or introduced legislation, I believe it says. On a quick review, this would be or could be a significant legislative project. The *Medical Profession Act*, *Health Care Insurance Plan Act*, the *Medical Profession Act Regulations*, and the *Medical Profession Registration and Fees Regulation* would quite likely all need to be amended or to have supplementation.

We assume that the relevant regulating bodies, health care service-providing businesses, and other stakeholders would be engaged, of course, in that policy development for legislation, be it amendments to the current legislation or new legislation. It is also critical that we work in partnership to determine how the possible project could be proceeded with in relation to the *Health Professions Act* amendments, of course, which are a related regulation, and it currently has a target of being done a few years out yet. So, hopefully, in following — there will be sufficient consultation and sufficient consideration by the movers of this motion, that this is not a stand-alone project as far as drafting legislation or perhaps amendments to current legislation and that a number of other related pieces of legislation — in particular, the contractual pieces, how individual health care service businesses, like doctors’ offices, would be involved and the details with respect to how that might come to be.

Health and Social Services and Community Services would need to work together to determine what sort of accreditation would be relied on for physician assistants, whether it would be the one I mentioned earlier, done by the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants and the examination process that they undergo, which is post-education, or whether some other possible accreditation would be considered.

Health and Social Services and Community Services would need to determine whether and how they could adjust or replicate regulations that accommodate a new practice designation, because physician assistants would be a new practice designation.

So, just some of the issues that could arise. Of course, we would need to work with the Yukon Medical Council. I understand that they are currently drafting a letter of support for the concept of regulating physician assistants, which is terrific news — not something that I am surprised at, because I have had this conversation, as have our officials at Health and Social Services, with the Yukon Medical Association. I know that they recently spoke to members regarding the introduction of physician assistants to the territory, and it was supported by some individuals and lots queries and perhaps not so much support but recognition by all of the members who were spoken to that we are on this journey of transformation together and that every possible option for increasing Yukoners’ access to patient-centred care that is trauma-informed and non-biased has to be pursued.

As I’ve noted, physician assistants are health care professionals who work in collaboration with physicians and other health care providers to deliver patient care. This is critical. Physician assistants work under the supervision of a

licensed physician but possess the autonomy to perform a wide range of clinical tasks and procedures, many as I have compared them to nurse practitioners. The scope of practice for physician assistants varies across Canada, but typically, they also conduct patient assessments, order and interpret tests and investigations, formulate treatment plans and prescribe medications, assist in surgical procedures, and order and perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. There is a role for both nurse practitioners and physician assistants. I certainly don't want to be heard to be saying that this is not the case. There are many situations in which a physician assistant would be the appropriate person to expand practice and expand service to Yukon patients and others where a nurse practitioner would be that person.

As part of our work with the health human resource strategy, we are looking at a number of options to ensure that our health care workforce is properly resourced and able to provide the highest quality of care for all Yukoners. I certainly look forward to that work continuing with our health system partners, such as the Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Association, and front-line nurses, doctors, and allied health professionals, because they are absolutely critical in determining how we proceed with this work.

We are truly in partnership in trying to develop and respond to Yukoners' needs. It is absolutely critical that we do this in partnership, because then it will be a transformed system — I spoke earlier about why those transformations are required — a system that will be improved, a system that will be responsive to the needs of patients, and a system that will be one that responds to the greatest challenges facing Canada and the Yukon's health care system today.

We are open to innovative solutions. The Health Human Resources Steering Committee has spoken extensively among themselves and to me about innovative solutions, about thinking big, and about determining how each piece of the health care puzzle can come together for Yukoners to have improved care. There are certainly a number of ways in which physician assistants can be used and integrated into Yukon's health care system, and we have begun the engagement with our health care system partners on this topic, and as I have said, we will continue to do that.

We are exploring the work to introduce changes to licensing classes and membership classes for nurse practitioners and to allow nurse practitioners to practise in full scope. That legislation — perhaps despite some of the questions earlier today — is, in fact, before this Legislature during this Sitting.

We will also learn from the other provinces in Canada on how they have integrated physician assistants into their public health care system. We are looking forward to the continuation of that work. I can also indicate that I certainly support the exploration, the integration of physician assistants into our system. As I have said many times, there are complex problems — and I have set this one out to be probably the most complex problem — that perhaps will be faced by any of us during a political career or even a personal, community approach. This

is the most complex of problems, and all complex problems require many solutions, many individual pieces of a puzzle to come together so that Yukoners will have the very best health care that they deserve, that we experience to a great extent already, but there is always room for improvement. And providing front-line primary care is a place that we concentrate on for providing improvement, and adding physician assistants, although probably not through immediate legislation to do so but exploring the options, exploring the legislation we have already — is there already a part of one of those pieces of legislation that permits us to expand to permit physician assistants?

Is there a regulation that could be used to do that? Is there a policy change that could be used to do that, or are we going to need stand-alone separate legislation? I don't anticipate that, but as you have heard, there are several pieces of legislation that must be addressed. All of that work, I think, is contemplated by this motion, but I urge the members opposite to fully understand the scope of that work and how that work can be done and also understand that we not only support that work being done but have begun it already.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk so broadly and in such support of our current health care professionals — how they are providing service to Yukoners, how they wish to continue to provide that kind of service, which is truly second to none. We are extremely lucky and fortunate here in the territory to have the health care providers that we do and to have them come to the table, as they do, for us to all join forces and determine how we can bring improvements to that system on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I will be fairly brief in speaking to this motion here today. We do support the concept of this motion. The one concern that wasn't specifically addressed in the motion wording itself is the importance of consulting with other health care practitioners, including the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, as well as other health care professionals. That may have been the intent of the member who introduced it, but we feel that it should be explicitly noted, because issues around scope of practice and who does what within a health care setting are ones that have at times been contentious, and they are certainly important to get the details of right.

Again, we do support the intent of this motion. I will be moving an amendment that I genuinely hope will be considered or well-received by the member who moved it.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Cathers: I move:

THAT Motion No. 823 be amended by deleting the word "introduce" and replacing it with the words "consult with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and health professionals about the concept of introducing".

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Lake Laberge:

THAT Motion No. 823 be amended by deleting the word “introduce” and replacing it with the words “consult with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and health professionals about the concept of introducing”.

Mr. Cathers: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief in speaking to it at this point.

Again, the intention of this amendment was to specifically acknowledge that there should be consultation with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and other health professionals about this proposal. I gather, from conversations off mic, that there may be some concern about the wording of “concept”. What I was trying to do was simply note that there are different paths in approaching this, whether government would do it through a legislative change or a regulatory change, and I was trying not to be limiting in the language.

The intention of this is just simply to reflect the importance of consulting with those health professions before any changes are made regarding this area.

Ms. White: I have no issue with the language around being more specific about the consultations. I do, however — I do not like the word “concept” — about the concept of introducing. As it stands, I wouldn’t support the motion. I may look to amend the proposed amendment, but as it stands, I won’t support it.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On the amendment, I think it’s important to note that the Minister of Health and Social Services had already spoken to the fact that there was going to be significant consultation in earlier comments. I would have to go back and look to Hansard, but I think both the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association were named in that process.

When we look to build new policy, if it’s an amendment to legislation or it’s new legislation, we would always be undertaking that significant consultation that would occur, especially with the key health care professionals who deliver these services.

I do appreciate the comments from the member opposite around scope of practice. I think that, in the initial conversations concerning the introduction of this capacity, there is a lot of concern about what it will mean. We have seen in other parts of the country where there has been the ability to support nurse practitioners in private clinics but that there have been concerns, in some cases, by other medical professionals. We know that, over the last couple of days, there has been significant conversation around that topic and how we could maximize services for all Yukoners, or all Canadians, but also understanding and supporting the health professionals in those specific jurisdictions and roles and knowing what that is.

I had the unique opportunity to grow up in an environment where one parent was the chief of staff as a doctor and the other one was the president of the nurses union. There were lots of things they agreed on and lots of things they certainly did not agree on — especially when it came to scope of practice and supporting that particular work. I think we are going to have to have a deeper understanding of what this is going to mean when it does come to the Yukon Medical Association. The sense that I have to date, in conversations I have undertaken, as well as the Minister of Health and Social Services, is that there has been a good conversation to date with the Minister of Health and Social Services. I know there is going to be a further conversation.

We talked in the summer with Nova Scotia about some of their aspirations when it comes to ensuring that there are physician assistants inside their practice. One of the things we have come to know as well — if you look at the expectation and the vision from province to province at this particular time, what you will see is that the number of actual post-secondary seats that are available to train folks in this field do not equate to the vision that provinces have and the capacity they want to see deployed. I could be off, and I think the Minister of Health and Social Services spoke about this. We are talking about under 100 seats in the country. When you are deploying new programs — and it was talked about by the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin — building up those programs, having them in place, and then being able to have folks trained, even if it is a two-year program after your initial undergrad — it’s still going to take a while to be able to get the number of people in place that we want to see in place across the country.

It is going to be important to have those discussions, and as well, as we talked about a little bit today in Question Period, it is also — when you take into consideration what the interface is going to be like or what it has been like in the country when we talk about agency nurses — that was a very significant topic. On Monday this week, we had a number of provinces, and now Québec is taking some very strong actions when it comes to agency nurses, really trying to eliminate the use, as I understood it, of agency nurses. What we are seeing in places like Atlantic Canada, where a nurse in one province can drive an hour and then they are under an agency nurse contract — and, of course, what we have seen is that they have been necessary to meet the needs across this country, but also what we are seeing is, as we all become avid users of agency nurses, there is a challenge with that.

We want to make sure — and the Minister of Health and Social Services and I are focused on making sure that we have as many full-time Yukon nurses in place doing this good work. The same would be in the move toward physician assistants, after a consultation with the Yukon Medical Association, Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and understanding the scope of practice.

I don’t know if there is going to be a move toward agency physician assistants or if there is going to be a different process. I think that is something, as well, that we are going to have to continue to keep an eye on. I think that it will be very important to understand how the role will take place when we talk about

the health authority and how we meet the goals of the *Putting People First* plan, which really talks about some key services also being available in our hubs throughout the Yukon and having an opportunity for potentially, in some cases, physician assistants, if that is the route we go and it is supported by our health professionals — also working, potentially, alongside others in our community.

Can we do that — which is going to be important if we have nurse practitioners in those hubs doing some of the leading work, and do we still meet the criteria of the mentorship and some of that extra work? I think that our early understanding would be that we may not, but again, that is going to be a deeper conversation with the Yukon Registered Nurses Association on this topic.

I did touch on it earlier and I will again. Some of the early work — there have been some folks really, really driving the fact across the country. There have been a couple of individuals — MPs — who have been focused on this work and have been champions of it. MP Battiste from Nova Scotia has been one of the loud voices in Canada on this, meeting with provinces and territories and talking about it.

I have had an opportunity to sit down and talk about what the mindset is and what the supports can be in this country and federally on this subject. I think that it is going to be: How do we build up the opportunity in seats, and how do we make sure that we don't go down the road that we did the last time, which was a patchwork of legislation and validation of credential, as well as being in this position where you can work in one province but you can't work in the other one? I think that, on this, we have a real opportunity from coast to coast to coast to put in a system that is recognized when it comes to what meets the criteria, what the payment model is, what the scope of practice is, and again, how that interfaces with each and every unique health care system that is being deployed across the country.

In the early work, folks will know that we have a reciprocal agreement when it comes to post-secondary in the Yukon with Alaska. There have been lots of great Yukon athletes who go to Alaska, and they play hockey, they ski, and they do a number of different things. I think that there is a real opportunity for us, as well, to note that we should be getting more Alaskans to come to attend Yukon University. But digging into that, one of the things that came to mind was that we really have to look at if there are physician assistant programs in Alaska, and would the reciprocal agreements that we have in place give us an upper hand? Because if you have all of these provinces competing for a few spots for physician assistants, are we going to be in a favourable position where Yukoners — maybe they have gone through and done a BSc in nursing; maybe they have done a BSc in an environmental field. Whatever it might be, as long as they have the post-secondary, they will meet that requirement to go on and do the extra two years in Alaska, paying a fee that is really significantly lower than a Canadian going into another US school where there is no reciprocal agreement.

That was some of the early work that we did. When we have been back and forth about areas of cooperation with Alaska, of course, we are always going to be talking about

Shakwak and other areas to work on, but one of the newest ones we brought up is: Can we work with you around these positions?

It has been a school in the southern US that is delivering a physician assistant program in Anchorage, and that is where, essentially, we have been trying to have a discussion with them and say: Look, is there a possibility for a seat?

Look, we are working right now on renewing the work that has been done years before with Alaska. We think it is important to codify some of those commitments and priorities, and this is one that we have looked to have in that agreement. It is important to note that we have to be identifying where we can recruit and where we can actually have Yukoners get this expertise.

You know, I think that the member opposite had touched on that there might be individuals now who are in the Yukon and have gone through that training and who want to use their skills here and to do that work here. I think that has been part of the reason that — it has been one of the things that has been a catalyst for the discussion today.

You know, again, I want to thank the member opposite, because it is extremely important that we are all speaking to Yukon registered nurses, as well as the Yukon Medical Association, and saying that we highly respect what you do. You know, we have great respect for the hours and sacrifices that all of these folks make, and what we are really looking at here is trying to augment and support their work — to make their work as efficient as possible, to reduce some of their tasks and undertaking that they do. You know, when you think about what is the best use of their time, whether it's the reduction of red tape, which we are really focused on now with the work with Nova Scotia — I mean, this week, I didn't have an opportunity, because I was in Halifax on this topic — but, you know, one of the individuals who worked with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business was here for the Yukon Medical Association's annual AGM with a focus on looking at some — deploying some of the same strategies on red tape reduction here. I know that further work is going to be done —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, the Minister of Health and Social Services had a good discussion.

There is going to be further work now where we think it is important to have Health and Social Services team members and members of The Yukon Medical Association all together in a discussion in Nova Scotia, looking at exactly what is happening there.

I think we all should be supporting this. I think the concept part, yes, is difficult for us; it is not just that. The keywords — as the Health and Social Services minister said, it was really important for us to touch on — and did — the fact that, of course, there would be a deep conversation. I think there is a bit of redundancy here with this, really, after — it has been noted and is in Hansard today that the Minister of Health and Social Services committed to doing all of those things, and now we are coming back again to duplicate that language, as well as use that word “concept”, which probably causes some discomfort for some in the House today.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to be very long on the discussion on this amendment this afternoon, but I did want to weigh in a little bit. I think it's important to note that, this afternoon, again — and it has happened several times this session in this House — we're all in agreement, and despite the occasional political scrimmage that we may see in this Chamber, when it comes to the big issues in this Legislative Assembly this session, we are often in agreement, and the votes that my good colleague will no doubt tally at some point will back that up. Health human resources present one of the greatest challenges facing Canada and the Yukon's health care system today, and our government is open to innovative solutions. We have been, as the Minister of Health and Social Services noted earlier, working on this issue of physician assistants in addition to many, many other things. But this is the issue of the day, and the Member for Lake Laberge has just asked for an amendment to the motion that is before us today to follow more process, to actually do a little bit more consultation, and I can't see how anybody can disagree with that, given that we are trying to improve health care and are working with our partners.

We have gone into quite a bit of detail about what a physician assistant is. The scope of practice varies across Canada, but typically, they conduct patient assessments, order and interpret investigations, formulate treatment plans, prescribe medications, assist in surgical procedures, and order and perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. Their scope of practice is similar to, in that case, but not identical to those of a nurse practitioner. There are a lot of perspectives regarding the use and integration of physician assistants in the Yukon health care system, and further engagement with our health care system partners on this profession is required, which is why I think that the Member for Lake Laberge's motion is suitable this afternoon.

We are also working with physicians on a number of things to address — priorities to enable our system to operate more seamlessly — and we also know that there are currently no physician assistants practising in the Yukon. At present, they are not regulated to do so. There may be some people trained as physician assistants, but they are certainly not working within our health care system because they're not regulated to do so.

We will have more to say on this in the future, but at the moment, I want to just say thanks very much for the amendment. We look forward to further discussions from members opposite.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to propose a subamendment to the amendment to Motion No. 823.

Subamendment proposed

MLA Tredger: I move:

THAT the amendment to Motion No. 823 be amended by deleting the phrase “about the concept of introducing” and replacing it with the phrase “and introduce”.

Speaker: The subamendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse Centre:

THAT the amendment to Motion No. 823 be amended by deleting the phrase “about the concept of introducing” and replacing it with the phrase “and introduce”.

MLA Tredger: I will be quite brief on this. I would just note that we appreciate the amendment about consultation, which is really important, and we have to do this as partners with the people who are the experts in the field, but we are also in a really difficult situation where there are thousands of people waiting for a family doctor or a health care provider of any kind. We need to move boldly on this. We are sticking with the wording around introducing this legislation rather than modifying it to being about the concept of introducing — we need to take action.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the subamendment?

Subamendment to Motion No. 823 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment as amended?

Amendment, as amended, to Motion No. 823 agreed to

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion as amended?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, this House has turned its attention to the medical profession again. Our colleagues across the way have joined us in contemplating physician assistants and I welcome them to this show. I thank them for this motion, which allows us to speak about some of the tremendous work we are doing on this file. A physician assistant — sometimes called a “medical assistant” — does many things, but in many cases does much of an office's administrative heavy lifting — sets appointments, inputs data for health records, formats reports, and helps patients fill out forms. This depends on the size of the physicians' office, of course, and how it operates.

To dive into this a little further, a physician assistant's scope of practice varies across Canada, but typically, they conduct patient assessments, order and interpret investigations, formulate treatment plans, prescribe medications, assist in surgical procedures, and order and perform diagnostic and therapeutic procedures.

Their scope of practice is similar to but not identical to those of a nurse practitioner. They need to know the business and the health care environment and have more than a passing knowledge of medicine. This is, in the long history of medicine, a relatively new addition to medicine — less so for other professions. Talk to any lawyer, CEO, minister, or any role with a lot of administrative work about the value of their assistants or advisors and you will soon learn how irreplaceable they are to the role. They make the systems that they touch more efficient and effective.

This is a relatively new refinement of the Canadian health care field. It is something that several jurisdictions are beginning to explore in more depth. We are among them. According to my investigation, there are no physician assistants practising in the territory and they are not regulated to do so yet. The Department of Health and Social Services is taking steps to mitigate the current resource strains through measures such as integration and expansion of nurse practitioners and their scope, as well as reducing operational burdens for physicians, but it is new — something we started exploring in earnest over the last several months. It is something that my good colleague, my friend, the Minister of Health and Social Services has just spoken about in the context of this incredible work she is doing to improve the Yukon's health care system. This is one little piece of a much, much broader initiative that will profoundly change the way we receive medical help here in the territory.

There are 76 recommendations in the *Putting People First* report. One of those is the creation of a health authority to deliver an integrated approach to health and wellness. It allows better coordination among organizations and sectors, using data and the citizenry's lived experience, in the best interest of Yukoners. So far, almost 20 percent of the recommendations have been fully implemented; another 50 percent are underway.

Our goal is to improve the health and well-being of all Yukoners and we are committed to *Putting People First* and transforming our health care system for the better. Health and Social Services is central to this care model.

Community Services is responsible for making sure that we make the Yukon a good place for medical professionals of all stripes to practise. It may seem simple to legitimize physician assistants in the Yukon, but it is one small component in a much larger machine that is being fundamentally retooled and we don't want to delay those larger changes any more than necessary.

For example, work is underway to revise the *Health Professions Act* and to improve how we regulate health care service professionals. This may be where physician assistants fit, or this profession may have to be slipped into some other piece of legislation in the Yukon.

So, what do we have to do? We are currently doing the hard work on all of these matters within Community Services. This multi-year project to do the *Health Professions Act* will ensure a high standard of regulation that responds to Yukoners' unique needs and context. We are modernizing the regulation of health professions in keeping with initiatives across Canada. This work will make Yukon an even more attractive place for health professionals to work and will allow us to provide Yukoners with access to new and innovative health care. Regulation of these professionals helps to protect Yukoners to make sure that those working here, serving them, are competent and safe to practise, as well as providing clear processes for dealing with complaints and disciplinary issues.

One priority that we have already broken out of the larger effort is psychologists. We are developing a psychologist regulation in the Yukon with an aim of delivery in the spring of 2024. We know that this is important to support Yukoners'

access to safe mental and behavioural health services. This is important work and there is a lot to it.

The Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch manages and supports registrants for 12 health professions and an additional 11 non-health professionals, totalling approximately 5,700 registrants a year. Only four of the 12 health professions are regulated under the *Health Professions Act*, while the other have stand-alone acts. The number of registrants varies. For example, denturists, optometrists, chiropractors, and midwives each have less than 10 registrants requiring the same support and resources as a larger profession like licensed practical nurses, which has 225 registrants in the Yukon.

I mention this because moving professionals to the health profession framework is expected to bring more consistency to licensing and related processes, improving services to professionals and bringing efficiencies to the regulator — that would be the Yukon government.

The policy branch and the Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch worked with consultants to establish the gaps in the current legislation for regulated health professionals. The report was finalized in the summer of 2022. Policy and the Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs branch are beginning the in-depth policy work in determining the appropriate engagement plans to determine options for addressing the gaps and improving the regulation of health professions in the Yukon. As I've said, this work is important and is well underway.

Psychologists are an outlier in the *Health Professions Act* work and we prioritized them for a reason. Yukon has declared a substance use health emergency highlighting the importance that Yukoners have access to quality mental health services. We are in the process of developing regulations for psychologists. In the meantime, the department has rolled out a public awareness webpage on how to select a psychologist. It includes a voluntary list of psychologists practising in the Yukon, indicating who holds a valid licence in other Canadian jurisdictions.

I mention all this because you get the point that regulating even a profession like psychologists has taken a lot of time and work, both with the profession and with the department and with Justice and Health and Social Services all collaborating. Now we're asking for another profession to be regulated in the territory. It takes a lot of work to do that — to integrate these folks into our system. That is why, in the longer term, Community Services is leading a comprehensive review of the *Health Professions Act* to support enhanced standards and safety of health care for Yukoners with an aim to improve the overall efficiencies for the regulatory system.

We want to work within the program that we have going. Any other distractions, like putting in one-off professional regulatory approvals, are just going to delay the overall whole, which is the *Health Professions Act*, and it is well underway.

The psychologist regulation, for example, is expected to be completed in 2024. After those regulations are drafted, they will need to go through a line-by-line review. Policy and Professional Licensing and Regulatory Affairs are working

with local psychologists and other psychologist regulators to develop the regulation in a shorter timeline. Work is also underway on a privacy impact assessment. Amendments and more complex considerations will be included in a larger *Health Professions Act* overhaul. This may be where physician assistants will fit or not. That work will have to be done with Community Services, Health and Social Services, and Justice.

The bottom line is that improving the way in which health professions are regulated under the *Health Professions Act* is a multi-year project. Regulation of health professionals helps Yukoners receive services by competent professionals who practise according to the high standards and ethics of their profession. It also provides Yukoners with clear means and processes for dealing with complaints and disciplinary issues.

We are working to improve the health care system. We want to make sure, for example, that there are nurses, which is why we just brought in legislation to help speed the recruitment of nurses in this House. They are critical to the health care system. Our existing regulations impeded the recruitment of nurses, so we're now taking steps to improve that. Again, the point is that we have to be careful when doing these changes so that we don't actually step on our own feet. That is why the amendment proposed by the Member for Lake Laberge was important — so we work with our partners. And I have another amendment that I would like to propose that will further help us with the legislation and the drafting of this to make sure that physician assistants are integrated into our health model.

Amendment proposed to motion, as amended

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move:

THAT Motion No. 823 as amended be further amended by deleting the words “introduce legislation that would allow” and substituting for them the following: “make the necessary changes to enable”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Whitehorse West:

THAT Motion No. 823 as amended be further amended by deleting the words “introduce legislation that would allow” and substituting for them the following: “make the necessary changes to enable”.

The motion as amended would then read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to consult with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, and health professionals and make the necessary changes to enable physicians' assistants to practice in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I know that our health system in Canada is under pressure and those pressures are echoed here in the Yukon. Post-pandemic, things are a struggle; we have heard that this afternoon. I know that numerous letters have been sent to different branches of our government advocating for the allowance of physician assistants to practise here.

As I have said, this is something we are assessing and have been for the last several months. We are talking to the Yukon

Medical Council, the Yukon Medical Association, and other organizations about this. The departments of Health and Social Services, Community Services, and Justice will also work together to analyze this proposition with an eye to all the other legislative work that this small team has on its plate.

This is a live conversation, and I don't think it would be appropriate for us to commit to something right now on the floor of this House before it's fully analyzed by our immensely talented professional civil servants — that is, I don't know where it fits in the context of our legal framework, policies, or regulations. We are going to do that hard work. We want to give civil servants the time to work through this proposition, consult with those in the medical system who will be most affected by this, and fit it into the ongoing work that's happening in Community Services to improve our *Health Professions Act*.

Once again, we are supportive of exploring the use of these professionals to further enhance Yukon's health services, and we are going to explore it in a responsible fashion in tandem with our health partners. It's important that we get this right. That may be within the *Health Professions Act*, which the folks at Community Services are currently working on. It may be some other piece of legislation like the *Medical Professions Act*, but we have to work smart with an eye to how best we can serve Yukoners and build a better health care system as a whole.

It's going to take a little bit of work, but I am sure that the results will be better assimilated by all. This is an important amendment, and I thank you for your time this afternoon.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for this amendment.

In my speech, I talked about the importance of changing the legislation to ensure that the scope of practice of physician assistants is clearly defined and to ensure that the common entry-to-practice requirements are met. I understand that the minister wants the motion to have broader language to leave flexibility for this government to make necessary changes that may go beyond legislation.

I agree with the principle of the amendment, especially if the government can work on temporary regulations or policies to allow physician assistants while waiting for more legislative changes. I trust that public servants will be working hard to find the best way to make these changes happen as quickly and as efficiently as possible.

The Minister of Health and Social Services did mention that physician assistants are paid through the physicians they work under.

This is not always the case. While salary is the most common approach to compensation, we see a variety of payment models across Canada when it comes to physician assistants. In Alberta, PAs are paid through the Ministry of Health by salary; in Manitoba, they are contractors; and in Ontario, they use fee for service. There has also been a lot of federal grant funding for physician assistants to work in northern Manitoba through Healthcare Excellence Canada. The reason that I wanted to specify this is that we can see, with these examples, that physician assistants can be successfully

integrated into existing health care systems in many different ways and following different models.

I am hopeful that this government will work toward finding the best way to make this happen here in the territory, as well as by necessary changes to policies, regulation, and legislation. Mahsi'.

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the amendment? *Amendment to Motion No. 823, as amended, agreed to*

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion as amended?

If the member now speaks, she will close the debate.

Does any other member wish to be heard?

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 823, as amended, agreed to

Motion No. 775

Clerk: Motion No. 775, standing in the name of Ms. McLeod.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Member for Watson Lake:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to ensure the financial and long-term sustainability of Yukon communities by amending the comprehensive municipal grant in response to the analysis and report conducted by the Association of Yukon Communities in July 2023.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Motion No. 775, urging the Government of Yukon to ensure the financial and long-term sustainability of Yukon communities by amending the comprehensive municipal grant.

I would like to begin by thanking the executive and board of directors at the Association of Yukon Communities for their continued work to achieve strong and effective local government and provide a united approach to our Yukon community ambitions. I would also like to thank the government staff and municipal staff who have taken part in various committees and community meetings. All of their input is appreciated.

The comprehensive municipal grant is unconditional block funding provided to municipalities by the Yukon government. This funding was created in 1991 and is renewed every five years. We understand that the CMG is intended to supplement municipal finances and is not intended to fully fund the operations. With the latest third-party review and analysis of CMG funding completed in July 2023, it is clear that changes need to be made before the next renewal. For example, a quote from this review states, "The need to review and adjust the grant every 5 years is more of a catch up than keep up mentality of the reality faced to deliver services to 90% of Yukon residents."

The CMG is intended to be a predictable and adequate funding resource to help municipalities plan effectively to meet the needs of residents, and this funding should have the ability to grow and change. This July 2023 report highlighted several areas of municipal costs that have increased significantly. These areas are identified as: peripheral users, who are people living outside of the municipal boundaries but using municipal resources; increasing government relations; core program service provision; additional service provision; and impact from climate change.

The president of AYC confirmed community financial struggles in a recent interview with CBC Yukon by stating — quote: "All of these impacts are hitting municipal governments which have a very small tax base..." The CMG is calculated per municipality using a formula that considers population, infrastructure, number of buildings, and inflation.

Now, over the past decade, the CMG grew by 17.5 percent, which was less than the inflation growth of 20.8 percent.

Earlier this year, the Minister of Community Services stated that — and I quote: "This funding is the cornerstone of our financial support for healthy, resilient and sustainable Yukon..." communities.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Minister of Community Services still feels this way and will respect the recommendations from AYC and the third-party report to amend the comprehensive municipal grant.

There are many more important recommendations in the report that I did not mention with respect to the time of this House, but I urge all members to vote in favour to amend the comprehensive municipal grant to assist our Yukon communities. This motion is about listening to the requests and recommendations from our communities to ensure that the

comprehensive municipal grant is financially sufficient now and provides long-term sustainability.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, good afternoon again. This afternoon, the Official Opposition is proposing that we amend the comprehensive municipal grant based on a report commissioned by the Association of Yukon Communities. I want to be very clear in my expression of appreciation to the work of the consultant hired by the Association of Yukon Communities, which is feeding into our review of the comprehensive municipal grant. That review has been going on now since about 2020.

As I begin, it's important that people understand a little bit more about the comprehensive municipal grant. This grant provides core funding support to municipalities and is based on the principles of adequacy, certainty, equity, transparency, and accountability.

The grant formula accounts for inflation. Calculations use data from two years prior, so it can take some time for inflation to be captured by the formula, but grant funding to municipalities has continued to increase annually under the current formula, which was put into place by my colleague the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, and it has continued to increase annually under that formula that was put in place.

Now, this stands in stark contrast to the way it was before, where it was static. We built in escalators, and so those escalators have been going, and just this year, they resulted in a sizable increase to the monies received by municipalities across the Yukon. Now, the Government of Yukon and I recognize the need for healthy, thriving communities — the important role that municipalities play in delivering essential services to Yukoners. The territory's eight municipalities are expected to receive a 10.3-percent increase in the comprehensive municipal grant funding — a total of \$24.5 million in 2024-25, and this funding will be transferred to the municipalities on April 1, 2024, which is common.

As I said, this grant is a grant. It's money that municipalities can use however they want, and it's not the only money that municipalities get, but it's a stipend that helps them operate the municipal governments and serve the citizens they represent, and it reflects the Government of Yukon's commitment to supporting local governance and sustainable communities. It's how the Yukon government directly funds municipal governments. As I have said, this core funding supplements municipal resources and pays for vital municipal services, like the provision of fresh drinking water, the collection of solid waste and recycling, recreational programming, and other services, as required by the *Municipal Act* and other legislation.

There are no conditions on this funding. It helps municipal governments balance budgets and reduce the burden on local taxpayers. As I mentioned just a few moments ago, the comprehensive municipal grant was enhanced in 2018 to offset the costs of operating and maintaining infrastructure and increasing regulatory requirements, which have resulted in increased grant amounts in the municipality ever since. With this money, they can fund their priorities. It's a cornerstone of

our financial support for healthy, resilient, sustainable communities, and we are working with the Association of Yukon Communities to ensure that it remains so for years to come. As the member opposite said, the comprehensive municipal grant was established in 1991 as unconditional block funding to municipalities.

If my memory serves, that was a New Democratic government that established that block funding, which was progressive at the time. I think it has served the territory well.

In 2017 and 2018, a review of the comprehensive municipal grant by the Government of Yukon and the Association of Yukon Communities reinforced key aspects of the grant, including fairness, transparency, and predictability, and led to an annual increase in grant funding. One of the key changes back then was the \$50,000 previously identified as a supplementary grant. This is now a permanent feature of the grant to directly address compliance with regulatory requirements. The grant allocation process utilizes a formula that incorporates readily available data from two years prior and includes factors such as population, properties, infrastructure, and the tax base of each unincorporated municipality. The formula is tied to the consumer price index and increases with inflation to protect municipal governments from broader market forces.

Every single municipality in the territory will see an increase this year — a sizable increase, as I said — of about 10.3 percent overall, and it will be disbursed equally to all municipalities. This is important because it's not everything that the municipalities are asking for, but it is a sizable increase in their municipal funding base this year. It represents a step toward making up for the increases in inflation that we have seen recently, and it will help municipalities. I have heard that from municipal leaders whom I have been speaking to about this. They have said that it is step up. It's not everything they want, but that is why this review is ongoing.

The submitted report from the Association of Yukon Communities that we are talking about this afternoon is important in that it goes some way toward identifying municipalities' perspectives when it comes to the comprehensive municipal grant and their funding gaps.

For context, I have been meeting with municipal leaders now for two years, and I have heard the pleas for more than two years, and I have heard the pleas for more funding from the Yukon government, especially in the wake of the pandemic. In fact, initially, I was asked by municipalities for more post-pandemic support. The federal government had provided a package for municipalities to help them deal with the economic effects of the pandemic — that was early in the pandemic — and that federal support was a one-time funding. Once it was dispersed, that was it.

In the wake of that, municipalities came to the Yukon government and asked for more pandemic support. They asked us to step in and fund a mirror of the expired federal program. We did not do that because we could not receive tangible numbers of the need; it was difficult. I spoke to municipal leaders and they said that they needed more money, but it was

difficult to quantify what the money was supposed to go for and why it was.

I tried; I asked municipal leaders, and frankly, it is difficult. We needed more information. The details just simply were not clear. At the officials' level, as well, we were searching for more concrete information. It was difficult to come up with where the gaps actually were, which is why, as part of our — and this is important information when we are doing a review of the comprehensive municipal grant for its renewal.

Frankly, I was delighted to see the Association of Yukon Communities hire a consultant to dig into the issue and help us understand how municipalities see the grant and see their funding gaps. The report arrived in July. The department has been working through to understand the report's findings and costs, to figure out exactly what they mean, and to verify them.

Again — I have to be absolutely clear about this — I want municipalities to be healthy and financially sustainable. This government wants municipalities to be healthy and financially sustainable. That is one of the reasons why we built an escalator into the comprehensive municipal grant, which had been static for a long time. That is one of the refinements we made to make sure that it captured and continually got better and to reflect the rising costs of living as they occurred. As a general principle, I think that is good policy.

Municipalities have to be healthy and financially sustainable. I have said that in this House. I have been consistent in conveying that to our municipal partners. It is important and I support it.

On November 3, Community Affairs directors met with the Association of Yukon Communities' executive to confirm the approach to continue to engage with the association on the comprehensive municipal grant. That was on November 3. Community Affairs has conducted a preliminary analysis of the recommendations made by the Association of Yukon Communities and the comprehensive municipal grant working group consultant. The association's recommendations would result in increasing the 2024 amounts by approximately \$11.8 million — \$11.8 million.

Currently, the Association of Yukon Communities is getting, through the grant, roughly — in the neighbourhood of \$20 million to \$24 million. I believe the increase in this year was \$24.5 million. So, if you are looking at \$20.4 million and adding \$11.8 million to that sum, it is more than a 40-percent increase in the comprehensive municipal grant. That is an incredible amount.

I appreciate that they need to be made whole, but we have to really look at this seriously and do some real analysis, because that is a lot of money. Further to that, the \$11.8 million — Whitehorse received the majority of that — approximately \$9.2 million in funding. Additional analysis is required to assess the rationale for proposed changes to the specific parts of the formula. While these changes will influence higher payments, it is difficult to assess the numbers without also understanding the long-term financial needs and pressures faced by all municipal budgets.

Currently, the department leads are engaging with an accounting specialist to evaluate the financial health of all

municipalities in the Yukon to confirm the most pressing issues affecting their financial sustainability. All of this work will be shared through the CMG working group. Just this year, coming up in the next fiscal year, they will be making an additional \$10.3 million and there is every indication that, in the following year, it will increase again a sizable amount. So, the comprehensive municipal grant, which was altered in 2017 and 2018, is already making up sizable chunks of the difference that have been identified with the Association of Yukon Communities in its current iteration. We really have to figure out the delta between what the municipalities want and what this report has said would be fair with what the grant is actually doing today, how that will interact, and what is actually fair.

Is it fair that, of an \$11-million increase, Whitehorse gets that, or should municipalities and other rural areas — do they need more? What is this? This is the assessment that we are doing right now and I have committed to have that done for the 2025-26 fiscal year, knowing that municipalities next year will be seeing a sizable increase of more than 10 percent, just because — it is just the formula doing what the formula has been designed to do, and that is to address and make sure that municipalities are financially viable and healthy.

All the work that we are doing — engaging the accounting specialist to evaluate the financial health of municipalities in the Yukon to confirm the most pressing issues affecting their financial sustainability — will be shared through the comprehensive municipal grant working group, which the Association of Yukon Communities has assigned three delegates to sit on. This work is going on, it is important work, and it is going to continue.

The department additionally is conducting an analysis of all regular payments made to Yukon municipalities. The comprehensive municipal grant is their mad money, the money that we grant municipalities to do whatever they want with, but we give other monies to municipalities, and that is not referenced in the report that we got from the Association of Yukon Communities. There is other funding that we are getting to the municipalities that isn't covered by the 22-page report that we got from the association, and so we are starting to correlate those. This will help to better understand the scope of support and revenue that municipalities currently receive from the Government of Yukon.

The Yukon government supplements municipal budgets with the comprehensive municipal grant but also transfers funds for grants in lieu of taxes — for example, funding to offset certain administrative processes. We fund land development and contribute to plans and engineering and consulting. We project-manage many municipal government projects. Yukon government invests significantly alongside the federal government in municipal infrastructure and capital projects. In some cases, we pay operating costs that are a municipal responsibility — for example, the Dawson wastewater treatment facility. Yukon provides funding in many cases to help municipalities respond to emergencies and disasters — the \$2-million contribution to Whitehorse for the escarpment slides.

We often contribute toward plans, studies, evaluations, project scoping, and more, and we provide in-kind services and flow funding to municipalities for a range of programs and services. None of this is captured by the Association of Yukon Communities' report. It's like a slice of what the funding is, but it is not holistic in any way. We really do need to assess all these other things to get a full picture of what municipalities are getting, what they need, and what they should be able to expect from the Yukon government. That's just due diligence, so I am a little surprised this afternoon to hear the members of the Official Opposition get ahead of this and just say: Hey, they gave you this report. Give them all this money — but without all this other work being done. The point is that the comprehensive municipal grant is meant to contribute toward the cost of running a municipality, but it is not the sole source of funding, nor does it represent the entirety of our support to municipalities.

I think, if we are going to retool the comprehensive municipal grant thoughtfully, fundamentally, we need to get a full picture of what municipalities need, what they're getting, what we are willing to provide, where some of the gaps are, and what some of the areas are where they need the support. It seems to be a lot broader than the report that we received — as good as that report is.

Mr. Speaker, municipalities, as responsible levels of government, have the ability to raise revenues and they make choices on how they do this — whether through property taxes, fees, or otherwise. A financial review into the long-term health of municipal governments will help us to better understand whether the comprehensive municipal grant is adequate or if there are other factors that should be considered. An analysis of the financial health of all municipalities will provide evidence that helps to support long-term solutions to financial sustainability.

We know that allowing this committee and our respective policy advisors time to conduct this analysis will serve Yukon communities the best in the long term. We don't want to get ahead of ourselves. I will once again note that municipalities will be getting a 10.3-percent bump in 2024-25.

Community Affairs is working with an independent contractor to develop tools required to assist with the overall health of municipalities. One indicator of financial health is the accumulated surplus in each municipality, which is recorded on their most recent financial statement, as it is the primary indicator of the financial resources a community has available to provide future services. I am not going to get into that today. That work is still underway, but it's also another indicator that we think should be considered in this whole thing. Currently, the proposal or plan that we got from AYC doesn't consider it at all.

Now, again, the context is that Yukon communities are absolutely the backbone of our territory, and they play a vital role in shaping our identity and our future. When I first got to the territory, I was a municipal affairs reporter before I moved up to the Legislative Assembly. I went to AYC's annual meetings, travelled to communities from Haines Junction to Carmacks to Carcross, and listened in on their community

meetings. In some cases, there were no local advisory committees back then. It was really interesting for me to see, as a reporter, how important these municipalities are to their citizens and how direct the correlation is between the services the municipalities provide and their citizens. This perhaps is the most intimate level of government. It is absolutely important to our territory that those communities — that closest of connections to the citizens of the territory — is robust and healthy.

Sewer and water, road snow clearing, bylaws — and there are a number of them — even lighting and garbage collection — these are most basic of human needs and services, and they are the ones provided by our municipalities. I understand the relationship and how important municipalities are to the territory. It's a great honour for me to sit in this chair and work for the betterment of our municipalities. I take that very seriously.

Many of the municipal leaders whom I deal with are effectively volunteers dedicating enormous amounts of their time to better their communities, and I think that needs to be recognized and acknowledged — the work that they do — because it is often thankless, and it's very, very important. So, I understand that they need the resources to do that job as well as they can. It is vital that this happens. I know my colleague — my predecessor in this role — certainly understands that very, very well too.

These community leaders — in times of crisis, they step up, and we have seen that this year with the fires that threatened both Old Crow and Mayo. In those places, the community leaders stepped up — in some cases, leading the charge. They were often in contact with me by cellphone — at any time of the day or night, we were talking. They don't get paid enough to do this work, but they were there for the citizens. And we saw in Mayo, for example, the mayor and the chief of the First Nation — the mayor and Chief Hope — were right there on the front lines, leading and helping their citizens to evacuate the community, giving them instructions, and, in some cases, working the fire lines, making sure that they had the support that they needed to protect their homes.

I celebrate that, so far be it from me to prevent them from getting the resources they need to run those municipalities, but I want to make sure it's done in a way that encompasses all the nuances of the funding and the relationship that the Yukon government has built with our municipalities over the years. There are really deep questions in that AYC report, and I know my colleague will probably address them as well, but there are tax implications that have been proposed, and that's a big issue. It's one that we really have to consider when we're talking about affordability in this territory and how we go forward.

How does an increase in tax revenue on people living outside of municipalities affect them and affect the municipalities? I am not clear on that yet, and neither are many people, so we are doing some analysis — we have looked into that. It was a surprising recommendation coming from the Association of Yukon Communities; it is baked into this report, and it has some implications that really do deserve some hard thought. So, we are doing that work; we are doing that analysis

so that we can actually assess what it means. This is in this report, and we could start cherry-picking ideas, but really, if we are going to start cherry-picking ideas, let's do it in a much more thoughtful and deep manner, which is why we are looking at the fiscal year of 2025-26.

There is no debate here on the floor of the House today on the importance of Yukon communities or the need and the important role that they play in our lives. What is up for debate is the nature of the funding that the Government of Yukon provides to the Yukon communities, and what we are discussing here today is how our communities are funded.

I would like to think that we share common goals of ensuring the financial and long-term sustainability of Yukon communities. How do we do that? How do we exercise fiscal and social responsibilities? It is a cornerstone of what differentiates us as political parties. It is not really the "what" but the "how" that we are debating today. Let me be, again, clear: Ensuring the financial stability and long-term sustainability of Yukon communities is something that we absolutely and fundamentally believe in. That is why the escalators were built in, and it is one of the reasons why my colleague addressed this issue when he came to office. Again, the Premier was a municipal politician; my colleague was a municipal politician. They served their communities because they believed in them, and they bring that ethos to our Cabinet, and that understanding — that context — is vital to us in understanding these things.

We want to make sure that our municipalities are sustainable. Again, how do we do that? I think that the best way to do that is by taking the information that we have been provided, plugging it into the bigger conversation — the wider consultation — about what our municipalities are receiving, and then build a better comprehensive municipal grant together as partners. That's really what we set in motion. It's what I support. We're going to continue that good work to bring all of our communities to a better place.

I don't know where or what that looks like in the end, but I do know that it will be vital to make sure that our citizens across the territory are represented by really committed, hard-working individuals who give their time, without regard, to serve their neighbours and families.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, I want to be very clear that we support our municipalities, but we're going to do it in a measured and responsible fashion using all the facts at our disposal to get a fair and comprehensive municipal grant to our municipalities. That work is ongoing.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would like to begin by thanking the Member for Watson Lake for bringing forward this motion.

The comprehensive municipal grant is a very important funding tool for our municipalities. I think that when she spoke — in the few minutes, as she spoke to this motion — and I'm also trying to remember her question today from Question Period — but I think she said that the comprehensive municipal grant is a supplement; it's not meant to be main funding.

But I think if we look at the report that the Association of Yukon Communities supplied, which we're effectively

debating today, the page that I find super informative on this is page 16 of the report, which talks about how some factors went into changing the formula in 2017.

Then we see, from 2017 forward, where the comprehensive municipal grant increases, but we ought to take a look at those numbers and put them in the context of tax revenue. The municipalities, generally speaking, have tax revenue. They also will have some revenue for services, although usually those services are fees for services. If you think of water and sewer here and garbage collection here in Whitehorse, really, that is meant to pay for that service itself, but when you think of the rest of the things that municipalities are trying to do to serve their citizens, the two main funding sources are the comprehensive municipal grant and property taxes.

It really depends on which community we're talking about when you try to think about the size of that. From that report that we're discussing today, put forward by the Association of Yukon Communities, they list a few areas or times of tax revenues through property taxes. I just took a quick look at a few of them just to get a sense, and they were showing numbers for 2021. Then I pulled some numbers off the graphs for their comprehensive municipal grants from 2021, which I actually have, because the Department of Community Services recently published the comprehensive municipal grant numbers for the last several years.

If we look at a community like Whitehorse, then yes, the comprehensive municipal grant in 2021 was around \$8 million and property taxes were in the range of \$25 million. What that means is that the comprehensive municipal grant is somewhere around 20 percent or 25 percent, so it's pretty significant. If we then look at, as you get into other communities — so let's take Dawson, which is the next largest; the property tax revenue was about \$1.5 million in 2021 and the comprehensive municipal grant was about \$2.5 million in 2021. What that means is that over 60 percent of your budget is the comprehensive municipal grant. Finally, if we look at our smaller communities — and I just took a quick look at Mayo — it can be over 80 percent or even 90 percent, so it's not a supplement anymore; it's a huge amount of the funding.

I think that it is a really good thing that we have the comprehensive municipal grant. I will build on some of the comments from the Minister of Community Services when he talked about the importance of municipalities and the importance of the work that they do and the services that they provide to Yukoners. These are incredibly important services and they allow our communities to function.

Here in the Yukon, we also get a federal transfer that is very similar in that sense — where there are a lot of dollars that flow to us. We are lucky to get that and it is good, and I think that the comprehensive municipal grant is important.

My first point that I am trying to make is that it is an incredibly important funding agreement for our municipalities, even more so for our smaller municipalities than larger.

The next thing I want to mention is that years ago, when I was a city councillor, I used to go to a thing called the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. You would go and meet

with colleagues from across the country who were also councillors, and they would talk about what their relationship is and what their situation is financially and how they are dealing with infrastructure investments — all that sort of stuff. It was great being from the Yukon at those events. One of the first reasons was because they always put up what percentage of the municipalities were part of — within any province or territory — the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, and the Yukon was always on the top because it was 100 percent — 100 percent of our municipalities are part of the federation. We always got this little shout-out.

People would come up to us, from the Yukon, and they would ask about the relationship with, for example, the territorial government.

I would say: Yes, our council met with the minister one time last year.

Municipalities from across the country would be like: What? You met with the minister?

We said yes, and they said: How are you dealing with these issues?

We said: Well, here is our situation.

They were kind of stunned when we talked about the comprehensive municipal grant. There is no such thing in many of our provinces. It is not very common. The Yukon was the envy of other jurisdictions.

Fast-forward to after the 2016 election, I had the privilege of being in the role as Minister of Community Services, and a couple of times, I went to FCM — the Federation of Canadian Municipalities — in support of our municipalities as they talked about national issues and about the Yukon's context. A couple of times, I was introduced to other municipalities and they were just kind of stunned that there would be a minister there trying to support, in this case, the territorial municipalities.

I want to say that comprehensive municipal grants are very important, especially for our smaller communities, and I want to say that it's not that common across the country.

Let's come back for a second and talk about a bit of the history of the comprehensive municipal grant. If you go back to that page that I was referencing in the report from the Association of Yukon Communities, page 16, you can pretty quickly see this visual of what was happening with the comprehensive municipal grant up until 2016 — well, 2017. We were elected in 2016 and we started working with municipalities in 2017. The new grant came in, so the first change happened in 2018. You can see that the comprehensive municipal grant was static. It was unchanging for at least several years before that. There were several years when the comprehensive municipal grant was static. What I am trying to understand — and I do appreciate this motion — is why this wasn't something that was done back when the Yukon Party was the government of the day.

I was a municipal councillor. I remember asking for it to happen. I remember requesting the Yukon Party, as the government, to unstick the comprehensive municipal grant. It wasn't so much in my role as a councillor from the City of Whitehorse; it was as a member of the Association of Yukon Communities. I would always go to the Association of Yukon

Communities' annual general meetings and we would talk about funding within our municipalities. We would talk about infrastructure funding; we would talk about the comprehensive municipal grant.

When the Member for Watson Lake rises to close out this motion, it is my hope that she will talk about why there was not an initiative to change the comprehensive municipal grant during their term. I think that what I hear all of us saying today is that the comprehensive municipal grant is very important to municipalities, but it was very important back in 2016 and earlier, too.

When you start to look at it, you start to see that increase. So, from 2017 to 2018 — increase and on we go. The report only goes up to 2022. I think there are a few things that we should acknowledge within there that are different. I have heard the minister talk in this House over the last couple of weeks during this Sitting about how the grant has moved and how it has changed. So, I went and grabbed those numbers to take a look at them and try to understand them a bit better. He has said — and I can confirm — that this year, the 2024 comprehensive municipal grant will go up — it is going up — by 10.4 percent. That is a big jump. Why is that jump there? The answer is inflation.

Well, let me go back for a minute to talk about that change. The Member for Watson Lake talked about — I think she mentioned that inflation has gone up 20 percent over the past decade and that the comprehensive municipal grant has not kept up. If you start to break that out and take a look — which I did while I was preparing for this debate — at how much the comprehensive municipal grant has gone up since 2017, it has gone up 20 percent. In other words, we have been increasing it dramatically.

I am pretty sure that when the Member for Watson Lake did those numbers, she was calculating it based on the report that was given by the Association of Yukon Communities. Unfortunately, that report only goes to 2022 and does not yet take into account the big jumps that have just happened. What I see as jumps over the past — last year, in 2023, the jump was just over five percent, and this year, it is over 10 percent. If you add those numbers in, you start to see that we are ahead of inflation right now, but all of that "ahead" has happened since the Liberals were in government and none of that is from the Yukon Party. That still doesn't take away from the debate or the point that I think is very important about the services that are provided by municipalities.

The question that we ought to be asking is: If we flow dollars to municipalities, can they do more? Would it improve the Yukon? The simple answer, of course, is yes. The harder answer is: How should that work in the balance of all of the questions that we have?

The report that we're being asked to discuss today — when I look at that report and we go down toward the end of the report, there are about four pages of summary at the end. Three of those pages are next steps and short- and long-term suggestions.

This is one of those challenges. The way that the motion is worded in front of us right now; it's saying that we should

amend the comprehensive municipal grant in response to the analysis and report conducted. There are both short-term and long-term suggestions in there. There are actually three pages of suggestions in there. There are a lot of them.

From my perspective, I hope that there would be an opportunity to try to go through that. I think it's pretty important to update those numbers. Right now, the numbers are talking about 2022, but, of course, we know that there are two more years of numbers that have had an increase of five and 10 percent — so, together, a 15-percent increase.

Within this, it's important to try to take a look at it and dig in and figure out the best approach.

One of the things that is discussed in this is property tax. One of the motions that the Association of Yukon Communities put forward at their last AGM was to look at raising tax rates outside of municipalities. Basically, they're asking us to raise property tax rates. I will say that I attended the local advisory council forum on October 27.

The Association of Yukon Communities — most Yukoners think of it as our eight municipalities, but it also includes our five local advisory councils. Four of those local advisory councils happen to be within Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I am going to a local advisory council meeting tonight. What I can tell you is that every one of those local advisory councils were pretty upset about that motion about raising tax rates outside of our municipalities. When I went to that forum, that was one of the big topics. It was the first time that I had seen the president of the Association of Yukon Communities at an LAC forum or meeting. I have not been to every local advisory council meeting, so I may have missed times when they were there. I know that the minister attends those meetings yearly. I know, for example, that he meets with municipalities at least a couple of times. He travels to the communities and meets with municipalities and councils a couple of times a year. Here in Whitehorse, I think there are four times a year for formal meetings, but there are lots of other informal meetings.

There is a concern and I think that one of the things I heard the president of the Association of Yukon Communities say to the local advisory councils at the local advisory council forum — he referred to the question about raising the property tax in unincorporated Yukon as a “red herring”. I haven't had a chance to talk with him further about that, but the sense that I got from him talking with the local advisory councils was that the bigger issue in his mind is the comprehensive municipal grant. As I have pointed out, it certainly is a significant funding piece for our municipalities.

If I go to those long- and short-term suggestions, there is a whole range of them. Really, what they are doing is trying to get at the formula of the comprehensive municipal grant. Let me talk for a second, then, about how that formula was created. It was created by sitting down and working with the Association of Yukon Communities. When we went and amended it in 2017 to get it moving and increase the dollars that were flowing to our municipalities — because, under the Yukon Party, it had not been increasing — we said to municipalities: Tell us what you would like in that formula. Tell

us what would be, from your perspective, the best way to make that formula work for you.

That's what we did. We took their advice —

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. 775 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 156

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 9, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

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New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 9, 2023 — 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
Remembrance Day**

Speaker: Remembrance Day is the day when we remember the many fallen Canadians who have given their lives in the line of duty. There is a lot to think about this year with wars happening in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and many lower-grade conflicts around the world that are just as real as larger wars to those who suffer the consequences.

It is very disturbing to think of the loss of life that we have seen in these wars over the last year: whole families murdered, children killed in their homes, people terrified by daily bombings and gunfire in their hometowns. It is difficult not to become depressed at the state of our human condition when we see all this all over our media day after day.

Here at home, we are at peace. Canadian contributions do not include active participation in the conflicts in the war zones, although we offer humanitarian relief and military support in the case of Ukraine. I support Canada helping people in their times of need, but I am saddened by the fact that they needed it in the first place.

Remembrance Day is a day to ponder the senseless destruction of war. It is a day to think about what is right and what is worth fighting for but also to double our efforts to avoid war in the first place.

Lest we forget.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of guests here with us today. I ask my colleagues to provide a warm welcome to the individuals who are here for our Remembrance Day tribute today: Corporal Retired Morris Cratty; Sergeant Retired Joe Mewett; Sergeant Retired Dave Laxton; Major Retired Red Grossinger; Corporal Retired Brian Reed; Ranger Al Parker; Sergeant Retired Jon Hall; Captain Retired Cal Knowles and Louise Knowles; Major Greg Theriau; Warrant Officer Andrew McLeod; and Master Corporal Retired Paul Brais and Melanie Brais.

I also saw veteran Carl Sidney.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming some special guests here for the National Indigenous Veterans Day tribute that I will be giving

soon. We have Chief Sean Smith from the Kwanlin Dün First Nation; and we have Chief Amanda Leas from the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council; and we have Denise Beattie, who is a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and granddaughter to Alex Van Bibber.

I too would like to welcome former Khâ Shâde Héní Carl Sidney of the Teslin Tlingit Council.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I invite my colleagues to join me in welcoming a couple of people to the gallery. Two of them sat through almost every day of the Legislative Assembly for my first five years — Rob and Mary Ann Lewis — and Brian Eaton is joining us today as well.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Remembrance Day

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in honour of Remembrance Day and to pay tribute to all Canadian soldiers for the courage, sacrifice, and service to our country. In the 11th month on the 11th day at the 11th hour, we, as a community, share in two minutes of silence and remember those who did not make it home from the conflict. We wear poppies as a symbol of remembrance signifying that their memory is not forgotten and in observance of our gratitude for all that has been endured and fought for.

We remember those who did not make it home and we remember the families who have lost loved ones. We mourn their ultimate sacrifice. We remember those who have returned — many with scars, seen and unseen. We also thank those veterans who have dedicated their time to their military family members who are facing challenges after war. We can continue to pay tribute to their legacy by remembering their stories, by living up to the ideals that they fought for, cherishing our freedoms, and contributing to our communities.

My family and I sit in observance of all veterans, holding a special time to share stories — my wife's grandfather and children's great-grandfather, John Adamson, a Champagne and Aishihik First Nations elder who fought in the Second World War and was a proud Indigenous veteran.

For all veterans and service members who have come from all walks of life from across this country and who have answered the call to duty and served our nation with valour and selflessness, we stand in remembrance in honour of you. We thank you for your service on behalf of all Yukoners and Canadians, and we also extend our gratitude to members of military families — spouses, children, parents, and others — who valiantly sacrifice time with their loved ones.

Lest we forget those who have served our country and those who are continuing to serve with honour, integrity, courage, and dignity, I encourage all Yukoners to participate in a moment of silence on November 11, to wear a poppy as a symbol of our remembrance, and to thank a veteran or service member for what they do or have done.

Lest we forget.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Remembrance Day.

I am going to read a portion of an article by Margaret Ecker from *The Canadian Press News*, May 12, 1945, published weekly for the Canadian Forces overseas. The headline of this newspaper reads: “Germany Quits”: “Without ceremony and without drama, in the pre-dawn hours of May 7, Col-Gen. Gustaf Jodl, newly created chief-of-staff of the German Wehrmacht, and Gen.-Admiral Hans George Von Friedelburg, commander-in-chief of the German navy, grimly scrawled their signatures to documents of unconditional surrender.

“I watched the Germans sign the death warrant of the Third Reich in an oppressively hot room in supreme headquarters here as they sat upon cheap deal chairs at a black-topped, ordinary table. The two Germans, with interpreters, sat alone at one side of the 20-foot-long table facing a representation of their conquerors — Britain, United States, Russia and France — who together in this very room on sprawling war maps plotted the strategy which eventually brought the German envoys on their knees.

“For 33 hours and 20 minutes the Allied supreme command and representatives of Russia had negotiated the surrender with Germany while the air was full of signals to Prime Minister Churchill and President Truman keeping them posted on the progress of the conference and messages were flying back and forth between Admiral Doenitz and his subordinates in Reims.

“And so finally the Allies and the Germans came together at the peace table which closed the Second Great War. The war conflict which Hitler had launched with such thunder ended with a whimper in a small, stuffy room crammed with about 60 persons dripping with perspiration ... For the Canadian Army in west Holland and northwest Germany, where the cease fire became effective Saturday morning, May 5, when the German northern forces capitulated in a prelude to the general surrender, this overall collapse of the Reich was a definite guarantee that Canadians had finished their job in Europe.” They could now return home except for a few left back who were liberating Holland.

Mr. Speaker, that is why every year at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, we gather in memorial parks, community halls, workplaces, schools, and homes.

We stand to honour and observe a moment of silence to mark the sacrifice of the many who have fallen in service of their country and to acknowledge the courage of those who still serve. Canadian veterans have served throughout history in a broad range of conflicts and situations: world wars, peacekeeping missions, and any crisis on the home front. On Remembrance Day, we honour and remember all veterans. Canadian veterans have protected the rights and freedoms of Canadians and people from countries all over the world through peacekeeping missions. They have played a critical role in protecting Canadians on the home front. Whether from fires, floods, or threats, these men and women have risked their lives for our safety and protection. We must also recognize the

support of our military families — the fathers, the sons, the mothers, and the daughters — who have endured alongside Canadian veterans. I want to thank all of those who have put time and effort into remembering, especially our legions across Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as a young soldier in Germany in the late 1980s seeing the memorials and participating in Remembrance Day ceremonies at Vimy Ridge, France, I understood — and I do still understand — the ultimate sacrifices that were made for our freedoms that we have here in this country today. We must remember that a veteran is a veteran is a veteran. If we do not, the sacrifices from those Canadian lives lost will be meaningless. They died for us, for their homes and families and friends, for a collection of traditions that they cherish, and a future that they believed in. They died for Canada.

Thank you. Lest we forget.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP in recognition of Remembrance Day. First Canadian Commander of the Canadian Corps, Sir Arthur Currie, wrote this speech 90 years ago, nearly to the day. It was delivered to a room of First World War veterans. He was speaking of Armistice Day, which we now call Remembrance Day. The words he wrote then still ring true today. I quote: “To all who lived through the war years, and more particularly to those who saw active service — today has been a day of sacred memories, different perhaps in detail to each one of us, but yet all based on similar experiences and similar emotions.

“With a lapse of years, Armistice Day becomes naturally less demonstrative. The ranks of those who saw service grow yearly smaller, as we pay our toll to time. And in future the day will grow less weighted with meaning to the generation born in the years between.

“But whatever changes may come, and however slight may be the recognition of future generations, I hope that Armistice Day may never cease to be impressive. I hope that the two-minute interval of solemn silence will always be more than a formal, statutory gesture — that it will always mean a reverence pause, in which we gladly remember, with tender and grateful thoughts, those who nobly dies for our country’s ideals ... We remember tonight the high resolves of that time 15 years ago. There was unspeakable sorrow for the great army of youth that had gone so early to its death. We were told that the world would henceforth be safe for youth.

“But what of youth today, and the opportunity for youth in our modern world? Where, ask the men who fought, is that new world of justice and goodwill they suffered so keenly to create? Has the world done anything more in these 15 years than give lip service to the ideals for which our fallen comrades gave their lives? The answer to these questions is found in the actual conditions of the hour. And these conditions are such that Armistice Day should smite the conscience of the world ... on this 15th anniversary of a peace which was to silence battle fronts forever, peace is not a fact, but still a dream.

“We need, as never before, the healing qualities of devotion and fidelity and self-sacrifice and goodwill and comradeship and friendliness, so that suspicion may be

vanquished and justice and mutual trust may be permanently enthroned. All this desire is in harmony with the real spirit of Armistice Day — the day dedicated to sacrifice and loyal remembrance of others.

“Armistice Day is primarily a commemoration of the dead. But a commemoration of the dead should be likewise an appeal to the living not to deplore the past, but to awaken our sense of responsibility to make our world less deplorable.

“We know from experience the stupidity of war, and the stupidity of those who made or caused wars. Does our responsibility end with condemning the follies of the stupid or the vicious 20 years ago? What can we do as veterans to make the world less deplorable?

“Are we fighting so that the next generation of youth will not condemn our stupidity as we condemned in the trenches the stupidity of our elders in 1914 and the era immediately before it?

“The truest commemoration of our honoured dead will be in the vigorous enlistment of our own lives and capacities in the struggle between unselfishness and greed, honesty and corruption, justice and injustice, and in the serious application to our national problems of those qualities which distinguished our Corps in the war days, and enabled us always to advance and conquer.

“Armistice Day reminds our country of the steadfastness of our fighting troops. It should also be a reminder to every citizen that he still has a duty to discharge, if the war is to be fully won and its high objectives permanently secured. It should call us to a realization that we still have to complete the unfinished task of our dead comrades who speak to us tonight with a voiceless eloquence — the task of replacing the present system of suspicion and fear and conflict with the enduring fabric of confidence in humane law and order.

“And on this Armistice night, as we recall the nobility of your sacrifice, we turn away from trenches and wounds and death and we rededicate our lives with hope to the still unfinished work which you so gallantly advanced and for which you died.”

Today, I think about the people living in active war zones — these people living in fear, seeing their communities destroyed piece by piece, human by human, child by child, and the armistice of the First World War was signed on November 11, 1918, and this ceasefire brought an end to the Great War. This ceasefire saved countless lives and gave hope and a future to millions of people.

Canadians are still grappling with the grief of war. Hopefully, as we wrestle with our collective feelings of past tragedies, we can gain some clarity on the conflicts of the present. We owe it to veterans and their families to strive for peace at home and around the world.

Lest we forget.

In recognition of National Indigenous Veterans Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government in honour of National Indigenous Veterans Day, which takes place each year on November 8.

I have seen so many beautiful beaded poppies this week, and I want to hold my hands up to all of those artists for your meaningful work in recognizing Veterans’ Week, National Indigenous Veterans Day, and Remembrance Day.

Indigenous soldiers have contributed to the Canadian Armed Forces in invaluable and numerous ways. Currently, there are 2,742 Indigenous members serving in the Canadian Armed Forces’ regular force and primary reserve force combined. They represent 2.8 percent of the Canadian Armed Forces and we thank them for their selfless service.

Indigenous people have participated in every great conflict of the 20th century. It is estimated that as many as 12,000 Indigenous people served in these conflicts, with at least 500 people making the ultimate sacrifice. Indigenous people served alongside their non-Indigenous comrades. Together, they shared in victory and defeat, in life and loss. They were fulfilling the most demanding and significant duty of citizenship — wearing the uniform and taking up arms to defend freedom and protect human life.

Indigenous veterans overcame much to serve, including adapting to cultural differences, travelling great distances just to enlist, and receiving unequal treatment when they returned home. They did not have the full rights and benefits that other Canadian citizens had, as they were governed by the *Indian Act*. As the Second World War came to a close, change was on the horizon for Indigenous veterans. Veterans and leaders advocated for their rights to citizenship reform. This led to a parliamentary review in 1946 and major amendments to the *Indian Act*.

In Yukon, similar demands were being made. Alex Van Bibber, a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and a veteran of the Second World War, stood up for Indigenous veterans. He noticed that, upon discharge, Indigenous veterans were sent home with only \$100 for clothing, yet non-Indigenous veterans were sent home with a parcel of farmland and the support to build a home. Alex became an advocate for Indigenous veterans in the Yukon and beyond, and it was because of the like-minded advocacy that the federal government increased their compensation to \$20,000 each.

Elijah Smith was a member of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations and another Yukon soldier whose experiences serving in the Second World War led him to go on to champion the rights of Yukon First Nations. He led the movement toward Yukon land claims and the Yukon’s final and self-government agreements, which created a more equitable territory today.

Indigenous Veterans Day is a day to commemorate and celebrate the bravery and valour of Indigenous veterans. On behalf of all Yukoners, I thank all Indigenous veterans who served in wars and those who supported at home. We continue to strive to do better to honour the sacrifices made by these brave people.

Lest we forget.

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to tribute Indigenous Veterans Day. I want

to talk about an initiative started here in the north by Floyd Powder, an Indigenous veteran who served 32 years. He was originally from Fort Smith, and now he serves as the Sergeant-at-Arms in the Northwest Territories Legislature. It is great to see veterans in this capacity, as we have Karina Watson, our Sergeant-at-Arms, and our Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms being Joe Mewett, who serve this Legislature.

Floyd has been tracking down unmarked graves of veterans across the Northwest Territories and working with families so that their loved ones can have a military-style headstone. The families of Indigenous veterans, especially in small communities, may not know they are eligible for funeral and burial assistance from the military, and this can lead to a veteran being in an unmarked grave — without a headstone recognizing their service to their country.

Earlier this year, when I was at Ranger leadership, Floyd briefed us on this Last Post Fund's initiative, which focuses on finding Indigenous veterans and is where Floyd works as a volunteer. He searches for graves and mostly works alone to identify these unmarked graves. So far, the fund has helped install 25 headstones for veterans between Fort McPherson and Fort Fitzgerald, 13 of which are for Indigenous veterans.

Our local region just completed a grave here at Grey Mountain Cemetery for an Indigenous veteran — Ross Wilson Reed. I am sure that there will be more to come through this fund in the Yukon.

November 8 marked Indigenous Veterans Day in Canada. It is estimated that more than 7,000 First Nation people served in the First World War and Second World War in uniform and many to the present day. The federal government actually said that number was even higher when considering an unknown number of Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous recruits.

In Canada's north, there is a rich history of Indigenous veterans who have served our country. We have highlighted many of them in past tributes in this Legislative Assembly. This year, I want to highlight those who serve in the Canadian Rangers. When World War II ended in 1945, the Canadian government realized that there was no need for the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers on the west coast of Canada and instead incorporated their duties to form the Canadian Rangers across the north. They span across Canada's north — 40 percent of the total land mass — where there are no reserve forces of the Canadian Army.

Rangers were trained as guides and scouts, continuously expanded their knowledge of the land, and have the capacity to act, if necessary, working with regular army units from the south. We rarely make notice of Rangers, but they are the ones whom we see at the cenotaph every Remembrance Day in these small communities. More than sombre figures to remember the ones who have fallen, the Rangers are here to provide a vital service, and these patrols across the north consist of predominantly Indigenous members.

As Canadians and Yukoners, we remember all those Indigenous veterans who have served our country in the past through many conflicts of war and peacekeeping and here at home. I am honoured to serve with many of them. It is great to

see so many veterans here — and ones who are still serving — in the House today.

Thank you very much, günilischish, shāw níthän.
Lest we forget.

Ms. Blake: I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP in honour of National Aboriginal Veterans Day. Today and every day, we acknowledge the significant contributions of Indigenous peoples, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, in the defence of peace and human rights.

We honour the courage, commitment, and sacrifices made by these brave people who stepped forward to serve their Indigenous nation and Canada in times of need. The acknowledgement and celebration of Indigenous veterans: There is even greater significance given the unfortunate past of discrimination and lack of appropriate recognition toward Indigenous soldiers returning from service or seeking veteran benefits.

Thousands of Indigenous veterans sacrificed their lives, their Indian status, and their freedom for us to live in the Canada that we know today. Indigenous people continue to answer the call and to play a critical role in Canada's effort to promote and protect our peace and security. We honour and remember the Indigenous soldiers who fought courageously for their homeland. Today and every day, it is essential that we thank and honour all veterans for their contributions, sacrifices, and for the many lives lost.

Lest we forget.

Speaker: I would ask all present to stand as we observe a moment of silence in honour of Remembrance Day.

Moment of silence observed

Speaker: They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

Thank you; please be seated.

Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

Are there any reports of committees?

Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 21 — response

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to Petition No. 21. This petition is calling on the Government of Yukon to ban all trophy hunting of grizzly bears in the Yukon and to ban roadside hunting of grizzly bears throughout the territory. I thank those who have taken the time to sign the petition and take part in the public discussion on this matter. I acknowledge your concerns regarding grizzly bears in the Yukon and appreciate your commitment to the conservation of this iconic species.

While grizzly bears are listed as a species of special concern in Canada, data collected by the Department of Environment, as well as local and traditional knowledge holders, indicate that the population of grizzly bears in the Yukon is stable and healthy. Under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, the only requirement for a species of special concern is to develop a management plan.

Through the work of the Department of Environment biologists and in partnership with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, we engaged extensively with Yukon First Nations, Inuvialuit, transboundary First Nations, renewable resources councils, various wildlife agencies and organizations, as well as the Yukon public, to develop and release the territory's first conservation plan for grizzly bears in Yukon in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the conservation plan, which received broad endorsement and support in the Yukon, is indeed based on current western science and traditional knowledge. The plan is intended to be a proactive measure to guide bear management across the territory, as grizzly bear populations appear to be stable in the Yukon. Much work has been undertaken since 2019 in order to monitor and study bear populations in central Yukon, including the Beaver River watershed near Mayo, the Klondike Plateau area north of Carmacks, and most recently, the Ogilvie Mountains in 2023.

It is estimated that there are between 6,000 and 7,000 grizzly bears in the Yukon. I understand the concern that some Yukoners have regarding grizzly bear hunting in the territory, and I would like to address the two points that this petition is urging the Government of Yukon to do.

First, the ban on roadside hunting of grizzly bears. Recently, the Government of Yukon amended the wildlife regulations to allow the minister to determine the number of grizzly bears that may be hunted within 100 metres of the centre line of a particular highway in the Yukon. The regulation establishes an adaptive framework that allows for local community or First Nation governments to request a prohibition of roadside hunting of grizzly bears in their area.

Recently, we have seen this in action in the Southern Lakes area, where roadside hunting of grizzly bears is prohibited along the Alaska Highway from the M'Clintock River bridge to Jakes Corner, the Tagish Road, the Atlin Road to the British Columbia border, and along the south Klondike Highway from Carcross Corner to the British Columbia border. Upon the receipt of such a request, we would engage with the local First Nation, renewable resources council, and the community on the proposal.

Regarding a ban on grizzly bear hunting in the Yukon, I want to put into context how many bears are, on average, being harvested. The Government of Yukon works to ensure that the harvest of any species in the Yukon is done sustainably, while respecting the primary importance of wildlife conservation and Indigenous subsistence harvest rights.

Mr. Speaker, since 1995, the annual average of grizzly bears harvested by residents is 28. The average non-resident harvest is 43. In total, there are approximately 80 human-caused grizzly bear deaths reported each year in the Yukon,

including deaths from vehicle collisions, hunting, and from defence of life or property. If there are 6,000 grizzly bears in the territory — which would be on the low end of our population estimate — 80 deaths account for a little over one percent of the population. Four percent is widely accepted as the total sustainable mortality rate in a given bear management unit.

In the Yukon, licensed hunters, resident and non-resident, are permitted to hunt one grizzly bear every three licensed years, and it is illegal to hunt cubs or adult females accompanied by cubs. Based on the evidence we have heard, the grizzly bear population in the Yukon appears stable, and the harvest of bears is well within sustainable levels.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to live up to its legal obligations for financial transparency and accountability including:

(1) immediately tabling the Public Accounts for the 2022-23 fiscal year, which the Minister of Finance was required by law to table no later than October 31, 2023; and

(2) immediately providing the Official Opposition and the public a copy of the full report done by Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance Inc. regarding the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which was done under a \$300,000 sole-source contract approved by the Premier against the advice of government officials.

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

THAT this House thanks the Yukon Hospital Corporation for hosting their annual public meeting on October 25 to:

(1) share the 2022-23 Yukon Hospital Corporation year in review;

(2) share the audited Yukon Hospital Corporation consolidated financial statements as of March 31, 2023;

(3) provide an overview of the corporation's financial highlights, accomplishments, and challenges this year; and

(4) provide Yukoners with the opportunity to engage with the corporation.

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon on continued real GDP growth in 2022, with the second highest growth rate in Canada at 5.9 percent.

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

THAT this House congratulates John McConnell and the Victoria Gold team as recipients of the Viola R. MacMillan

Award for innovative financing of the Eagle Gold Mine development and production in the Yukon, which will be presented at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference in Toronto on March 5, 2024.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, I asked the Minister of Highways and Public Works for an update on the budget of the largest capital project in the Yukon's history. When the government included this project in their budget planning, they projected that it would cost between \$110 million and \$125 million, yet last year when they signed the contract, it had grown to \$160 million. Since they awarded the project without the proper licences and permits in place, the contractor has sent in change orders. We have been told that the budget for this project now is around \$207 million.

Can the minister confirm what the current budget is for this project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to this question again. The Yukon government and Graham Infrastructure LP have been negotiating a change order to reflect the impacts of the *Fisheries Act* authorization for the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement project. Negotiations such as these are confidential because of their commercial nature and to maintain confidential positions. The Yukon government has done its due diligence in handling this matter and in mitigating risk due to the original *Fisheries Act* authorization.

Mr. Speaker, when the Nisutlin Bay bridge project was tendered, there was no reason to expect any significant deviation from similar previous *Fisheries Act* authorizations from the regulator, Fisheries and Oceans Canada. However, the Yukon government did receive a *Fisheries Act* authorization that had new restrictive limits to cumulative noise impacts on fish. Together, the Yukon government, Teslin Tlingit Council, and Graham Infrastructure LP have worked on an amendment to the authorization. This took time. This amendment was received in May 2023, at which time negotiations began between the Yukon government and Graham Infrastructure LP about a new schedule and work plan reflective of the authorization.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week and again now, the minister has admitted that they were negotiating a change order due to the fact that the government awarded this project without the proper permits and authorization under the federal *Fisheries Act*.

This is not a small, inconsequential change order, Mr. Speaker. We have been told that the change order and cost overruns could be worth somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$50 million. If that is correct, then we are talking about a change that is around 10 percent of the government's entire capital budget. This will significantly affect the Yukon

government's finances, so I think Yukoners deserve to know how much this change order will actually cost.

Can the minister give any sort of indication of how much this change order is going to cost Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated a number of times this week, negotiations such as these are confidential because of their commercial nature and to maintain confidential positions. These negotiations continue, and I am not going to engage in negotiations with the hard-working team for Yukon government and the officials at Graham Infrastructure LP on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. Of course, this information will become available to Yukoners when it is available.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we have been told that the project cost — the total cost now — for the Nisutlin bridge is well over \$200 million. I can appreciate that the details of the negotiations are confidential, but if the increases in this project are as large as we have heard, then they will have a big impact on the government's bottom line.

I will ask this: Has the government had any indication from the federal government that they will help cover the cost overruns, or will any cost overruns on this project have to be covered by the Yukon government alone?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak about this incredible piece of important, vital infrastructure that we have in the territory right now — the Nisutlin Bay bridge — which the member opposite has indicated is nearly a \$160-million project of vital infrastructure, a connector of the Alaska Highway from the Lower 48 to our friends in Alaska of strategic importance that we are maintaining that link.

On the subject of strategic links and strategic infrastructure, another \$160-million project is for the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport over the course of the next two and a half fiscal years, also providing absolutely vital infrastructure for the Yukon.

We are also continuing to build the national trade corridors funding, north Klondike Highway project. As well, as far as big projects are concerned, we have the grid-scale battery project, which will come online next year. We have various other projects. It is an amazing time for infrastructure projects and I look forward to continuing to talk about all of these great projects, in contradiction to the tumbleweeds that occurred between 2011 and 2016.

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government has talked a lot about fixing the health care system, but unfortunately, things continue to get worse under their watch. One of their promises that hasn't been delivered is a walk-in clinic. The Minister of Health and Social Services originally told media that she planned to have a walk-in clinic open in the spring of 2022. A year and a half later, there is still no walk-in clinic.

Thousands of Yukoners don't have a doctor, and the government is fast approaching the January deadline for

opening a walk-in clinic that was set by the CASA. Is the minister confident that they will actually meet that deadline?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for Yukoners to be served by a walk-in clinic in the City of Whitehorse is a tremendous opportunity. We have been working on this initiative for quite some time. I am sure the member opposite will no doubt draw our minds to the history of other attempts for this to be open. We're working now with our physician community to have walk-in clinic services available to Yukoners in Whitehorse by 2024, with plans to hopefully launch by the end of 2023.

We are currently dealing with some issues regarding the development of the space for the clinic. The clinic is set to be located, at least temporarily, at 9010 Quartz Road, with future plans to relocate it to a space in Mah's Point on 2nd Avenue. The development of the work with the physicians has been to help us design the clinic, what is needed, the staff who are needed, the financial impact, how the clinic should be set up, and what staff members will be needed to deliver those services.

Mr. Cathers: A long-time family doctor and emergency room physician who is also a former president of the Yukon Medical Association was recently quoted by the *Yukon News* sharing serious concerns about the state of the health care system. Dr. Tadepalli publicly stated that health care in the territory is on the "down slide and crashing".

One of the few actions that the Liberal government did take was to open the Constellation health clinic, which just celebrated its first year of operation despite opening without a single doctor. The only doctors this government has been able to find to provide any services there have been poached from other parts of the health care system, including medical clinics.

The Liberals are failing to attract new doctors. Instead, doctors are being spread thinner and the health care system is crumbling. Dr. Tadepalli said that there's "no hope" for a walk-in clinic, and a rising number of family doctors are wanting to quit. Why should people believe the minister this time when she says that they will open a walk-in clinic, or do they just plan to open it without any doctors?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this issue on behalf of Yukoners. I won't address the comments made by the member opposite. I think they are inappropriate, frankly, in this Legislative Assembly.

Our plan is to hire a clinic manager, a medical office assistant — and they have each started work. An additional medical office assistant and two licensed nurse practitioners are in the final stages of being hired. One social worker posting is now closed and moving to screening and interviews. Additionally, there are three integrated health service nurse practitioner postings that are active in the Government of Yukon's job website.

We have been working with three medical professionals here in the territory to help with the design and to appropriately work through the staffing. For the physical space of the new clinic, we previously opened the Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre, which is providing health care to a significant number of Yukoners. It is successfully operating and has

celebrated its recent anniversary. We have spent \$2.34 million getting that clinic available for Yukoners as well.

Mr. Cathers: The *Yukon News* quotes Dr. Tadepalli saying that there are "no takers" on the minister's plan for the hospitalist program. Worse, he feels that health care in the territory is on the "down slide and crashing". This government talks a good line about improving the health care system, but when respected local doctors use such strong language, it's a very bad sign about the real state of health care.

The Liberals have repeatedly failed to attract new doctors whom we desperately need and have neglected this area for years. Provinces, including Alberta and Nova Scotia, have taken action to fast-track foreign-trained doctors and nurses being able to practise. Nova Scotia accepts doctors trained in the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. They began this approach many months ago, yet despite the Premier's photo op with the Premier of Nova Scotia and the MOU, his government has done nothing to fast-track doctors from a short list of countries being allowed to practise and nothing to recruit them.

What is he waiting for and when will this government actually make changes to fast-track the licensing of doctors trained in the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am happy to address part of what was noted by the member opposite in relation to the hospitalist model, because it is an incredibly important opportunity to provide inpatient services to people who find themselves at the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Whitehorse General Hospital.

In partnership with that corporation and the hospitalist physicians, the Government of Yukon has been working to support a request to formalize what is the current hospitalist program — also sometimes referred to as "doctor of the day" at Whitehorse General Hospital. The Yukon and other jurisdictions are determined to properly resource the hospitalist program, and we are following the lead in many of those jurisdictions.

I simply don't accept — and I know Yukoners do not accept — the picture being painted by the member opposite with respect to how this government has responded to the issues, as I spoke about at some length yesterday, that are unprecedented with respect to the health human resources issues. Our doctors and the relationship here with the Yukon Medical Association is strong. We are working together on all of these important issues on behalf of Yukoners.

Question re: Mineral staking in Na-Cho Nyäk Dun land use planning region

Ms. White: The First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and the Government of Yukon have been working to establish terms of reference and a memorandum of understanding in order to begin land use planning in their territory under chapter 11 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement*. One major sticking point between the two parties remains. At least four times since 2011, Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has formally requested a moratorium on mineral staking in the lands that are slated for planning until the land use planning is complete. Chief Hope most recently asked for this moratorium in July of this year.

The Na-Cho Nyäk Dun territory has been subjected to an immense amount of pressure from the exploration and mining industry in recent years. The more areas that are disturbed, the harder it becomes to establish the protection of sensitive lands.

When will the minister do the right thing and implement a moratorium on mineral staking in the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun land use planning region?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, yes, we are working to begin regional land use planning with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. It would be a portion of the northern Tutchone regional planning area. Yes, we are in dialogue with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and talking with them about how things will start off. Also, we will acknowledge that Chief Hope has asked me about this position several times.

I will note that I took a look at the Dawson regional land use plan. What we did differently there from the Peel was that we withdrew the most sensitive areas right away. When a draft plan came in, we then withdrew everything that was identified through the planning commission as potential areas for conservation to withdraw then, and then finally, with the recommended plan, we did the same thing again, and we continue to be in dialogue with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun about how we will start land use planning together.

Ms. White: I will remind the minister that Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has formally requested the removal of this land four times since 2011.

When this government started the Beaver River subregional land use planning, the Yukon NDP warned this House that mineral claims would pop out of the forest floor — and we were right for Beaver River and, before that, in the Peel. While some of the claims in the Peel were eventually relinquished, there are still thousands of outstanding claims in the region, and it remains to be seen whether the holders will sue for loss of use. There are more claims in the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun traditional territory than any other region of the Yukon, and that number rises constantly. The Mayo region is seen as such an important mining district that the Premier even visited there with the federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry while the town was under an evacuation order this summer.

Despite the growing number of claims in the region, the minister refuses to work with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun government and do the right thing: implement a staking moratorium. Why is the minister refusing to implement the moratorium on mineral staking that the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun government has repeatedly requested in their traditional territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am just going to say, through you, that the member is incorrect, and I hope that she is willing to correct the record. It is not correct. I was there with the Premier and the federal minister, and it was not anytime during the evacuation period, so that is not correct.

Second of all, with respect to the Peel, there was a lot of staking that was done, but what I will say is that 6,500 of the 9,000 mineral claims in the Peel have been relinquished or exchanged for non-monetary compensation — or lapsed. As we work through the Dawson plan, we haven't seen — the way in

which we approached it, we haven't seen that same challenge. Again, ongoing conversation with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun — I appreciate their position, and we are in dialogue directly with them and looking forward to beginning that planning process.

Ms. White: In trying to achieve a compromise, the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun has offered a much smaller area, the Stewart River watershed, to be subject to the moratorium, rather than their entire traditional territory. Still, the Premier has refused to action this request. Not only that, but his minister has refused to engage in good faith with the First Nation on the resource roads regulation and is seeking to undermine the Peel regional land use plan by filing a judicial review of the YESAB decision on Michelle Creek. The *Umbrella Final Agreement* isn't an optional piece of paper that this government can choose to ignore or forget when it's too hard or when it doesn't fit their agenda. It is a foundational agreement for our territory.

So, will the minister explain why his government is so unwilling to uphold the *Umbrella Final Agreement*?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay, to begin with, I didn't hear the Leader of the NDP comment about the earlier one. I will say again that the Premier and I were in Carmacks — we were not in Mayo. Second of all, with respect to resource road regulations, I just reached out — you know, the First Nation chiefs, when they talk to me about the new mineral legislation, they have asked that we try to move faster. With respect to resource road regulations, some have said: Hey, you are moving too fast. What I said to them is: How about we keep going with the resource road regulations but we look for an opportunity to allow for — under successor lands legislation — to review it again so that I live up to their request to move more quickly.

What I will say for Yukoners is that, at every turn, we are working closely with First Nations. It doesn't mean that we always agree on all topics, but we are certainly there respectfully, and I appreciate the effort that First Nations have brought to new mineral legislation, to land use planning, to resource road regulations, and to all of these important initiatives to modernize our mining industry for a positive future for the Yukon.

Question re: Dawson City recreation centre

Ms. Van Bibber: On October 3 of last year, the Government of Yukon issued a press release that said construction of the new Dawson rec centre would start in 2024 and that the total cost would be around \$60 million. However, a CBC Yukon news article from April of this year said that the Mayor of Dawson estimated that the cost of their preferred design option was around \$75.3 million.

How will the government make up the gap in funding for the Dawson City rec centre?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about all of our investments in recreational infrastructure across the territory. There has been a substantial amount, thanks in large part due to the historic investment that the federal government has made into our communities across the territory, our willingness to make those investments on behalf of — and

to invest with the federal government in our communities — in their recreation and their sewer and water and everything else. The Dawson City rec centre is another example of this great initiative.

We currently have a rec centre in Dawson that is really dilapidated and isn't meeting the needs of the community — hasn't met the needs of the community for a very long time. We have seen the Yukon Party stop and start, hold faux sod-turnings on an impromptu basis with nothing to back it up, and then lead the community on for years and years, saying that: It's coming; it's coming; it's coming — it didn't happen.

We have made a commitment to the City of Dawson. We have backed it up with a commitment with the federal government to build a new rec centre for the City of Dawson. As I said in Committee of the Whole just this week, we are working with the community to make sure they get the rec centre that they not only want but that they can afford, and we're working on that right now. We're going to go to tender in 2024 for site prep, and that community is going to have their new rec centre.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislature that his department will be tendering the site prep for the new Dawson rec centre in 2024 and that construction will begin in 2025. In April of this year, the Mayor of Dawson told CBC Yukon that the shortfall in capital funding was the big stumbling block for this project.

Can the minister confirm that the Yukon government still intends to release a tender for the site prep for the new rec centre in 2024, and can he confirm when construction is planned to begin?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I don't know if the mic is working, but just two seconds ago, I said: site prep in 2024, construction in 2025. We're working with the community on schematic drawings to make sure that they have the community rec centre that they not only want but that they can afford. This is important work. We are working with our municipalities. I have a very good working relationship with municipalities. I have spoken to the Mayor of Dawson on a regular basis. He has my phone number. We're constantly in conversation.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Party did not deliver on a long-standing promise and led the community on. My good colleague the MLA for Klondike has been a really firm advocate for this project. It's a good project for the community and we're going to build that project. We have an investment commitment from the federal government.

The members opposite are laughing off-mic, but this is not a funny issue. This is leading on a community for years and years and years. They have long memories and they remember that. We're going to deliver on this project.

Ms. Van Bibber: The Mayor of Dawson has also pointed out that the yearly operating cost of the proposed new facility could be a problem for the municipality to afford. He said, quote: "... the city of Dawson knows we've recently moved forward with some serious rate increases and even with the increases, this new proposed rec facility is not necessarily something that can be afforded under the current tax and grant structure that Dawson City has."

What support is the Yukon government providing to Dawson to help them afford the new rec centre that the Yukon government has promised?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker — old news. The member opposite is referring to a news article from April. I spoke with the mayor this summer. We have had many conversations on this very subject. As I said in my earlier answer not more than 45 seconds ago, we are working with the community to make sure that they have the community centre that they want and that they can afford. I have spoken to the COO of Dawson City, with the mayor and council. We have discussed this issue. They understand that they need to build a rec centre that they can afford. I understand that.

We are working with the City of Dawson to make sure that they get the replacement rec centre that they have long needed — and were led astray for years and years and years by the former government that led them intentionally along the line: It's coming next year; it's coming next year. It never showed up; that train never arrived. Well, we are going to deliver this project. We are working with the community, leveraging our good relationship that we have with municipalities to make sure that they get the rec centre that they need and that they can afford.

Question re: Dawson City daycare

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, in his very first promise as Liberal leader in the Fall Sitting of 2015, the MLA for Klondike promised to fund the construction of a replacement building for the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson. We are just a few weeks away of the eight-year anniversary of that promise, so I would like to ask the Minister of Education: How much funding is in the current budget for the replacement of the Little Blue Daycare building?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise to speak about early learning and childcare in the territory and the investments that we are making in that regard. We have seen historic investments over this year alone. We are investing \$43 million in early learning and childcare throughout the territory. Certainly, Little Blue Daycare is a priority for us. In 2022-23, the society applied for and received CDF funding to advance the next steps of their building project, which involved hiring a professional contractor for the Little Blue design and cost estimates. That was a result of meetings that I had directly with their board.

The cost for this step was \$102,000, of which they received \$75,000 from the community development fund. The society committed \$12,500 and Early Learning and Child Care contributed \$14,500. In 2022-23, Early Learning and Child Care provided \$8,430 for further feasibility. I will continue on with my answer as we proceed.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would remind the minister that it has been eight years since the MLA made that promise. Of course, she is correct that the committee has done the work and provided it to the Yukon government and is now looking for funding from the Yukon government.

Will the minister commit that next year's budget will include the full capital amount for the construction of a new Little Blue Daycare?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, our government is working closely with the not-for-profit society for the Little Blue Daycare. They have done a lot of work at the community level and we really did have to work toward ensuring that we had full, updated plans for Little Blue. There have been a lot of really great investments in early learning and childcare in the community. We now have a privately run daycare in the community as well. Of course, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in continue to run their early learning and childcare centre and Little Blue is, of course, a very important partner in delivering early learning and childcare in the community.

We have transfer payment agreements with all of them and will continue to support them. We are working with them on next steps in terms of the building of a new facility. I am happy that they have been able to do the groundwork to allow for a full decision.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would point out that the minister was careful to avoid any sort of commitment around capital funding for this project. She is correct that the work has been done to develop the design and come up with the funding plan. Of course, now the request rests with the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education could decide to add to the capital budget and provide this funding to the community of Dawson if she chose to. The wait-list for Little Blue Daycare currently sits at 42 people. We have heard from the community that they have had to turn away doctors and nurses and other professionals because they simply can't provide childcare in the community. They have plans for a design and they have plans for staffing. They just need support from this Liberal government.

I would, of course, point out that the MLA promised this eight years ago next month. When will the Liberal government make good on the promise made by the MLA for Klondike eight years ago?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to speak about the historic investments that we are making in early learning and childcare in our territory. It is an exciting time. We have really lifted up a whole new initiative and change to early learning childcare in our territory. We have introduced universal childcare that includes subsidy to parents. Throughout the territory, we have increased accessibility. We have increased

Some Hon. Members: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order.

Speaker's statement

Speaker: It's getting kind of loud in here when members are speaking. When members have the floor, please be respectful.

Minister of Education, please continue.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, we are very proud of the work that we have been able to do. We are leading the country in terms of our

investments in early learning and childcare. Again, \$43.4 million this year and another \$515,000 investment into capital supports that develop data management systems and other initiatives, like wage enhancements for 500 early learning childcare educators, 77 licensed operators, including nine First Nation government-owned and -operated programs.

There are 2,251 licensed spaces in the Yukon. These are incredible statistics. I am happy to continue working with Little Blue, and we will do that good work in good faith with them.

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

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 31: *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I am pleased to welcome, with me this afternoon from the Department of Justice, the deputy minister, Mark Radke and as well, one of our senior policy analysts, Abdul Hafeez, who has worked on this legislation. I am very pleased to welcome them for assistance should it be needed for questions from the members opposite.

I do have some comments with respect to this bill, and I am very pleased. As I noted at second reading, the *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act* is an important opportunity to protect the rights of Yukoners. At second reading, I reviewed the proposed *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act* and

highlighted some key provisions. Today, I will address this bill in a bit more detail here in the Committee.

Hopefully, many of my comments, which aren't too long, will answer questions that might arise with respect to this bill and provide Yukoners with some additional information. The main purpose of the proposed legislation, as members of the Assembly may recall, is to enable fiduciary access to a person's digital assets after their death or incapacity and to prevent online service providers from confining or denying these access rights.

The proposed legislation will enable the Government of Yukon to align our legislation with the best practices of other jurisdictions and is based on the *Uniform Access to Digital Assets by Fiduciaries Act* from the Uniform Law Conference of Canada. The proposed legislation follows the traditional approach of trusts and estates law, which respects the privacy and intention of the individuals on behalf of whom fiduciaries act.

The context behind this bill and what it means for Yukoners is important to fully understand the legislation that is proposed. One of my priorities, and indeed my responsibilities as Minister of Justice, is to provide effective protections to Yukoners, and one of the ways that we are meeting that goal today is by introducing legislation that is adaptive to the evolving needs of our society.

The proposed legislation has been designed with the aim to strike a balance between affirming a fiduciary's rights to fulfill their legal obligations and upholding respect for the privacy and the wishes of the respective individual or the person who, we could say, owns the digital assets.

The Government of Yukon is taking proactive steps here with this legislation to affirm the usual powers of fiduciaries to access assets of a deceased or incapacitated person without restriction on whether the asset is a tangible or a digital property, clearly recognizing the importance of digital property in our modern world. The Government of Yukon is pleased to move forward with this legislation, as it aligns with our commitments to continue modernizing our legislation and ensuring that the needs of current and future Yukoners are met.

I am just going to draw the attention of the members to the specific provisions of the bill. The act facilitates fiduciaries' access to digital assets in order for them to properly administer the property of the individuals on behalf of whom they are acting. It defines the fiduciaries who are covered by the act, such as a personal representative, maybe a guardian, an attorney appointed for an account holder, a trustee, and the public guardian and trustee under specific circumstances. The act also clarifies that the rights of fiduciaries to act are subject to terms mentioned in the instrument that empowers the fiduciary. Those instruments are commonly known as different types of instruments but commonly could include a will, an order appointing a guardian; it could be a power of attorney; it could be letters of administration; it could be an instrument creating a trust; or it could be a court order. This is important for ensuring that the wishes of the individual are respected.

The act applies to appoint fiduciaries or instruments that take effect before or after the act comes into force. The

proposed act does not apply to an employer's digital assets that an employee has used during the time of their employment or during their work. The act also clarifies that the legal duties imposed on the fiduciary for tangible property also apply to digital assets, so it includes those two things as equivalent.

If this legislation passes, which I sincerely hope it does on behalf of Yukoners, a provision in a service agreement from an online service provider would be unenforceable against a fiduciary if it limits the fiduciary's access to a digital asset. There is an exemption to this: when that limitation has been expressly agreed to by the original account holder through an affirmative act that is separate from the account holder's assent to the general terms of a service agreement.

We have all signed up and said that we have read the tiny print and hundreds of pages with respect to signing up for an account, but it can't be a default position in this situation; it must be an express agreement by the original account holder that this legislation, or legislation like it, does not apply.

The legislation imposes an obligation on a custodian of digital assets to provide access to a fiduciary with a right of access under the act. The act establishes a process for fiduciaries to request access to digital assets and specifies the documentation that is required to be provided as part of that request to prove that the fiduciary has the legal authority to access those assets in the interest of the deceased or incapable person. One might draw an analogy to what is required for a fiduciary, for instance, to have access to someone's bank account and what documents need to be presented to the bank in order for them to understand and accept that the fiduciary is acting pursuant to their requirements and pursuant to the wishes of the individual whose assets they are accessing.

The act also allows a fiduciary to apply to the court for direction, and it affirms that custodians who comply with the act will not be subject to liability when granting access to digital assets.

I am pleased to present the *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act* as one component to meet the evolving needs of all Yukoners. Our modern world requires us to respond. Our government is taking these proactive steps toward ensuring that fiduciaries are able to fulfill their legal obligations without interference and that the digital assets of a deceased or incapable person can be managed properly with the utmost respect to their wishes and their privacy.

I look forward to responding to any questions, and I appreciate the time to review this bill.

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, I do not have any additional questions, at this point. I do thank officials for the information that they provided at the briefing, and we do support the concept of this legislation. So, with that, I will wrap up my comments here, and my understanding is that I don't think that the Third Party has questions either, so this will likely be a brief appearance this afternoon.

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, we do not have any questions about this legislation, and I would like to thank the officials for their work in bringing this forward, and the NDP will be voting in favour of this important legislation.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*?

Mr. Cathers: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 31 read and agreed to

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 clauses and the title of Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 10 deemed read and agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Riverdale South that the Chair report Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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. 211: Second Appropriation Act 2023-24 — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Education — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, I am pleased to rise in the House once again to speak to the Department of Education's first supplementary budget for 2023-24. I would like to welcome our officials here from the Department of Education. We have Deputy Minister Mary Cameron and our director of finance, Andrea McIntyre.

I have already given my opening comments in regard to our supplementary budget, so I will just cede the floor to my colleagues.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister and welcome her officials, as well, to the Legislature today to provide support.

I will jump right in. In Question Period today, my colleague the Leader of the Official Opposition asked about a capital commitment for the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson. I will, of course, be sharing those transcripts from Question Period with the organization once they are ready, but I just wanted to follow up with the minister.

My understanding is that the organization has gone through all the outstanding process and asks from the government for them with respect to design, and now they are at a place where they will be looking for a capital contribution from the government. Is that something that they can expect to see in the spring budget — the 2024-25 budget?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am happy to rise again to speak about the work that is happening in early learning childcare. I am well aware of the file as it relates to the Little Blue Daycare in Dawson City. As I stated today, we have had a lot of interaction and have worked closely with the society over the last — since I have become minister, and I know the previous minister before me had dealings with Little Blue.

Since I have become minister, we have moved forward on a number of steps. There was a lot of work that needed to be done to update the plan for Little Blue. Much of that work has happened. The work relating to the Little Blue Daycare involves a number of government departments, and we are continuing to have those discussions with the departments that are working directly or indirectly with Education as the lead in working with the community. Those discussions are ongoing.

The member opposite knows quite well the process in which we work within Management Board and how determinations are made in regard to budgets and updating capital planning — we now have a five-year capital plan — and the work that goes into ensuring that we are working within the government budgeting process to make those decisions at the Cabinet level.

We will continue, as I stated today, to work with the Little Blue board and their staff to ensure that all of the information that is required is contained within their feasibility and planning. There will be more to be said as this file proceeds.

Again, our government is very committed to early learning childcare in our territory. We have made huge strides to make the right investments in this important part of our population — our littlest Yukoners, so we're very proud to share that Yukon educators have been awarded — sorry, I'll go back.

In 2023-24, the budget for early learning and childcare is just over \$43.4 million, with another \$515,000 invested in capital to support the development of data management systems. Among other quality initiatives, the funding supports wage enhancements for more than 500 early learning and childcare educators and 77 licensed operators, including nine First Nation government-owned and -operated programs.

As I stated today, there are 2,251 licensed spaces now available to families and their children in the territory. There

are 1,856 children and their families who were benefiting from universal childcare as of July 2023, with a savings of up to \$8,400 a year for each child enrolled in licensed programs.

Deputy Chair, it is important that you look at the whole context of how we are investing in early learning and childcare in terms of affordability, accessibility, and quality. Clearly, this is a huge priority for our government and we will continue to work with Little Blue to further develop the project that is very meaningful and important to the community and the City of Dawson.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear — just so that we can send the information up to the society — there is nothing else required from them. The minister mentioned that there are a number of departments involved in this project. I am assuming Health and Social Services and Highways and Public Works, obviously, because I understand that it is going to be a multi-purpose space that they are looking at.

As was mentioned in Question Period today, I think that there are 42 children on the wait-list for that facility. Again, just so we can pass this on to the society up there, there is nothing else that the government is looking for from the society with respect to this project. It is now a decision for Management Board whether or not it gets funded in the next budget or put into the five-year capital plan.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We will continue working directly with the Little Blue Daycare through their board and through our staff and officials from Government of Yukon. There are a number of departments that are involved in this particular file. The most recent communication, from my view — we are not looking for any additional information at this point. That may change because we are working with multiple departments, but that will be something that I will communicate directly with Little Blue if further information or something needs to be clarified. We will continue to work with them.

In terms of a wait-list, I will go back and check on that particular statement that was made by the member opposite. In terms of the wait-list for Little Blue, I will go back and check on that, because I shared with the Legislative Assembly today in Question Period that there are now three operating early learning and childcare centres in Dawson City: one that is privately owned, the one that is operated by the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation, and, of course, Little Blue. I will go back and check on that and work, of course, to — I know that our team with Early Learning and Child Care within the Department of Education is in pretty constant communication with all of our licensed operators, and we will go back and check on that and work with them if they need assistance from the Department of Education.

Mr. Kent: That number of 42 on the wait-list was the number that was provided to us by the society. If it has changed, certainly that information would come from them.

I do want to move now over to something else that has been raised with us over the past number of weeks since Education was last up. On page 3 of the minister's mandate letter from the Premier, it says that the Minister of Education would be: "Working to increase student safety by developing and implementing school safety and transportation plans." A very

important part of school safety is a functioning PA — or public address — system. Obviously, if a school has to go into lockdown or if there is something that the entire school population has to be notified about very quickly, a functioning PA system is very important.

From this past weekend's Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees meeting, I understand that there are seven schools that do not have functioning PA systems or don't have a PA system at all. I know that the minister was in attendance at that meeting. I am wondering if she has had an opportunity since then to address that with her colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works and get a work plan in place to either fix or install those PA systems that aren't functioning as part of the work to increase student safety that was put in her mandate letter.

Hon. Ms. McLean: It's very important that school staff are able to communicate effectively during emergencies and during regular programming. We completed upgrades on public announcement systems at Elijah Smith Elementary School in 2018, Grey Mountain Primary in 2019, Holy Family Elementary School in 2021, and the Khàtina.àxh Community School in Teslin in 2022. We also upgraded the public announcement system at the Porter Creek Secondary School and St. Francis of Assisi Secondary School in 2019-20.

Recent upgrades of the Del Van Gorder School public announcement system have been completed. We have also, during the summer of 2023, upgraded the public announcement system in the Carcross Community School. Education has maintenance contracts in place to troubleshoot and repair any public announcement system deficiencies reported by the schools.

Work is ongoing at the Elijah Smith Elementary, Porter Creek Secondary, St. Francis of Assisi, Selkirk, and Christ the King Elementary schools to address any potential system errors and source parts as needed.

Yes, I was in attendance at the meeting over the weekend with the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees and this was an item that was raised there. We are working closely between the Department of Education and Highways and Public Works to ensure that we are rectifying any issues with public announcement systems. As I stated, it is very important that school staff are able to communicate effectively, especially during emergencies but also during regular programming in the schools.

Mr. Kent: Is there a timeline that we can provide to those schools that either have a PA system that is not functioning properly or don't have one at all? Is there a timeline that we can provide to them as to when those systems will be in place — recognizing, of course, that the department has to work with the Department of Highways and Public Works presumably on getting that work done? This is something that we would like to inform those school communities about — when they can expect functioning PA systems in their schools.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are working directly with each school community, so I don't believe that we need to rely on the member opposite to communicate with the schools. I believe that this work is ongoing.

As I have stated, we do have contracts in place to troubleshoot and repair any public announcement system deficiencies that are reported by schools. I think that is the main thing — that they need to be, of course, communicating early and quickly to the Department of Education so that we are aware of any issues directly that they may be having with these systems. We will be working directly with each school community to address any issues that they are currently having.

Mr. Kent: We will continue, in the opposition, to meet with school communities and address their concerns and bring them forward to the House. I won't get into that anymore with respect to that comment by the minister.

I wanted to move over to the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement, which is in the five-year capital plan and is scheduled to be done. Earlier in this Sitting, we asked about a contract with a consultant who was determining where on the Takhini reserve the school could go, whether or not the existing Takhini school would have to be torn down, or whether or not other locations needed to be chosen.

I guess my first question for the minister is: When can we expect that consultant report to be finished and when will it be made public?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is an important project for the Department of Education in terms of upgrading infrastructure, and the commitment to build and replace this particular school is a high priority for the Department of Education and for our government overall.

In August 2023, Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd was awarded the prime consultant contract for the École Whitehorse Elementary replacement project through a public tender. A preliminary site assessment is currently underway. That is the phase we are in. I am unable to give you a definitive timeline around that. Of course, we would like this work to be done as quickly as possible to move into phase 2. The contractors will work, then, on a traffic study, which will be conducted to report on local impacts of the development. Pedestrian safety, traffic access, and egress from the site will also be assessed.

Again, we are working in a phased approach, and as soon as I am able to bring that information forward to our partners and then, of course, to the public, we will do that as quickly as we can. Moving forward on this project is very important and timely and a priority for our government.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to confirm that, in that consultant contract that is underway right now — and we brought this up in Question Period earlier this Sitting — located in there is whether or not to tear down the Takhini Elementary School to accommodate the new school on that land reserve and whether or not the contractor has been asked to consider other potential locations for the school beyond the Takhini reserve, because as members know and as the public who have been following this issue know, the government has been quite adamant that this is the only site that is suitable, that Takhini land reserve, which, of course, contains Takhini school and three Softball Yukon ball diamonds that they use for slo-pitch and softball tournaments and league play here in the territory.

Again, I just wanted to make sure that I have this information correct. Is the teardown of Takhini school being

contemplated by the contractor? As well, is the contractor being asked to consider other locations outside of the Takhini educational land reserve?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I have had the opportunity this Sitting, and during the last Sitting, to have a lot of discussion around the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary. The Takhini educational land reserve is a very large parcel of land. It is serviced, is appropriately zoned, and provides a central location that has better access to greenspace, which is desired, of course, for modern learning. An initial step in the work is to identify potential locations for the future school on the Takhini educational land reserve, at which point engagement with the First Nation School Board and Softball Yukon will occur. Engagement then will happen with the broader community and partners.

In terms of the contractor that is currently doing the work around the preliminary site assessment — which I have already stated, of course — is underway. We, of course, wanted to give them as much scope as we could to assess the entire property for the building of this new school, and that is currently underway. They will bring back the options to us, and then decisions will need to be made.

Again, this is a large educational land reserve that can accommodate two schools, which is why it was chosen. Currently, the contractor is looking only at the Takhini educational land reserve.

Mr. Kent: Deputy Chair, I guess we'll wait until the contractor produces that report and it is made public, and then we will have an opportunity to check out what their recommendations are with respect to tearing down the existing Takhini school or possibly considering other locations or whatever those recommendations may be.

I do want to move over to other capital plans for school replacements in Whitehorse. The document that I have is dated April 14, 2022. It's entitled the "Whitehorse school replacement ranking update". There are 16 schools in the Whitehorse area that are ranked in terms of when they need to be replaced. Some of the older ones are obviously — the top five are: Whitehorse Elementary — that we were just talking about, as far as being potentially relocated and a new facility built in Takhini — the second one is Selkirk Elementary, followed by Takhini Elementary, Wood Street Centre, and Christ the King Elementary.

Does the minister have a plan going forward? Are we looking at replacing or renovating one of these schools every couple of years — every three years? What is the timeline and the plan going forward to address — let's just focus in on those five schools, because I think they had, obviously, the top five rankings, as far as the Whitehorse area schools. So, again, Whitehorse Elementary, we know, is under consideration for replacement, followed by Selkirk, Takhini, Wood Street Centre, and Christ the King Elementary. I'm just looking for an update on what those school communities can expect for timing to address their schools.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We continue, of course, to work with school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. The Government of Yukon's five-

year capital plan includes school replacement and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come. We are, of course, pleased that work is underway on new schools in Whistle Bend and Burwash Landing. Planning has started for the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary School. The Government of Yukon's five-year capital plan also includes experiential learning spaces. In the 2023-24 fiscal year, experiential learning spaces are being constructed at St. Elias Community School, J.V. Clark School, Tantalus Community School, and Jack Hulland Elementary School.

Capital planning decisions are made based on current information and facility assessments, supplemented with educational programming needs and emerging enrolment trends and pressures. Engagement with the broader Whitehorse community and partners took place this spring. The public had access to an online survey between March 14 and May 15, 2023. Public open houses were also held throughout April. Additionally, there were direct e-mails and letters sent to all Whitehorse school councils inviting them to meet with the public engagement specialist to hear their feedback and participate, as part of the Whitehorse school capital planning public engagement. There were a number of schools that did participate in that and accepted the invitation.

The results of the public engagement are now available in the form of a "what we heard" report, which can be accessed at yukon.ca. This feedback will inform future planning for Whitehorse school renovations and replacement. We will continue to have conversations with school communities — and, of course, the two school boards — about facility needs, as we plan for future school projects. All of the schools that the member has referenced are part of our work with school councils, school communities, and/or school boards.

Mr. Kent: In the spring, Christ the King Elementary School Council wrote a letter to the government with respect to seismic upgrades to their facility. I am just trying to get a sense for where they rank in the overall priority list for replacements.

In the school rankings that we were just talking about, they are currently fifth. I am wondering if, subsequent to that letter, any meetings between the minister or her officials took place with the school community just to talk to them about the seismic and, I believe, energy efficiency upgrades that they were looking for to the existing facility, while they wait their turn for a new facility to be built.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We continue to work with school communities on planning for their short-, medium-, and long-term facility needs. I have met with the school council, along with our officials, and the deputy minister has had at least two subsequent meetings with the school community directly to work through the issues that were raised in the letter at our meeting. The work is ongoing.

The Yukon government takes great pride in maintaining school buildings. The safety and well-being of children in our schools is always our highest priority. Christ the King Elementary School, of course, as the member has noted, is one of our older schools, built in 1960, with an addition added in 1965. Highways and Public Works is aware of the issues raised

this past spring about Christ the King Elementary School's seismic retrofit and capital infrastructure investments.

Highways and Public Works regularly assesses schools, and if potential structural issues are identified, we immediately address them. Over the years, we have invested in the maintenance of Christ the King Elementary School and we will continue to do so throughout the life of the building — meeting directly with the school council. We have had at least three meetings, one of which I was part of, and our deputy minister continues to meet directly with the school community. I will just end there.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that update from the minister on the concerns raised by Christ the King Elementary School Council in that letter they sent in the spring.

I wanted to ask about the high schools. Number 15 and number 16 on the school rankings — or the two last spots — are occupied by F.H. Collins, as well as Paul-Émile Mercier Secondary, which, of course, is the francophone high school. Vanier Catholic Secondary is ranked 13th out of 16 and Porter Creek Secondary is ranked 10th out of 16. Of course, F.H. Collins and Mercier are two of our newest schools in the territory, so one would expect them, I guess, to be ranked lower on this list, but one of the concerns that they are facing — both of those schools — and we have also heard from Porter Creek Secondary School. My colleague the Member for Porter Creek North was at their council meeting last night. They are experiencing some overcrowding issues as well, similar to what F.H. Collins and Paul-Émile Mercier are experiencing.

I am just wondering if the minister can share any of the work that the department has done around projected attendance over the next number of years for those schools and what is planned. I know that F.H. Collins and Mercier have asked for portables. I understand that Porter Creek Secondary is seeking an addition to their school. I have not heard from Vanier — pardon me, it's St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School. I am just curious if the minister can share with us any plans for secondary schools. Obviously, the numbers that are coming up from the elementary schools are starting to grow. There are a number of French immersion kindergarten classes at Whitehorse Elementary and Selkirk Elementary that will eventually be feeding into those schools.

I am just curious about what long-term planning has been done with respect to the existing secondary schools and if there is any consideration being given to building another secondary school in Whitehorse to meet some of these population increases that we're seeing and some of the enrolment pressures that the school councils are now bringing up to us.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Department of Education monitors school enrolment to help school administrators and school communities plan for changing trends and meet their short-, mid- and long-term needs. The school population is increasing and we expect it will continue to grow over the years to come. We are prioritizing work on long-term capital planning.

Of course, we have talked a lot about elementary schools today and the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary and the new school in Whistle Bend, which will help to address the

enrolment growth on the elementary side in the north end of Whitehorse. We have added, of course, portables to Hidden Valley Elementary, Selkirk, and Golden Horn. If enrolment at a school nears program capacity, we work with the school administrator and council to find ways to accommodate all students. If needed, we work with families on a case-by-case basis to place students at other schools where space is available.

The Department of Education works with the two school boards — the First Nation School Board and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon — to assess their enrolment pressures and determine their long-term school capacity needs.

The department is working to address the short-, mid-, and long-term student enrolment growth by taking the following actions: in the short term, by consistent use of new attendance areas and sending students to other area schools if their grade level is full, and in such a case, transportation support is provided with busing and/or subsidy if school busing is not available; in the mid term, by adding portables to increase the number of classroom-sized spaces available and by monitoring attendance areas and the number of students who live in a school's attendance area to align with the school's enrolment capacity; and long term, by confirming approved projects through the Government of Yukon's five-year capital plan and continued long-term facility planning for schools through the capital planning.

In terms of school growth, school growth plans are a really important way to focus on student success and the impact on school-level strategies to improve student learning outcomes and engagement. Each school is responsible for developing and implementing a school growth plan that is reflective of the needs of their community and students. School growth plans are collaboratively developed with Yukon First Nations, school councils, school boards, school staff, and students. All schools include Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being in their school growth plans, aligning cultural, language, and traditional perspectives with the curriculum and local priorities.

I think that some of what we are seeing now in the addition of those outdoor learning spaces and experiential learning spaces is a direct result of that level of collaboration.

We definitely work with school communities on ways that they can organize their building's learning spaces to meet the needs of their students and programs. We monitor all schools to help administrators and school communities plan for enrolment and needs for the short, medium, and long term. Modular classrooms are an option to address enrolment pressure in schools. Enrolment pressure is also a key element of the long-term capital planning process, which is part of what we are in now. We certainly are aware that there are pressures in terms of our Whitehorse-based high schools. We will continue to work closely with those school communities around short-, medium-, and long-term options for them.

Mr. Kent: Just for F.H. Collins school, which, I believe, has a request for a portable that goes back to last year, and they were expecting it in the 2023-24 budget, but then it was bumped from that budget. I believe that Mercier, as well, has requested portables.

I am wondering if the minister can give us a status on those two requests. Can those school communities expect portables to alleviate some of their population concerns for next year?

While the minister is on her feet — I know that she referenced short-, medium-, and long-term enrolment projections. I don't need it here today, but I am hoping she can return via letter or legislative return with what those projections are for whatever time horizon they go out to — for the Whitehorse area high schools in particular. If those statistics exist for other schools in the territory, we would welcome those as well.

Again, the first part of the question is with respect to the portable requests from Mercier and F.H. Collins, and the second part was just requesting whether the minister could provide us with those enrolment projections for schools in the territory.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are well aware, of course, of the requests that have been made. Going back to part of my previous response is that we work in the short, medium, and long term. We are currently looking at short- and medium-term solutions for the school communities that have been mentioned here today by consistent use of new attendance areas and sending students to other area schools if their grade level is full — some of it is working a bit on a case-by-case basis — and by adding portables, if that is deemed the right solution for the school community and then looking at that long term.

Yes, we are monitoring enrolment in all schools to look at the students who are exiting — or student enrolment and the increases there but also students who are exiting grade 7 and then also the graduation rates throughout the Yukon — so, very carefully monitoring that. As I started out with, the Yukon's population is increasing, and we do expect that it will continue to grow over the years to come. We know that there will continue to be pressures on our schools. We are working to catch up on some of our infrastructure within the Department of Education throughout and will continue working closely with all of our partners around this, including our two school boards that we have in the Yukon right now.

Yes, we will continue to work closely with — we have been working with F.H. Collins and Mercier and will continue to work with them on the short-, medium-, and longer term solutions for their school communities.

Mr. Kent: I am sorry — I am not sure if I missed it, but I was hoping for a commitment from the minister to provide us with those enrolment projections for the schools. If she is able to do that when she is on her feet next, that would be great, understanding, of course, that she mentioned that those figures do exist and that the research is undertaken by the department. It would just be helpful for us to inform the various school communities that we talk to about the projected enrolment for their schools.

Moving over to the Whistle Bend school now, I have a few questions. The first one is: With enrolment for next year — you know, again, we understand that the school is going to be ready for students in the fall of 2024 — I am curious what the projected enrolment is for the school next year and when the staffing allocation will be set. I guess the final part of that

question is: What effects are the minister and the department expecting to have on neighbouring schools, such as Jack Hulland, when it comes to their population and their staffing allotment once Whistle Bend opens?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am really happy to speak about the Whistle Bend Elementary School today. Its construction is underway and is expected to be completed in the winter of 2023-24. In preparation for the new school, a Whistle Bend school attendance area has been created. This attendance area is based on the city boundaries for the subdivision, plus portions of the previous Takhini Elementary School area, which is now being governed by the First Nation School Board.

The Whistle Bend Elementary School Council has a role guiding aspects of the school build and will assume regular school council duties, such as hiring a principal, which is currently underway. I would be happy to bring more information as it becomes available around this. Again, standing up a whole new school and school community is very exciting work that is underway, and we're really looking forward to the opening of this new school and also to see where and how other school communities may be impacted or not impacted. So, there's a lot more to come here.

In terms of the previous question around enrolment projections, we can share statistics that we have and any new information that we generate through our work on looking at the projections for student enrolment in schools across the territory.

Mr. Kent: Deputy Chair, I thank the minister. I look forward to getting those figures as far as projected enrolments.

Again, just back to the Whistle Bend school, as the minister mentioned, the Whistle Bend school council is up and running. I believe they are out to recruit a principal, as the minister mentioned, as well, but for them and for schools like Jack Hulland school which are going to be affected once the school opens, has there been work undertaken yet to determine what the enrolment numbers would be at Whistle Bend versus Jack Hulland and then potentially what the shift in staff might be looking like as well? I know that this is a question that has been raised at the Jack Hulland Elementary School Council meetings, and it's just something that we would like to get the minister on the record here today so that we can share that with them, as far as what planning is underway with respect to Whistle Bend school-opening population and then a potential decrease in population at Jack Hulland and if there are any other schools that may be affected as well.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, thank you for the question. In providing consistent service levels in all schools, maximum class sizes are set in the collective agreement between the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Association of Educational Professionals. Staffing allocation is primarily based on student enrolment and class sizes. Our human resource staff are working closely with the union around the standing up of a whole new school and knowing that there will be some impacts to other school communities. Student enrolment has increased in recent years, and the department is working to ensure consistent service levels in schools and that effective, targeted support is provided for students with diverse

learning needs, for instance. While overall enrolment is increasing, some individual schools have decreased enrolment, which may have impacted their school staffing allocation.

This is specific, what the member is asking about — the new Whistle Bend Elementary School — and we are very live to all of the work that needs to be done there. Our human resource staff are working closely with the union around the staff-up and the enrolment for this new school.

Mr. Kent: As soon as information is available, the minister and the department, I am hoping, will share that with those school communities, including Whistle Bend, that are going to be affected once the new school opens next year.

I wanted to jump back to the minister's mandate letter for a little bit. One of the points that the minister has been tasked to do by the Premier is to work with school communities to determine the unique requirements of the students in their school.

Can the minister expand on that a little bit? What work has been undertaken with school communities? How many school communities? What sort of unique requirements are being flagged by the minister and the department for students in individual schools?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, I think that a big part of our work is responding to the 2019 audit — the *Final Report of the Review of Inclusive and Special Education* and the Child and Youth Advocate *Review on School Attendance* — by supporting students and delivering timely and effective help for their learning needs. We continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to reimagine, reshape, and create schools that are safe, inclusive, and build on student strengths to ensure that every child feels connected and supported to thrive. This includes developing, for instance, a comprehensive mental health and well-being approach that aligns with the Yukon mental health strategy. The approach will include prevention and development and clinical responses and will improve connections to mental health and well-being supports provided by partners and stakeholders.

In November 2021, the First Nations Education Commission and the Advisory Committee on Yukon Education approved their reimagining inclusive and special education work plan, which addressed the review of inclusive and special education, as well as the Yukon Child and Youth Advocate *Review on School Attendance*. This work is guided by our collective efforts to transform the education system, address barriers to inclusion, and improve education outcomes for all students. We continue to advance initiatives in this work plan. It is guiding a lot of our work. We are also working with our education partners to support experiential learning opportunities in Yukon schools.

I wanted to just draw some attention to a key initiative that was launched in the fall of 2022, which is the Ready-to-Learn Schools, based on the ground-breaking work by Dr. Bruce Perry's neurosequential model. The program is grounded in understanding that children can only be ready to learn when they feel safe and calm. This model trains teachers and staff to be developmentally responsive to recognize that a child's chronological age may not match their emotional, cognitive, or

social age. Most importantly, it helps educators understand how developmental adversity impacts brain development, functioning, and learning.

This initiative empowers our teachers and school staff to understand, honour, support, and guide our children so that they are ready to learn as they travel along their own unique path. That is very important work that is underway and has been underway for some time. Over the last couple of years, we have been investing in a number of important initiatives. Several school communities offer experiential learning programs, which is another great example — Golden Horn Elementary School's great outdoor experiential school philosophy, which is weekly class blocks dedicated to providing students with challenge and achievement through academic, athletic, cultural, and social endeavours. This is a really important initiative, and there are many to draw on throughout all of our school communities.

Building on that, in our school capital planning projects, we have experiential learning spaces that will be developed at St. Elias Community School, J.V. Clark School, Tantalus School, and Jack Hulland Elementary School, so those are new investments that we are making to support school communities in their endeavours around experiential learning. There is certainly a lot of work happening around the learning network project that is really empowering school communities to explore different ways of meeting their unique needs within their school communities.

I had the opportunity, last year, to be able to experience presentations from all of those school communities that are involved in the learning network. We know, of course, that a lot of good work is going to come from that. In fact, that is how Takhini Elementary School led their way to the Ready-to-Learn project that now has been reshaping the culture of many of our schools, and we are working toward ensuring that Ready-to-Learn is in all of our schools.

This was a community of inquiry that was unique, initially, to the Takhini Elementary School and now again has become adopted as a move toward changing the culture in all of our schools. So, yes, those are some great examples of how we are working to address the unique needs of school communities.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that. Maybe what I will do is either submit a written question or send a letter to the minister just trying to get a breakdown of which school communities have been worked with and, you know, how they were worked with, as well as what unique requirements of the students have been identified for each school in the territory that has been underway. I guess I will essentially be looking for a progress report on this specific point in the minister's mandate letter.

I do want to jump over to something that we have talked about in Question Period this Sitting as well, and that is the parent advisory committee. Initially, a parent advisory committee was set up for Hidden Valley school to deal with, I believe, the implementation of the safer schools action plan, as it related to that school. Then, in early September, the minister was on CBC Radio and was talking about transitioning that

parent advisory committee that was specific to Hidden Valley into a broader one that is for all Yukon schools.

Now, I think what I have been able to ascertain from the minister during Question Period is that it would be one committee for all schools — not one committee per school. I am just curious if the minister can tell us: Is this committee set up, and how is it representative of all of the schools in the territory? Many of the school councils that we have talked to are unaware of what this committee is doing and how their work sort of complements the work of the school councils. I am just curious if the minister can elaborate on that for us.

After I ask that question, I will be turning the floor over to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King. I just wanted to once again thank the officials for attending here today. I look forward to the answer from the minister on the parent advisory committee for all Yukon schools that she announced on CBC Radio in early September.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, I think I am going to go back a little bit to the other question. There are a few other things that I would like to just share around — happy to receive a letter from the member to define what is happening in schools, but again, our work is with the entire education system.

I wanted to talk a little bit about formal assessments as well, which really do determine specific needs of students. Student Support Services branch has reviewed its service delivery model and is now centralizing waiting lists for consultations and assessments. This prioritizes students with the most urgent needs in the 2023-24 school year. Regular training will be provided for learning assistance teachers and other school team members. This training will cover the school-based team process, collaboration with Student Support Services, and the assessment referral procedure.

I think that this is just an important aspect of the work that we are doing to ensure that we know what the pressures are in all of our schools and ensuring that we are getting those assessments done in a timely manner. Student Support Services has also contracted additional psychologists to help minimize the wait-list. Currently, we have standing offer arrangements in place with four private educational psychology providers — two within Yukon and two outside of the territory. These standing-offer arrangements are for three years.

Student Support Services is also actively working to establish a funding program that will enable the provision of financial assistance for private psychological assessments. This assistance will be extended to families and caregivers who have been waiting more than six months after consent forms have been signed. So, a lot of work around that whole area to get a good handle on the direct needs of children, and again, that is another way that we are working closely with school communities to ensure that we know what their needs are within their school communities.

Turning to the parent advisory committee, the Department of Education is in the early stages of transitioning the existing parent advisory committee at Hidden Valley Elementary School to a broader Yukon parent advisory committee. This allows for continuity, while expanding the scope to include feedback from parents at a territorial level. Forming a Yukon

parent advisory committee demonstrates our ongoing commitment to student safety. This initiative builds on the foundational work achieved through the safer schools action plan. We recognize that parents and guardians are essential partners in education. The committee will be a platform where parents can share their views and experiences to help make Yukon schools safer and to foster student well-being by bringing together parents and guardians from the three different school authorities in the Yukon.

The committee will offer a way to talk about safety issues that are Yukon-wide or unique to their community. This way, the Minister of Education and department staff can make well-informed decisions to improve safety for all students in the Yukon.

The Yukon parent advisory committee will maintain an open channel of dialogue with the Department of Education and with me, providing a platform for recommendations and discussions on next steps for enhancing safety in Yukon schools. Of course, we will continue to work with all of our educational partners, all school councils and school boards in the way that we normally do. This is an additional lens that I am seeking to have in place.

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. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 3, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, I would like to welcome the officials this afternoon and thank the minister for the conversations that she has had with my colleague leading up to now. My series of questions will be all over the board in large part because some questions have been asked and answered. I will just be building on some of those and then go in a different direction.

One of the first things that I would like to start with is the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement and, most importantly, I would say conversation that has happened in Takhini, but that would be disingenuous. My neighbourhood continues to write letters to the minister and indicate their interest in being involved in this discussion. When will Takhini be involved in the École Whitehorse Elementary School replacement?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, thank you for the question. Replacing École Whitehorse Elementary School is, as I have said many times, a really important project for the Government of Yukon and we are happy to be investing in our school infrastructure. As I have stated a few times, we have a

contract in place now with Kobayashi and Zedda Architects Ltd, as the prime consultant on the project. We are currently in the site assessment phase — working to identify the exact location of the new school on the Takhini education land reserve.

As we continue to progress, we will work with the First Nation School Board and the project advisory committee to address any potential impact, of course, to the Takhini Elementary School as well as the Takhini neighbourhood.

The project advisory committee has been formed to provide advice to the Yukon government on this project. This includes looking at ways in which a new school can meet community needs. The community has designated seats for members right now from the Whitehorse Elementary School Council, Whitehorse Elementary School administration, City of Whitehorse, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and Kwanlin Dün First Nation.

I have heard the questions regarding the community input to this project. If there is an association for the Takhini neighbourhood, I would be happy to appoint a person from an association to this committee. When the site analysis is complete and before the project progresses, the school community, Takhini area residents, the Association franco-yukonnaise, Canadian Parents for French, other stakeholders, and the public will be given ample opportunity to provide feedback. But I would be happy to appoint a person from a neighbourhood association or something equivalent so that the input can be taken directly at that level with the project advisory committee.

Ms. White: I am relieved to hear the minister say this. This is the first time in the many times that we have had the conversation that there has been the indication that a Takhini resident could sit on that committee. There was a notable absence when the minister was going through the list of people who sat on the project advisory committee talking about how it could affect the Takhini community without actually having a Takhini representative.

Interestingly enough, I would say that concerns around the school and that there was no involvement of anyone in the Takhini neighbourhood actually spurred the creation of the Takhini Neighbourhood Association, which in large part came up because people were not getting any kind of response or feedback. I will forward this part of the Hansard excerpt and assure the minister that, in its founding meeting, concerns around a new school were one of the founding reasons why the association started.

One of the other concerns highlighted around the proposed new École Whitehorse Elementary School on the Takhini education plot is the concern around the greenspace in that area and the fact that the Department of Education has not come out strongly against the possibility of a road having to go through McIntyre Creek.

Can the minister let me know if there is a plan to develop a road or access through McIntyre Creek for easier access to this proposed new school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I have stated, we do have our prime consultant in place now. They are in the first part of the

work. The preliminary site assessment is underway, and phase 2 of the contractor's work will include a traffic study and report on the local impacts of the development, pedestrian safety, and traffic assessment. The egress from the site will also be assessed at that time and, of course, traffic access — that is what I meant to say.

A lot more work needs to be done here in terms of that aspect of the work, which is, of course, a key consideration. We will want to work with all of our partners around this, and so that will be the next phase. Really, it's about identifying and making a decision about the location of the new school on the site, which will determine those next steps.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that, but there seems to be a bit of a disconnect. Earlier this year, Yukon government talked about the development of Chasàn Chuà, which is the McIntyre Creek park, as an actual park area. It was a commitment in the Liberal platform in 2021 that it would be a park, and residents — because we have not been involved at all in any step of the process. No Takhini resident is on the project advisory committee; there has been no communication; there has been no public outreach; there have been no discussions led by the Department of Education or anyone else — contractors or any other players around the development of this school. There are big concerns that what this school will do will also put in the justification for a road through McIntyre Creek, which was an election issue actually back in 2011 and has been an issue ever since. I guess my encouragement to the minister right now is to ensure that the space back there that has been identified as being so valuable to so many people — that it is respected and doesn't have a road going through it.

Now that the minister knows that there is the Takhini Neighbourhood Association, how soon could we expect a member of Takhini to be able to sit on that project advisory committee?

Hon. Ms. McLean: In terms of the location that was identified — again, this is a long-standing education reserve and the big draw toward this is, of course, the size and that we will not have to do certain aspects of work for a brand new site. It's municipally zoned; the site doesn't need to be serviced — sewer, electricity, and all of that. These are important aspects, but including access to spaces for innovative, inclusive, and experiential learning is one of the big draws to this location, which is already experienced by having the Takhini school existing there. It's very important to have access to these types of lands and green spaces.

I will leave it there. The work is underway. We will be doing a lot more work around this once we receive our preliminary site assessment and then we will be in a better position to make decisions.

In terms of the project advisory committee, as soon as we are able to have a formal connection with the Takhini Neighbourhood Association, we will be happy to extend that invitation to them. As soon as the contact is made, we will follow up with an invitation.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I would anticipate that she may have an e-mail before the end of the day tomorrow from that neighbourhood association.

In all fairness, the government made this announcement in the summer of 2022. It came out of nowhere. As the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King — and my colleague the Member for Whitehorse Centre — it wasn't anticipated. We were told that there would be updates and that this community would be kept aware of what was going on. To be honest, from my perspective and from where I'm standing, it has been pretty much radio silence, so when I'm asked by people and my neighbours — the people I represent and who live in and around the existing school and the proposed school area — the unfortunate truth is that there is not much that I can say because there hasn't been a sharing of information.

I am looking forward to seeing someone from my community — someone from the neighbourhood — being on the project advisory committee. I think that is going to be really important.

In one of the articles, it talked about how construction was expected to begin once the Whistle Bend Elementary School was completed. I think that this news article might be wrong when it says "fall of 2023", but can the minister let me know when the expected completion date is for the Whistle Bend Elementary School?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, thank you for raising the concerns here today around the consultation and work around the replacement of École Whitehorse Elementary. I certainly will be bringing that feedback back to the prime consultant and the project advisory committee to ensure that there are more sessions and information available — as they become available — to the public and to the community.

In terms of Whistle Bend Elementary, construction is well underway; we are getting close to completion. It is expected to be completed this winter, with a start date of August 2024.

Ms. White: That is good to hear about that new school.

We had previously talked often about the need to update the sexual orientation and gender identity policy, so I was really pleased, with others, to see when that update was announced. I can see online that it says that the policy was updated on August 15 and it talks about what it was reflecting.

Why did the minister choose to have a press conference and to release this prior to the school year being started? I say this in terms of the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance that had really been actively involved in some of this work, and they weren't included in the announcement, nor did they have the chance to see the updated policy prior to its release.

Why was the decision made to have this publicly released prior to the school year starting?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is part of a couple of steps here. We still have more work to be done on the sexual orientation and gender identity policy. We did the release of this, which was in alignment with a technical briefing that we had planned for a public briefing with media. This was work that was underway, and we had completed this particular review and wanted to ensure that we had enough time to provide the training and support to our school staff and administrators. It was not intentional to leave anyone out of this, but we really did want to have it in place for the start of the school year —

which we did — and to be able to provide the supports in a timely manner for the educators and the administrators who would be responsible for ensuring that these changes were integrated into the work and in preparing teachers for the upcoming school year.

This is an important part. This fits two portfolios for me, as the minister responsible for Education and for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. We are fully committed to the ongoing implementation of the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. We still have work to be done, and we have put in some supports, for sure, within the schools to further support the 2SLGBTQIA+ students. The Department of Education did do this update of its sexual orientation and gender identity policy as outlined in the *Inclusion Action Plan* in our work to implement and evaluate the updated SOGI policy. We will continue to engage with students, educators, and other members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

As part of our SOGI policy review, we will look at the best ways to support schools to implement the policy in schools. Our recent partnership between the department and the ARC Foundation — a charitable foundation supporting SOGI-inclusion education practices in K to 12 school settings — has been established to implement the tools and resources of the SOGI 1 2 3 program to help create more inclusive schools for students and to support educators to implement the policy.

Schools with the support of the Department of Education, school councils, school boards, and the guidance of best practice from the ARC Foundation are developing school-based procedure guidelines — again, really working to equip schools with the supports that they need. We will be doing more work to continue to update this policy and to make sure that we are hearing all of the voices that need to be heard in this regard.

Ms. White: Can the minister just let me know what kind of education or support that administration and teachers were given prior to this school year with the announcement of the new updated SOGI policy?

Hon. Ms. McLean: At the beginning of the 2023-24 school year, the Department of Education provided professional development training to administrators and teachers on the requirements of the act, the SOGI, and the safe and caring schools policies.

School administrators have been provided with the information about their legislative responsibilities, of course, as well as reference materials and resources. Counsellors and administrators have been provided with local and national SOGI, gender, and sexuality alliance information. Several Yukon schools already have gender and sexuality alliances and other 2SLGBTQIA+ initiatives.

In terms of the work that we're doing with ARC, as I've mentioned, schools, with the support of the Department of Education, school councils, school boards, and guidance from the practice of the ARC Foundation, are developing school-based procedures and guidelines under the umbrella of the Department of Education's SOGI policy to ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ students are treated with respect and dignity at all Yukon schools, which includes publicly funded Catholic schools.

Again, as the Minister responsible for both Education and Women and Gender Equity, I am fully committed to the ongoing implementation of the inclusion action plan. Much work went into this inclusion action plan with the community, and we are working to ensure that we are implementing all of these important actions. Updating the SOGI policy was one of them. There is still work to be done, which we are looking forward to doing with all of our partners, to ensure that we are hearing all of the voices that need to be heard. We will continue to support our school community, putting new tools and resources in place, like SOGI 1 2 3, and continuing to support them through training and other ways that the school community has identified to us.

Part of that session that we had was, again, another follow-up around spring 2022. The Government of Yukon was pleased to support the amendments to *Education Act* to promote equity and non-discrimination and to ensure that all Yukon schools have safe spaces for 2SLGBT students in the form of activities and organizations. So, part of that work that we did is a regular revisiting — the act changes and now, of course, new policy changes and the new tools and resources that we have put in place.

We will continue to work with our community to ensure that all voices are heard.

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, I thank the minister for that answer. How often are the Department of Education's protocols or policies updated?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, the majority of our policies and procedures are either needs- or issues-based, and, of course, if we are in contravention of any legislative requirements or changes to law in the territory or otherwise, we will adjust our policies to be in alignment with that so that we are ensuring that our policies are aligned with those laws.

Again, the SOGI policy was one for which we had made that commitment. It was outdated; it needed to be updated, and that was the cleanup that we did with this particular policy, and we are continuing to have more discussions about further changes to that policy. There will be opportunity. Going back to the beginning of the questions today around this, around students and educators and other members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, there will be more opportunity, along with all of our other partners whom we are committed to working with on any changes to curriculum or policies that impact their school communities.

Ms. White: One policy, or lack of policy, that affects school communities is no policy specifically around sexual assault of students. The reason I bring this up is that I know that the minister, at the same time as I was, has been again contacted by a family who have lived through a sexual assault of their child in school and near school and the after-effects. I don't think that the House is unfamiliar due to the fact that this was a topic I brought up often in the spring, but it has been brought up again by the family. I went back to the letter that the minister sent me, so I sent a letter to the minister with my concerns — highlighting my concerns in February of this year — and highlighted to the minister that, under the *Education Act*, the minister must establish and communicate goals and objectives

for the whole Yukon education system, and those goals provide a framework for policies and procedures that support healthy, active, safe, and caring learning environments in Yukon schools.

I highlighted that there is no specific education policy regarding student-on-student sexualized assault. The student protection policy lays out what happens if such an event arises between an adult and a student, but there is no existing policy that clearly spells out what happens if harm occurs between students. The reason why I brought it up in the spring is that there was a real-life example, — and again, I have the consent to speak about it, and I am not talking about specifics — but a student who was victimized who then had to be in the same class with the assailant and then had to see the assailant in the hallways, and it seems to me that is something that is missing.

In response to my letter, the minister told me that the violence threat risk assessment protocol is something that would be used. It is interesting, because the *Yukon Education Violence Threat Risk Assessment Protocol* is actually from June 2013. It has a previous deputy minister, it has a previous commanding officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, it has a different deputy minister of the Department of Justice and a different deputy minister of the Department of Health and Social Services, and actually a different president from the Yukon College. This is supposed to be a guiding document of what happens and how threats are viewed.

It says: “Protocol for Assessing Violence and Dealing with High-Risk Student Behaviours”, but even going through this, it didn’t really answer the question. Ultimately, what I am really just looking for — what families and individuals have been looking for — is just the assurance that the Department of Education will create a specific policy that deals with this. For example, it lays out for school administrators that a victim is not the person who is removed from the classroom or removed from the school — that it is not the victim who has to change all of their habits and all of their patterns, that they are not being revictimized. That’s really ultimately all I was looking for in the spring.

Going through what I was told answered those questions, it really doesn’t. So, when can we expect to see a specific policy created that deals very much with the concerns that I have highlighted?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This, of course, is a very important issue to me as well. I appreciate the questions being brought forward today. All students, parents, teachers, and other school staff have the right to be safe and feel safe in their school community. The comprehensive work on the safer schools action plan has highlighted other work that we need to complete to ensure that Yukon schools are safe and inclusive.

There is a need to proactively and responsively address concerns to student harm. Peer-to-peer harm is taken very seriously, and we commit to examining the need for stand-alone policy to address the issue. As we have completed that first stage of the safer schools action plan, this is where we have pulled our attention to.

As we did see in the safer schools action plan the creation of new policy and in light of the work and the concerns that

have been brought forward, this is, of course, the next place that we look to. If serious incidents occur in school, we follow emergency plans and response protocols. This includes working with the RCMP and other agencies, as well as providing support to families involved. I think this is also where all of the work that we have done on the sexualized assault response team comes into play, because we do have a progressive approach to working with victims of sexualized violence, and that includes young people, of course.

We have also developed communication guidance to support school administrators in providing clear and consistent communication to families. In addition, collaborative work has been done by Education and Victim Services in the development of guidelines and victim support plans to support victims of harm to feel safe at school. These are all definite considerations as we go forward.

I will again raise the sexualized assault response team as something that is in place now, and we are working to expand that into communities as well. School staff promote respectful and positive behaviours by providing welcoming and positive spaces for teaching and learning. The few children who come to school intending to be disruptive — it is up to the adults in the school to be sensitive to signs that a student may become dysregulated or demonstrate escalated behaviours.

The violence threat risk assessment training that was referenced here today is certainly something that we are looking at, as well, as we look forward into any stand-alone policies that are required.

Ms. White: I don’t know that I would say that sexual assault and disruptive behaviour are on the same line. There are plenty of — the challenge, I guess, that I have is that there are plenty of education policies that already exist, and the reason — I think we discussed this before — why they were important and good is because it laid out the steps, for example, that an administrator or school community should take.

So, if I look, for example, at the safe and caring schools policy, it lays out behaviours and consequences and it says who will do what and when. It’s clear. The purpose of the policy is to promote the safety of people in the schools to ensure that all members of the school community are treated with respect and dignity. It goes on and lays out the requirements.

There are education policies that cover a wide variety of things, from medication for students to French first language policies to after-school care policies. All of these things lay out what can be expected, but what’s missing in this long laundry list of policies is one that’s very specific.

I appreciate that the minister referenced the sexualized assault response team, but a policy would direct the administrator to contact the sexualized assault response team to help the school, for example, set up a safe plan for the victim. It would be clear. It would say, as an example, that it was not about removing the victim from the classroom but that it was about removing the assailant. It’s not about removing the victim from the school; it’s about removing the assailant from the school. A policy would lay out what those clear guidelines are.

Again, I am just going to urge — possibly plead and beg — the minister to hear the intent of what I’m saying, because it

is just about making things better for future students. The really unfortunate truth is that when I started talking about this, other cases have come forward, and there aren't those policies. I don't need the minister to tell me what exists right now. I have read through them all and none of them deal with this specifically. They talk about bullying. They talk about harassment, but harassment is not sexual assault. It's not the same. It's not disruptive behaviour.

So, I am just urging the minister that when we look at these policies or are creating these policies, this is one that is critical. It can be developed with the sexualized assault response team. It can be developed with people from Victim Services or women's organizations. It's just about putting in clear guidelines for administration and school staff to make sure that when an incident like this is reported as having happened on school grounds or out of school grounds — it doesn't matter; it still affects students — that it is dealt with in a way that we do not revictimize the victim.

In previous work, I know that the minister shares this feeling, so I will leave it; I will walk away from it, but I hope that there will be a press announcement in the future that talks about how this policy has been developed, because I know very specifically that there will be people who will be grateful for that leadership.

I am just going to put it here and I am going to walk away from it, but I will give the minister a chance to respond before I move to my next question — if she has anything she would like to say.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Deputy Chair, thank you for the comments. When I was referring to disruptive behaviour, I was talking about behaviour in schools in general — not about sexual assault or sexual violence. I was simply drawing attention to other types of behaviours that may happen in schools and how the violence threat risk assessment training recognizes signs and responds appropriately. We are looking at that whole approach as well.

Early in my comments to this, I expressed the importance to me, as the Minister of Education and the Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity, of this work. It is not just the work that I have been able to work on within a political position, but it has been my life's work, really, in terms of safety for victims of violence — particularly women.

Peer-to-peer harm is taken very seriously. We commit to examining the need for stand-alone policy to address this issue. Will it be connected with the sexualized assault response team? That is work that we have spent many years developing and doing so with a whole-system approach to how victims of sexual assault and sexual violence are supported, and we will absolutely be drawing on all of that work. We are working closely with Victim Services now.

The point is well taken. I am happy to have the conversation today and to continue to commit to looking at the policies that we have within the Department of Education and how we can support children, our parents, teachers, and other school staff to be safe and feel safe and to be supported in their positions within our schools.

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, I thank the minister, and like I said, I look forward to the announcement of the creation of that policy that deals specifically with the situation we have talked about.

I'm going to move on to student transportation and just about fair funding for school transportation. In the school transportation regulations, under section 2, it says: "Transportation allowances", and it says: "Where a student resides more than 3.2 kilometres by the nearest passable road from the school he or she attends and resides more than 3.2 kilometres from the nearest loading point or bus route, the Department of Education shall pay a transportation allowance for transporting the student to the loading point."

That is going to be my starting point, because it's interesting. I would say, in the Yukon, that there are a lot of different situations in families, and students live in a lot of different places, and in some cases, they may be very close to school. They might just be outside of the allocated spot, and they might be nearby, but as an example, my little sister is building a farm at Fox Lake, and so that is just about 55 kilometres from town, and her entire household gets \$13 a day for her to get her kids into school. Interestingly enough, the two younger kids are in elementary school. The 16-year-old, however, is in high school, and as we all know, teenagers are a different breed.

The reason I want to bring this up is because there was a change that happened in 2004, and it talked about how section 2, prior to 2004, read — and I'll just read it. It says: "The amount of transportation allowance to be provided under subsection 47(2) of the *Education Act* in lieu of transportation shall equal the Government of Yukon car mileage rate payable to public servants to a maximum amount prescribed by the Minister."

The reason why that's relevant is that we all know in this Assembly that if we drive our vehicles, we are awarded a mileage, and it takes in wear and tear on the vehicle, and it takes in the cost of gasoline. Well, on April 28, 2004, there was an amendment that was made to both the *Education Act* and subsection 2(1) of the student transportation regulations, and now it says: "This Order may be cited as the *Student Transportation Allowance Order*." And "(2) The maximum transportation allowance payable under section 47 of the *Education Act* and section 2 of the *Student Transportation Regulations* is \$13.00 per day." So, in 2004, there was a full cut rate of what that cost was.

Interestingly — I have referred to it before, the Wayback Machine — but you can go on to Statistics Canada, and you can see that the cost for gas in 2004 was 93.4 cents a litre in the Yukon. I don't know what community that was in, but Statistics Canada tells me that it was 93.4 cents a litre. The federal government's rates, in cents per kilometre for the use of privately owned vehicles driven on authorized CRA business — which, if we are really going to talk about the federal government, you know, talking about the Canada Revenue Agency is probably a good spot to go. They are pretty good at minding their cents and dollars. They said that the CRA

business travel in the Yukon was 50.4 cents per kilometre in 2004.

The reason why I bring this up is that, when I wrote this letter — because gas prices have changed again. So, this was in July of this year. At the time, gas prices were \$1.839 per litre. The allowance for private vehicle use by a YG employee was 69 cents per kilometre, with a daily mileage rate of \$2.35. We know now that \$13 doesn't cover, for example, the mileage cost.

I use the example of a family living at Little Salmon Lake. So, prior to September 2004, they would have received \$64.50 a day to drive their student to and from school. Now they get \$13, which is based on dollars of the day, a difference of nearly 134 percent. The reason why I bring this up is because it is actually under the jurisdiction and the ability of the minister to change that.

Knowing that this was changed in 2004 when it was put to \$13 a day, is there an intention of the minister to update this? It is 19 years old at this point, and the price of gas has changed. Is there an interest or a plan for the minister to update this amount? If not, why not? If yes, when can we expect to see those changes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It's an important discussion that we are having. We definitely know that transportation is high on everyone's mind all the time when it comes to ensuring that our students get to and from school safely and to ensure that we have reliable transportation. If families live more than 3.2 kilometres from the nearest school bus stop and the student goes to the catchment area school, they may apply for a transportation subsidy to offset the cost of driving.

We are reviewing the student transportation program to ensure that it supports the needs of families and those eligible for transportation allowances. We recognize that students with exceptional needs may require additional support, and we make every effort to accommodate students' transportation needs. I can tell you that this work is underway right now.

Ms. White: That is a delight. When can we expect that work to be completed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The work, as I have stated, is underway now. I am unable to give you any definitive timelines. We have to work within all of our processes within government to ensure that we are doing the due diligence to ensure that we are looking at all of the angles of a decision to follow, of course, the government processes that we work within. I am happy to bring the information back to the member once decisions have been made and to further communicate with those who have outstanding requests with us.

Ms. White: Deputy Chair, I thank the minister for that. I guess one of the questions right now is that there are people who are caught in between this, and again, I don't think that it is going to be hundreds of families driving kids to school — I don't think that it is going to be like that at all — but who should a family or a caregiver contact if they live, right now, quite a bit further out than one would anticipate the \$13 to be adequate support to get children to school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am almost certain that, if there is an ongoing issue or request, the individuals will know this, but

I am happy to share with the Legislature today. Our director of operations is Chris Hanlin, and he would be the one to work directly with families and take those requests.

Ms. White: Fantastic. A big thank you to Chris ahead of time in case they get run off their telephone by phone calls, but I am sure that the minister is right and that it won't necessarily be the case. I am glad that we know whom we should call now if that's the case.

It was discussed by my colleague previously in October, but it has to do with the Hidden Valley play structures. I know that the department committed to installing them and now they are installed, but one of the things that I was told by the school council at the time was that they had to fund this year's smaller equipment piece because they didn't want to disappoint the children. They are hoping that the department will reimburse them for those costs.

One thing that they highlight, though, is that they feel very fortunate that they had the funds in their account. They were actually saving them for an outdoor learning kitchen facility, but they used those funds and then redirected them to playground equipment. They recognize that not every school council necessarily has that fundraising ability or that kind of money on hand.

My first question is: Will the Department of Education be reimbursing the school council for the piece of equipment that they paid for?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Hidden Valley school community has a new playground, which includes three pieces of neurodiverse-inclusive equipment installed over the Thanksgiving long weekend. The replacement playground is now ready for students. This positive upgrade replaces the two previous 30-year-old wooden structures with equipment that is more inclusive and encourages outdoor learning and play.

The social, physical, and developmental benefits of the safe outdoor learning and play area are an important part of a child's education. The Department of Education works closely with school principals and school councils to make short-, medium-, and long-term capital plans for each school. We are continuing to work with the Hidden Valley Elementary School Council to plan for their school needs.

In terms of the specific question about reimbursement, I am unaware of any such request, but that being said, we will follow up with that school council to have that discussion with them directly.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I will also encourage the school council to reach out, but based on an August 2 exchange with them, that is what they indicated.

They also highlighted that the concern around planning — knowing that the decision was made in 2019 that their playground equipment was unsafe and it was just going to be removed. There was no plan to put other equipment in. I know that there is a commitment to put in additional equipment for next year, but why was the decision not made to put it in the capital expenditures in this supplementary budget to make sure that the school had adequate playground equipment for that number of students who are in that school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is very important that we are ensuring that all of the support — and that the school communities are working well to ensure the greatest learning environment for students and staff and that the facility and outdoor needs are addressed. It is a priority for the Yukon government to continue to invest in school infrastructure and to ensure that our schools meet the demand of the unique school communities that they serve. The Department of Education is installing new playground equipment and did part of the work this fall. The assistant deputy minister spoke with the school council chair on July 25, 2023 to let them know that the department will be funding the installation of the procured playground equipment for 2023-24, as well as the playground and installation for the following year.

The commitments are there in terms of ensuring that this equipment is put in place. When I worked with the student advisory committee for Hidden Valley — I again met with them early in the school year. I was informed that the school year had started in a great way and that the school was really working in a good way. This wasn't even an issue that was raised with me by the parent advisory committee. I know that we are continuing to work with the school council. We will follow up on the conversations that we have had here today as well.

Ms. White: Seeing the time, I am just going to try to get a couple of questions in about TOCs.

The deputy minister, my colleague the Member for Copperbelt South, and I and others attended a meeting that was hosted by the Holy Family Elementary School. In attendance also was Selkirk Elementary School Council representatives. We had a really interesting conversation around teachers on call — temporary teachers, substitute teachers, or whatever we want to call them. What I heard directly from both of those school councils was that their schools are desperate. In the case of Holy Family, on average in a day, they are short-staffed by anywhere from 15 percent to 25 percent of their school teaching staff, whether it be teachers or educational assistants. They said that it was a real struggle to get teachers on call.

One of the things that I have heard has been floated about in other places is the discussion around supply teachers. A supply teacher, of course, is a teacher who doesn't have a designated classroom, but they are assigned a school. For example, if a school, on average, is missing five teachers each and every day, maybe the Department of Education decides that they are going to assign them three supply teachers, so that means three permanent teaching staff who are able to support and act in those fill-in roles.

Has the minister — and her officials, I guess — looked into supply teachers or a way to fill those gaps from the teacher-on-call shortage that we're experiencing here in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Great question. We are definitely looking into a lot of different options. That is something that we are prepared to look at, but we do have a current collective agreement. The current term is to June 2024. I think it is a great joint opportunity to collaborate with the association and the union through the negotiation process.

Deputy Chair, seeing 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

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, 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: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance 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.



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 157

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 14, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 14, 2023 — 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: Mr. Speaker, we have a tribute today for Morris Lamrock and there are a number of family and friends who have come to hear us give this tribute. Can we please welcome Susie Anne Bartsch, Morris' partner; and Morris's daughter, Jessie Bartsch. We have Aura-Leigh Birss, Remy Rodden, and Judy Forrest. From the Respectful Workplace Office, Jodi-Lyn Newnham and Morgan Settle, Rob Florkiewicz, Vanessa Stewart, Shyloh van Delft — they are dressed in the bright colours — Lauren Wonfor, Ella Parker, Carrie McClelland, Jacquie Van Marck, Ryan Benson, Heather Ashthorn, Robert Collins, and Deputy Minister Manon Moreau.

Welcome them all, please.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Just to add one more name, Judy Forrest is here.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Morris Lamrock

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Yukon and the Official Opposition, I rise today to pay tribute to Morris Lamrock, who passed away earlier this year on Groundhog Day.

Morris was an exceptional, lifelong voice for community and environmental stewardship. He committed so much of his life to building a stronger, more inclusive world.

For many years — the better part of two decades — Morris inspired the next generation of environmentally minded Yukoners through the coordination of Environment's beloved Yukon Youth Conservation Corps and Conservation Action Team programs, Y2C2 and CAT camp. Through CAT camp, he provided over 500 youth with opportunities to experience the Yukon's environment through multi-day river trips.

Over the years, Morris oversaw hundreds of Department of Environment summer students. Many of them have gone on to become environmental and conservation leaders in their own right. Over the years, his students completed more than 250 environmental and community-service projects across the

territory, creating an impact in our territory that is still felt today.

Morris was truly unique. He helped others feel comfortable beating to the tune of their own drum — or pennywhistle — and served as a role model for so many young people. He was a great dancer, Mr. Speaker.

When people talk about being their authentic self, Morris certainly walked that walk. He was an amazing listener, an out-of-the-box thinker, and a 100-percent, all-the-time voice for a more sustainable Yukon and world.

When we think of the potential behind the idea of my work family, we can see Morris' legacy shine brightly. He was a community builder, a work culture guru, a connector, and an idea spreader. He had contagious energy and was an example of creating win-wins at every turn. He was also a long-standing member of the Department of Environment's wellness committee, the health and safety committee, and was the shop steward and union representative.

Other highlights of Morris' varied career include: founding the Moss Street Farmers Market in Victoria, BC; helping to establish the Whitehorse thrift store; creating a uniquely Yukon board game to help students learn about human-environmental impacts; writing a book about the wisdom of cats subtitled "What Cats Can Teach Us About Being Fully Human If We Would Only Slow Down and Listen"; and, finishing his career in the public service, working at the Respectful Workplace Office. All of this work led to his recognition through a Premier's award in 2019, alongside his partner in good work, Remy Rodden.

Through little ways, he made big changes — the work hockey rink, the compost program, the claim to fame that Morris had more plants per square foot than any other government desk — that was all Morris.

While Morris is gone now, he remains our instigator of joy and his legacy lives on. I remember myself walking with Morris and his incredibly earnest way of listening. He just made me feel so important.

Of all his relationships, Morris most cherished his family: his mom, Anne; his partner, Susie Anne; and his daughter, Jessie, who, by the way, just graduated from high school with honours.

Thank you for being here today. Take this moment to remember him and recognize the impact that he had on our territory as a builder of community and a steward of life.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to remember Morris Lamrock and celebrate a life well lived.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the beautiful life of Morris Lamrock and I thank my colleague for his heartfelt tribute.

Morris was kind, he was curious, he was playful, and he deeply loved people, the environment, and the world around him. I remember meeting him for the first time in 2011 when I was invited for tea during the territorial election campaign. Lucky for me, his dear friend Lisanna lived in the riding. What I didn't realize is that, at the time, I was walking into an

intervention on electoral reform. The conversation was educational, it was passionate, it was respectful, and it was deep. It made an impact and I am still trying to accomplish the work that he envisioned that day.

Very few of our conversations in the following years were ever about the weather. He liked to get straight to the heart of things and I always left feeling better. Morris made a huge impact on all who knew him. He would give you his full attention. Talking with Morris was like standing in a warm and caring spotlight — you were the centre of attention.

The stories and photos that were shared before and after his passing showed the true depth of the man and the sheer reach of his impact. I thank Susie Anne and Jessie for sharing so much of him with the community, for your open hearts mirrored his so perfectly.

Morris was loved by many. The lessons he shared and the life he lived will carry ripples forever. He is deeply missed.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the *Yukon Judicial Council Annual Report 2022*, which is tabled pursuant to section 37(2) of the *Territorial Court Act*.

I also have for tabling the *Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report* for 2021-22, which is tabled pursuant to section 150(2) of the *Legal Profession Act, 2017*.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a statement in my capacity as Minister responsible for the French Language Services Directorate.

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

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

THAT this House supports the Government of Yukon introducing legislation in the 2024 Spring Sitting that will confirm Yukon's participation in the coordinated vaping products taxation framework.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, 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:

(1) the full report done by Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance Inc. regarding the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which was done under a \$300,000 sole-source contract approved by the Premier against the advice of government officials; and

(2) all e-mails and documents regarding any requests for changes to the draft report by Ernst & Young that may have

been made by the Premier, the Minister of Health and Social Services, Cabinet Office staff, Executive Council Office, and the Department of Health and Social Services between August 1, 2023 and October 31, 2023.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation that would ban the practice of hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas in the Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to act on the recommendations of *Our Clean Future, Putting People First, Aging in Place Action Plan, Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ People Strategy*, and the Yukon community travel project by developing a collaborative public transportation solution in the territory.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to engage with First Nations, local residents, and stakeholder groups on the development of regulations pertaining to and a management plan for Yukon's feral horse population.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Canadian and Alaskan universities currently offering physician assistant programs, as well as Canadian universities that will soon be opening physician assistant programs, to ensure spaces for Yukoners in these programs.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide mental health supports and post-partum services to new parents and to develop a parents' perinatal mental health strategy.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Residential lot development

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Yukon Bureau of Statistics released the 2023 residential construction numbers. These annual statistics show a disturbing trend for the Yukon's housing crisis. Despite desperately needing more houses to be built, the stats released last week show that residential construction is down 7.8 percent compared to last year. In the period from January to September 2023, the value of residential building permits decreased by \$4.8 million compared to the same period last year. That means that under this Liberal government, fewer homes are being built this year than last year, which means that the housing crisis is only getting worse.

Can the minister of housing tell us why fewer homes are being constructed this year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, one of the things we are doing is that we are putting out more lots. We will continue to do that.

There are ebbs and flows in the construction market. I think some of that has to do with the nature of what's happening with interest rates at the moment, but I don't think that it has anything to do with government activity, working through Yukon Housing Corporation, working through Community Services, and working through Energy, Mines and Resources' Land Management branch. Also, in working with Yukon First Nation partners, we will continue to work to provide more opportunities for housing across the territory.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the biggest choke point for housing construction has been the lack of residential lots in the City of Whitehorse. The government has simply not been able to get enough lots out to meet the demand. Earlier this month, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislature that, so far, the government had only released 240 lots since the last election. This is nowhere near enough and is well short of even the government's own targets.

What is the Liberal government doing to get more residential lots to market?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk this afternoon about all the work that we are doing to build more lots for Yukoners across the territory. Our government has, to date, delivered 807 lots since 2016 in Whitehorse and in rural communities for residential, commercial, and industrial development. We are on track to deliver 1,000 lots over five years by fiscal year 2025-26, just like we promised. This is a historic investment in lot development, Mr. Speaker, and our Liberal government has built strong, collaborative relationships with municipalities, private land owners, developers, and First Nation partners across the territory to speed up the development of lots and homes in the territory. We are doing good work with those partners and we are providing more housing opportunities for Yukoners every single day.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, even before 2021, there was a housing crunch in the Yukon. Since 2021, the population of Yukon has grown by almost 2,000 people. The number of lots that the Liberal government is releasing is nowhere close to keeping pace with our population growth. As a result, we now see that housing construction is actually 7.8 percent lower than last year.

The housing crisis is growing, and yet housing construction is slowing down under this Liberal government.

When will the Liberal government take substantive action and release the proper number of shovel-ready residential lots to keep up with population growth?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by just vehemently disagreeing with the opening remarks by the member opposite. I want to remind Yukoners that the Yukon Party's record on housing is embarrassing. The Yukon Party sat on millions of dollars and refused to invest in affordable housing. We are still paying the price for the Yukon Party's inaction on housing.

I want to remind folks that this year's budget includes \$26 million for land development projects to address the strong demand for residential lots across the territory — a strong demand for lots driven in large part by our incredible economy. There are a lot of things at play here. We are working very, very hard to make sure that we keep on top of the lot development in the territory.

Unfortunately, the Yukon Party does not believe in spending money on this stuff. They voted against our budgets for land development again, again, and again. They do it again and again and again, voting against Yukoners, and that has to be acknowledged as well. We are working very hard on behalf of Yukoners to get lots in the ground so that they have places where they can build in the territory — not only in Whitehorse but across the territory. We are doing that hard work with more than \$26 million this year in lot development.

Question re: Recycling program in Whitehorse

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, last week, the City of Whitehorse launched a request for information to explore the feasibility of a curbside recycling program.

According to the tender document, the annual operating expenses for the collection and processing of non-refundable recyclables is estimated at \$2.2 million. Last week, the Minister of Community Services told the Legislature that he was working on providing funding support for the city for this project.

Can the minister tell us how much funding the Yukon government will be providing to the city to assist with their curbside recycling program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to talk about all the work we are doing to improve our landfills and our garbage and waste disposal in the territory, which, of course, includes recycling. The goal with recycling is to keep all the detritus from our packaging and everything else out of the landfills. That's important.

We do know that Raven has given governments a deadline of the end of December to come up with a solution to increase recycling in the territory. I am fully in support of that, as are my colleagues. Our government is committed to promoting environmental sustainability and waste reduction across the territory.

Because our current recycling system in Whitehorse is financially unsustainable, we have introduced extended producer responsibility to provide financial sustainability for the system that will keep waste out of the landfills and help us reach our waste diversion and greenhouse gas reduction targets under *Our Clean Future*.

We have had extensive engagement with Raven ReCentre and the City of Whitehorse on this issue. Those discussions are ongoing, Mr. Speaker. We all agree that our goal is to create a healthy, sustainable, and environmentally conscious community here in the Yukon. We are fully in support of that and we will continue that work until it's finished.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it's well understood that the City of Whitehorse is currently facing some difficult budget challenges. The creation of this new program will likely only

be possible with funding support from the Yukon government. Earlier this Sitting, the minister suggested that the Yukon government may direct some of the money identified for diversion credits to the city to help with this program, but he has not been clear about how much.

Will the minister clearly explain how much funding the Yukon government will provide to support the city with the development of a curbside recycling program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, well, it's fishing season this afternoon here in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. I see the hooks being tossed out, but I'm not taking the bait. I am not conducting a negotiation about recycling here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I know that the members opposite are now really engaged and interested in recycling because Yukoners, frankly, are engaged in recycling and they want to know what's happening. It's a big issue.

I want to be clear this afternoon that we have made it very clear that we are here to support the city as they stand up a new municipal curbside recycling program, in whatever way it looks. We are here to support the city as they stand up their new curbside recycling. There are many ways we can do that. Those talks are ongoing and I know the members opposite want a spoiler. That's not happening this afternoon. They will have to wait until we get a deal with the city, Raven ReCentre, and other recyclers on what that curbside recycling system looks like.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Mayor of Whitehorse gave an interview on CBC Yukon where she noted that the new curbside program would not be in place in time to meet the planned closure date of Raven ReCentre. The latest that Yukoners have heard is that Raven ReCentre will close its doors to the public drop-off at the end of next month. Many Yukoners are wondering what that will mean for recycling options in Whitehorse.

What actions are the government taking to ensure that recycling options are available to the citizens of Whitehorse in the new year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we are working very closely with our partners — the City of Whitehorse and Raven ReCentre and other recycling folks in the territory — to make sure that there is an opportunity for citizens of Whitehorse to take their recycling to a location. We are working with Raven ReCentre. Those talks are going well. I heard the mayor this morning and I think it was a great interview on a very, very complicated issue. We are working together to resolve the issues to get a curbside system in the City of Whitehorse.

I have said several times this afternoon and in previous discussions that we are here to support the City of Whitehorse as they look after the recycling within their municipal boundaries and their landfill.

It is important to consider, though, Mr. Speaker, that the Yukon Party's historical stance on similar initiatives in support of a clean and sustainable future for Yukoners is simply not that great. The Yukon Party voted against nearly \$60 million for climate change initiatives last session alone. None of the Yukon Party caucus members and none of the Yukon Party caucus public-facing staff have been involved in any conversations

between our government, the City of Whitehorse, and Raven ReCentre. Given that some Yukon Party MLAs cannot even seem to acknowledge that climate change is real, any of their criticism regarding our government's approach to building a clean and sustainable future for all Yukoners is frankly unfounded.

Question re: Whitehorse General Hospital laboratory services

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Hospital Corporation assumed control of the Whitehorse General Hospital 30 years ago. Since that time, the medical laboratory, where lab technicians test blood and other samples, has never received accreditation. Every four years, Accreditation Canada comes to the Whitehorse hospital and reviews each department as part of the process. While the hospital as a whole passed accreditation, the lab itself has failed every time.

Accreditation is a way to be publicly accountable and demonstrate ongoing commitment toward quality and best practices. When will this government work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to achieve accreditation for the lab?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the question. The Government of Yukon is, of course, committed to working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the needs of Yukoners through the establishment of at least three hospitals and increasing access to timely, safe, and quality care, as well as culturally safe services. It is a focus of the Hospital Corporation to ensure that Yukoners receive safe, timely, and high-quality care. The corporation is an important partner as we move forward in the direction laid out by *Putting People First*, and the hospitals are identifying and working to eliminate systemic barriers to any care and building competency and capacity at all levels, diversifying our workforce and leadership, managing how flow and occupancy impact patients to ensure that the right patient is in the right place at the right time, and continuously assessing policy, programs, and services to support equity, diversity, and inclusion.

I do not have any specific information on the accreditation of the laboratory and I will look into that issue.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the June 2023 report from Accreditation Canada found that the medical lab at Whitehorse General Hospital did not meet Canadian standards in several areas. For instance, the lab does not have a comprehensive way to measure errors and evaluate standards of practice. The report also indicates that lab technicians are being asked to use outdated procedures and obsolete documents. The way the lab is laid out was shown to create risks of cross-contamination and the lab also failed on several safety practices. That report noted that an immediate effort needs to be made to improve the safety and quality standards of the hospital lab.

Has this government addressed these very serious issues with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and if yes, what is the plan to get the lab up to standard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, as I have already noted, I don't have any up-to-date information with respect to the accreditation assessment and/or reports with respect to that process. What I can say is that we meet regularly — the

Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon government, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation — to meet the needs of Yukoners and to determine how we can best do that — making sure that Yukoners have access to timely, safe, quality, and culturally safe services. As I have noted, we are working with the Hospital Corporation as it leads its work to make sure that Yukoners have the services that they need at the time that they need them.

It is a very serious approach that the Yukon Hospital Corporation has taken to make sure that patient care is at the centre of their guiding principles. They are working to build competency and capacity at all levels, and the work that they are doing is focused on diversifying the workforce and the leadership and on managing flow and occupancy to ensure that Yukoners have safe care and the care that they need.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, over the last years, the medical laboratory at Whitehorse hospital has stopped processing several types of tests. Microbiology samples, for instance, must now be sent out for analysis at a medical lab out-of-territory. This means weeks of waiting for results for antibiotic-resistant infections like MRSA or for sexually transmitted infections like syphilis. These delays can have very serious public health consequences, especially since Yukoners were recently alerted by the chief medical officer of health about the concerning increase in syphilis cases in the territory. Yukoners cannot afford to wait weeks to hear about their test results.

Will this government work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that critical samples can be tested locally and quickly?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I look forward to being able to speak to the member opposite with respect to many of the facts that she has put forward today in relation to this question. It is certainly not my understanding that it is taking weeks for those kinds of tests — the ones that she noted. In fact, the Yukon Hospital Corporation is working very diligently to make sure that those kinds of test results are returned quite quickly — so that exactly what she anticipates could be the problem as a result of people waiting too long to get the treatment that they need.

There are some functions with respect to testing — certain kinds of tests — that must be done outside the territory. We just don't have the capacity to do so. We work diligently and I know that the Hospital Corporation does every day to make sure that any results that are returned do so very quickly, and I know that to be the case. I will speak to the member opposite if she so chooses to determine the facts of her question and make sure that she has the correct information with respect to what that waiting time is for those kinds of test results, because it's simply not weeks and weeks.

Question re: Health care specialist wait times

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear from Yukoners who are concerned about growing wait times for surgeries, diagnostic tests, and specialists' appointments. Earlier this Sitting, I asked the minister of health about wait times for cataract surgery and she revealed that the wait time

was 12 months. The recognized target for cataract surgery in the Yukon is within 6 months.

What, if anything, is the minister doing to bring down the wait time for cataract surgery?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer this question again. It is, in fact, the case that specialist and hospital services under our government at the Yukon Hospital Corporation have been greatly expanded. I can certainly indicate that we appreciate when Yukoners do have to wait for some services. We have additional medical travel options if individuals are medically assessed to need the services faster than they can be produced here in the territory. As a result, we have that opportunity. The Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services work together every day to make sure, as I have just said in relation to the other questions today, that Yukoners are assessed and their medical needs are properly assessed and that the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as the specialists who visit our hospital, can address the needs of those patients.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, we have also heard that wait times for orthopaedic surgery have grown. Some Yukoners tell us that they have been informed that they will need to wait for up to two years for hip or knee surgery. Last November, the CEO of the Yukon Hospital Corporation told this House that the target wait time for hip and knee surgery was — quote: "... less than approximately one year from time of referral to time of surgery..."

Can the minister confirm what the current wait time for orthopaedic surgery is in the Yukon and what steps the government is taking to reduce that wait time?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, let's remind ourselves — and I love the opportunity to remind Yukoners that there were no orthopaedic surgeons doing surgery in the territory prior to 2017. As a result of the work that this government did to bring those services here in the territory, hundreds of Yukoners have had the opportunity to have their orthopaedic surgery needs met in the territory. The Yukon is currently supported by two resident orthopaedic surgeons with additional coverage provided by locums. The first resident orthopaedic surgeon was introduced here in 2017, and the second orthopaedic surgeon was introduced in 2019.

We initially had 28 joint-replacement surgeries back in 2017-18. That increased in 2022-23 to a total of 104 joint-replacement surgeries that were completed here in the territory. That does not take into account emergency surgeries that are needed to be responded to by our very competent and dedicated orthopaedic surgeons.

I look forward to the next question.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the minister might want to check her facts, because orthopaedic surgeries had been performed in the territory many years before she indicated.

We have also heard that wait times for cardiology are too long. Last November, there were 298 people on the wait-list with a wait time of five months.

Can the minister confirm what the current wait time for cardiac care is here in the Yukon, and what steps, if any, is the government taking to reduce that wait time?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question and the opportunity to give information to Yukoners about the importance of these services, which are provided here by our local orthopaedic surgeons, the cardiologists, of course — and the program with respect to cardiology is one supported by locum experts. The cardiology services are provided by visiting specialists. Wait times and the wait-list fluctuate, depending on the frequency of the visits of the visiting specialists.

Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by three visiting cardiologists who provide six visits per year and two visiting pediatric cardiologists who offer two visits per year. This also allows testing to be done here in the territory, and the review by those visiting specialists is incredibly important to those individuals who have issues — and particularly the pediatric cardiologists and supporting those families. As of the summer of 2023, a total of 439 individuals have received services through this program. In 2022, a total of 1,531 services were supported through the program. Yukoners are well served by this cardiology program.

Question re: Yukon River crossing at Dawson City

Ms. Van Bibber: Earlier this summer, the Yukon government hosted a public information session so that Dawson residents could share their opinions about the future of the river crossing in Dawson City. When will the results of that engagement be available to the public, and what are the next steps for this planning initiative?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. Certainly, the engagement process with respect to the Dawson river crossing is an important component. I have had the opportunity to travel to Dawson on a number of occasions over the course of the last seven years but certainly over the course of the last two and a half years or three years in my capacity as Minister of Highways and Public Works.

I have engaged both with the town of Dawson City and with First Nations and other persons with respect to the issue of river crossings. We also know that this process has been engaged in by various governments over the course of many years. We are going to do it again and start this process.

I will get back to the member opposite with respect to the timing of the release of the results of the consultation.

Question re: Mining legislation

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, this past spring, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources boasted about the Yukon's 2021 top-10 position in the Fraser Institute's rankings for mining. Then in May, the 2022 rankings came out and we had plummeted to 20th overall. One of the issues dragging us downwards is the ranking on policy perception, as we had dropped to 23rd overall in 2021.

Has the minister made any policy changes this year in order to reverse this slide?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have never bragged about the position of where the Yukon is at. I have certainly stated it, and I think that most of that credit goes to industry,

not to government. What we are talking about is being in the top 20 jurisdictions in the world for mining. Again, the credit goes to the industry — not to take away from the great work that the department is doing.

What policy work are we doing of late? Here is a list: resource road regulations; new minerals legislation; working with governments; we're engaging in land use planning; we are doing mining intensity targets. We have certainly been working with industry across the board around modernizing the industry to make sure that it is environmentally, socially, and governance responsible. What I will say is that, as we come up to the Geoscience Forum next week, the industry is keen to make that transition as well.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the Fraser Institute has us at 20th overall — a drop of 11 spots from ninth overall in 2021. This is the lowest we have been since 2019 when we were 23rd overall. We currently have well over half of the Yukon unavailable for staking new claims. This may be why a Yukon government geologist suggested at last year's Geoscience Forum that the Yukon prospector could be considered an endangered species.

So, what work is the minister doing to increase the amount of land available for staking new claims?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, one of the main things that we are doing is land use planning. It's not a fast process, but the process that we agreed to under our *Umbrella Final Agreement* was that we would make efforts to plan across the territory. We are currently working on the Dawson regional land use plan. We are at the initial stages of the northern part of the Northern Tutchone plan. This is a stark contrast to what was happening under the Yukon Party. Under the Yukon Party, we ended up in the Supreme Court around the Peel plan.

The purpose of land use planning is to try to agree upon together — with Yukoners, with First Nations, with us as a government, and with industry — about where the smart areas to develop are and where the areas to protect are. We will continue to do that work. It does take time, but it is very important work.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, our overall rankings in the Fraser Institute report place us lower than Botswana and Morocco. The score on policy perception is by far the lowest that it has been in the last five years. The report also says — quote: "... it is important to note that 25 percent of respondents for Manitoba and the Yukon claimed that it took 24 months or more for them to get their exploration permits — the highest percentage for all surveyed Canadian jurisdictions."

The former Premier made a promise to the mining industry almost seven years ago to develop a collaborative framework to deal with timelines and reassessments regarding YESAA. Unfortunately, this promise has gone unfulfilled. What actions is the minister undertaking to ensure that permits for exploration can be issued in a more timely manner?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is talking about Botswana. If he wishes to go and be an MLA in Botswana, have at it. I think that here in the Yukon we envision a modern mineral industry and that mineral industry is working with us on redoing our legislation, working directly

with First Nations, government to government, to do that new mineral legislation. It is more than a century old. Yes, there is some work to be done and we are willing to do that work.

The member asked about other programs. He asked a question last week and I didn't have the opportunity to rise at that time, but I will note that in our Yukon mineral exploration program funding, this year we decided to add critical minerals as an evaluation criterion for the mineral exploration program.

Of course, this program — in 2023, we invested \$1.4 million, committing support to 44 exploration projects, but the part that I like is that it leveraged an additional \$3.2 million in exploration.

There are always challenges that face our industry, but what I will say is that we believe in a modern mining industry and we will work with industry to move in that direction.

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

Chair (Ms. Blake): Order. I will now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter before Committee is general debate on Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 34: *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Bill No. 32, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*.

Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*.

I would also like to ask all my colleagues to welcome Clarke LaPrairie to the Legislature. Clarke is the ADM of Economics, Fiscal Policy and Statistics for the Department of

Finance and is no stranger to the Legislative Assembly. I would like to thank him for supporting me in answering questions from the members and for his and the rest of the department's work in putting this bill together.

I gave an overview of the contents of this bill during second reading. Committee of the Whole allows us to understand the proposed changes in a little bit more detail. The *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)* amends three Yukon statutes: the *Income Tax Act*, the *Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Act*, and also the *Financial Administration Act*.

Bill No. 34 ensures that Yukon's legislation is consistent with changes to federal law or the knock-on effects from engaging other territorial legislations. It also updates the wording in certain sections that have gone out of date, makes some minor updates, and also clarifies areas where the meaning was open to question.

The *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)* allows us to make a broad range of changes under one bill to address all of these issues. I will consider the amendments in the order in which these things will impact the public most and go from there, so that would mean that I will start with the proposed changes to the *Income Tax Act*.

Section 1 of the Canada-Yukon tax collection agreement stipulates that the territory must make best efforts to harmonize their tax legislation to reflect the amendments in the federal *Income Tax Act*. In order to satisfy the terms of the agreement, we are amending subsection 6(51) of the *Income Tax Act* in two different places. The first amendment adds references to ensure that Yukon residents who file taxes in multiple jurisdictions can receive non-pro-rated, non-refundable tax credits for the caregiver amounts for infirm children, the employment amounts, and the children's arts amounts. The amendment applies retroactively to January 1 of the year each tax credit became available.

Yukon residents who file taxes in other jurisdictions as well are entitled to these credits in full, and up until now, the Canadian Revenue Agency had been administering these credits under the same principle. This amendment simply makes the Yukon legislation line up with what the CRA has already been doing.

Another update that we are making to subsection 6(51) is to add language that properly references other subsections for taxpayers filing in multiple jurisdictions who are not Yukon residents. The goal of this change is to ensure that non-residents who pay over 90 percent of their taxes to Yukon can still access adoption and pension credits. This amendment brings Yukon's *Income Tax Act* in line with the federal *Income Tax Act*.

Because of federal tax changes introduced in Bill C-32 in 2022, the Yukon *Income Tax Act* requires further amendments that expand the definition of "individual" to include trusts and estates and makes reference to the federal act. The changes will apply beginning in the 2024 taxation year.

For the last amendment — from changes to the federal *Income Tax Act* — we added a reference to subsection 21(1) to the federal law about notice of determination made under the

general anti-avoidance rule. This change affects transactions made after April 6, 2022.

Next, we have had to make three amendments to address some unintended consequences from the wording in Bill No. 21, the *Carbon Price Rebate Amendments Act (2022)*. Before diving in, I will explain the roots of this issue.

Bill No. 21, as members know, included provisions to prevent businesses from claiming both general and mining business rebates. However, it was determined that the double-dipping — we'll call it the “double-dipping provision” — could result in mining businesses not being able to access the amount of the rebate that they are entitled to because of the different rates applied to mining assets. The consequence came out of how the legislation defined an “eligible mining asset”. To address this issue, we are changing subsection 16(1) and subsection 16(5) of the *Income Tax Act* to segregate eligible Yukon mining assets from the general business asset. This allows for the separate treatment of these assets for the purpose of calculating the carbon rebate.

Further, in addressing the double-dipping provision of Bill No. 21, we are amending the *Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Act*. Subsection 15(1) will also include the definition change that prevents mining assets from being claimed in the general business rebate. I believe there is still no mining company that is in consideration of a double jeopardy, but it is something that we are just being pertinent over. The changes to the *Income Tax Act* from Bill No. 21 will apply effectively on January 1 of next year. These amendments are very important to the mining community and reduce confusion over what assets can be claimed for the carbon price rebate.

This brings us to our next statute — the *Financial Administration Act*. The changes that we are making to this legislation largely reflect changes in government practices and we are simply aligning the act with how things are done. In 2019, the Government of Yukon streamlined the delivery of printing, storage, and distribution services from two agencies and shifted certain tasks to local, private businesses. Central Stores kept inventories of office supplies that were distributed to government offices and programs across the Yukon. Central Stores stopped keeping these inventories, and departments now buy office supplies and other consumables through buying agreements directly with local suppliers. The King's Printer — previously the source of a wide range of printing services for the government — also narrowed its scope to sensitive materials only, and the high-volume printing machines that used to belong to the King's Printer are no longer in operation.

All printing is now outsourced to local companies. To this end, we are repealing paragraph 44(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, which established the Central Stores revolving fund.

We are also repealing section 48, which outlined the King's Printer revolving fund that was used to maintain, operate, and replace publishing equipment. I will note that the central store inventory has no items in it as of March 31, 2023, and the King's Printer revolving fund also has a zero balance since March 31, 2021.

As neither fund is necessary, these administrative amendments just reflect the current reality. We are making similar amendments to section 48.01 for a different reason. Originally, the wildland fire suppression revolving fund was created under this act. Beginning in the 2020-21 fiscal year, costs for suppressing wildland fires had been budgeted as part of the operations and maintenance estimates for the Department of Community Services, making this revolving fund redundant. We are therefore repealing this section of the act, and I once again note that the wildland fire suppression revolving fund has had a balance of zero since March 31, 2020.

Our final change to the *Financial Administration Act* is to correct some language that has gone out of date. Subsection 20(3) refers to the federal-territorial financial agreement. This agreement has not been in effect since 1985. We are updating the section to instead reference the current *Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act*, which covers territorial formula financing, the Canada health transfer, Canada social transfer, and cannabis transfer.

That basically covers all of the amendments that are included in Bill No. 34. I thank the members of the House for their time and consideration on this bill, and I will answer any questions that members have about the *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the introduction. I do have concerns, though, regarding the changes that are being proposed in this legislation related to revolving funds. I am also including the fact that the minister cited the dates that the balances of each of those areas had been at zero. The issue there, particularly with changes such as the 2019 change to which the Minister of Finance referred to regarding Central Stores — the government made a decision to bring in that change. There was quite a bit of conversation in this Assembly about that, including questioning if it was actually improving efficiency or not.

But in the legislation under section 44(a), there is a specific requirement for a Central Stores fund to be established and a specific dollar amount that it references in there. The fact that the government appears to not have been in compliance with that part of the *Financial Administration Act* for four years does raise the question of why they didn't change the legislation at the time they made the policy decision to ensure that they were not violating the Yukon government's most important financial accountability piece of legislation.

Similarly, the references to sections 48 and 48.01 of the King's Printer revolving fund — formerly the Queen's Printer revolving fund — is again specifically established by this section of the law and it states an amount under it, which is required to be used. The question of why the government didn't change the law so that they weren't out of compliance with the law for a period of roughly four years is a concerning one.

Last but not least, under 48.1, the wildland fire suppression revolving fund is established by law, with a limit of \$30 million for the purpose of suppression of wildland fires.

My point in all three cases, Deputy Chair, is that if government was making the policy decision, why didn't they

change the law at that time to ensure that they weren't out of step with it?

My next question is regarding the actual impact of the decisions, particularly regarding Central Stores and the Queen's Printer. We had concerns about it at the time. The government asserted what they claimed the impacts would be and claimed that it would create efficiencies. We have, however, heard concerns coming forward from staff about a lack of efficiencies that have resulted from that, including that the cost of some items has increased due to a lack of ability to get a cheaper price by buying in bulk. Also, instead of having a central agency conducting the buying of office supplies and other items, now staff of multiple departments are going out — while being paid their normal wage, of course, Deputy Chair — and having to spend their time purchasing those items, so there are some questions about lost efficiencies.

Has the government actually done an analysis, and if so, will they share it — of where the costs have increased and where they have decreased as a result of the decisions both to eliminate Central Stores and the Queen's Printer? Have they analyzed the impact and determined where costs have increased and where costs have decreased and what the total picture looks like?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Despite what the member opposite said, we are not offside of any legal parameters. The numbers that were cited — for example, up to \$3 million — are just maximums. The number can be zero as well. Those numbers have been zero for a while, but they could range from zero up to millions of dollars — so, not offside. Ideally, we could have put this forth in the past; we didn't. I did make reference to part of the bill today where we are changing language that has been in error since the 1980s as well. So, again, we have reasons for bringing these forth now, but to say that we are legally off because the balance was zero is just not accurate.

When it comes to — and I know that the member opposite asked some questions about the Queen's Printer and Central Stores in response to the second reading as well. There are efficiencies in these reductions. I hear what the member opposite is saying as far as time from a government employee position, having to go out and interact with the private sector. I think that this is a good thing — to make sure that local business providers can help the government out and increase the efficiency of the government at the same time as lending to some more sales in these local businesses. I think that is a good idea.

In the past, the Queen's Printer Agency had a budget that ranged between \$530,000 to \$600,000. That budget is zero now. Central Stores had a previous budget that ranged from \$550,000 to about \$570,000 a year. That is now zero as well. The King's Printer — that service has less responsibility now, making sure that they ensure that official versions of legislation are accessible to those who request them, but a lot more contracts are going into the private sector, which I believe is a good idea.

I believe that the member opposite, who is very passionate about the private sector, would agree that more businesses

benefiting from the pages that we create and the office supplies is important.

We are limiting long-term warehousing of a wide variety of centrally distributed supplies through these changes. It could be small things or large things. We no longer have supplies that can expire on our shelves or become outdated because they are just being sourced by the government. Also, supplies like high-visibility vests, for example, that become outdated — we have seen that in the past when safety regulations change — and other things like contracting out printing that used to be done in the Queen's Printer Agency, including confidential printing and budget items. We are very pleased that we have also modernized many of the processes through these changes. For example, with this change came a whole bunch of modernization of digitization, which now lives in e-services. We no longer have staff doing actual printing; instead, we are facilitating materials and contracts with, as I said before, local printing companies.

I believe that answers the member opposite's questions. If not, I will cede my time here to see if there are any more questions.

Mr. Cathers: What I didn't hear in the minister's response was confirmation of whether they have actually had an analysis done of where costs have increased and where they have decreased and the impact on efficiency and staff time, et cetera, of both of those decisions. Again, we have heard concerns from managers and others that, instead of simply being able to order things from Central Stores in the way they used to, they now have to send staff out of the office to shop for notebooks and so on at local stores, which is taking a lot more paid staff time from individual departments. Again, all I am asking is whether they have done an analysis of those decisions, not the predictive one at the outset but actual impacts after the fact. If the answer is that they have not, I would encourage the minister to have that done.

Another question I would ask, since this legislation is amending the *Financial Administration Act* — as the minister knows, the *Financial Administration Act* requires the minister by law to table the Public Accounts for the fiscal year no later than October 31. As the minister is aware, he did not meet that legislated timeline. Can the minister tell us when he will table the audited Public Accounts, and will he confirm that it will be before the end of this Fall Sitting?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I know that Highways and Public Works was tasked with an analysis as far as the efficiencies and savings, and they are still diligently working on that, so I will leave it up to the department to finalize that analysis. It is still early times to compare. We had a global pandemic in there, as well. So, in a little bit of a more normal setting, we will take an analysis and do that report.

When it comes to the Public Accounts, I know that the chair of the Public Accounts mentioned a date. We are not mentioning a date right now as far as when the Public Accounts will be tabled. The member opposite knows what his leader has said as far as a date, and supposedly he had that confirmed. I am assuming that he must have had that confirmed before he decided to make that statement, but we are going to continue to

just work with the OAG — the Office of the Auditor General — to make sure that we get it done as soon as possible. We are targeting to get it done before the Legislative Assembly rises this fall. We want to make sure that we are going to have a Public Accounts with the cover letter, with the blessing of the Office of the Auditor General, and not do what the Yukon Party did in 2008-09 when they tabled the Public Accounts without the auditor and it took until June of that year before they could finally get that confirmation. We believe that something like that would create more delay, and there is an example to test that theory.

As the member opposite knows, the act and the *Financial Administration Act* require Public Accounts to include the auditor's report. We are going to work with the Office of the Auditor General to make sure that we get both of those in, as opposed to running the risk of tabling our numbers and then having the OAG have a different report after that. We are definitely running out of days right now before the end of this session. We are hoping that we can get this thing tabled with the Office of the Auditor General audit as well, and I know that the Department of Finance and the federal Office of the Auditor General are working diligently toward that goal.

Mr. Cathers: We look forward to that occurring and I would note that the minister has at times been — in my view — too dismissive of the fact that it is a legislated requirement under the *Financial Administration Act* to table the Public Accounts by the end of October, and the responsibility does fall personally on the minister and pursuant to the act. It is quite clear that this responsibility also falls on Management Board. In that context, for clarity, I should make it clear that I am referring to the committee of Cabinet — not the secretariat. Cabinet is responsible, as well, for ensuring the format of this. The minister does have a legal responsibility, which he has not been in compliance with for the last two weeks. More to come on that matter. I will thank officials for their briefing on this legislation and the work that they do on behalf of Yukoners. I will cede the floor to the Third Party at this point.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, this isn't the first time that I have heard that I am dismissive in some way when it comes to the Public Accounts. I went back and reviewed the one time — just two questions, not three — when the opposition, the Yukon Party, asked about this. I don't feel like I was being dismissive. I took on the responsibility. I agree that it is absolutely the Minister of Finance's responsibility; I admitted that. It's in Hansard. Also, I was being very matter of fact but not dismissive, so I would push back a bit and say — not dismissive. We take this very seriously and we believe that working with the Office of the Auditor General to be able to table their audit with our accounts — with our mains and with the Public Accounts — makes more sense than being delayed by months and months and months before the Office of the Auditor General report comes in, which, again — that is the requirement. It is not only the Public Accounts but also the auditor's report as well. We're not going to do what the Yukon Party did and just put half of the equation in and wait months before the auditor's report.

We know that with the five new obligations that we have — including 3280 — these are some new requirements. I had a good time reading through the Hansard of the public debate back in the day when the Yukon Party was late on their Public Accounts — a very similar situation back then. It was a federal program that was causing some consternation to the Finance department and now we are seeing a very similar thing with these asset retirements obligations.

Anyway, just to stand to say that I don't think I was dismissive. I apologize if I came across that way — being very matter of fact about what the obligations are and my responsibilities.

Ms. White: On the issue of the *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, Bill No. 34, I thank the official for the fantastic briefing, and I commend the minister on best efforts to walk us through what is very complicated. I feel like, if anyone ever gets the chance to get a briefing on taxation law in the Yukon from the officials who continue to present it — Clarke LaPrairie walking us through taxation law made something that is very, I'm going to say, "dull" into something quite a bit more interesting. I thank him for those briefings and I commend the minister on the efforts to try to also make it interesting, but at this point, we have no questions.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I don't normally do this, but the audible that you may not have heard when the Leader of the Third Party just said it was dull — we had Clarke LaPrairie on record saying that it is.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all clauses and the title of Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, read and agreed to.

Unanimous consent re deeming all clauses and the title of Bill No. 34 read and agreed to

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 clauses and the title of Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, read and agreed to.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

Clauses 1 to 15 agreed to

On Title

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, without amendment.

Motion agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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: Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Justice — *continued*

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I would like to come back Mark Radke, the Deputy Minister of the Department of Justice, and Luda Ayzenberg, the director of finance for the Department of Justice, who are here to assist us today, and I thank them for doing so. I think that when we left off the other day — I want to say November 2, but I am not sure if it was November 2 or 3 — when we were debating this portion of the supplementary budget which has one single line item that totals \$1,734,000. It is all related to the increases for the Yukon Employees' Union after negotiations earlier this year and includes the payments that are made pursuant to that agreement.

However, we have had other questions regarding Justice initiatives, and I recall — and I looked it up earlier today — that I had just completed an answer in relation to a question from the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin and I look forward to further questions if she has any.

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I welcome the officials for being here today.

I believe that when I left off with my questions, I asked about supports for communities when there is a process in place for severe charges. One of the questions that I often get in communities when I am visiting is about the support for victims' families and the offenders' families. This continues to be an ongoing concern for communities up the Klondike Highway. One of the questions that I often get asked is: What supports are available in communities for victims and offenders, for the families, for the community and First Nations after court processes have been done, especially when there are court matters unfolding related to manslaughter or murder charges in the community?

At present, there are some First Nations that feel a lot of pressure and they feel a bit stuck with the limited resources they have in communities. What resources does the government

provide in communities to support the offenders' and victims' families after court proceedings have been completed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I think that this is what we were discussing at the end of the other day. Victim Services is a branch of the Department of Justice and provides services to victims throughout the territory. It's not related only to Whitehorse; it is throughout the territory. Victim Services workers who are assigned to assist individuals on a court circuit or perhaps at a trial that might be occurring in a community, which is what I understand is being asked about, would attend and support a victim at the victim's discretion. So, if a victim chooses to have that assistance, it would be provided to them.

What I can say is that the Victim Services workers who work to support victims through those difficult times and processes do so — it doesn't end at the end of a trial. If a victim is struggling or needing further services, those continue. They are also available — and I think this is incredibly important for Yukoners to know — even if there are no criminal charges laid in a particular matter. If someone is being victimized or has been victimized by someone and needs the supports and the kind of supports that can be offered or needs access to further supports, Victim Services is a great resource for helping individuals.

I can also note that the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services branch services the Department of Health and Social Services and works in conjunction with Victim Services if there is a community issue. The tragedy that I mentioned the other day — the criminal activity that took place in Faro, for instance — was supported both by Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services workers as well as Victim Services. That support continues to go on — again, at the victim's discretion.

We continue to support a program of Indigenous courtworkers who are working to support — and I think one of the most important things is that some communities have individual support folks. Again, I am thinking of Faro and the way that the community came together. In other communities — I know, for instance, in the community that the member opposite represents, community members come together to support each other. They also have their own health centre workers and health workers and support workers — mental wellness folks — and it is incredibly important that those community resources are combined with whatever the Government of Yukon can help provide so that individuals in those communities get all of the support they need.

We continue to support the Gladue reports that are provided to courts with important background information on Indigenous offenders. This is also an opportunity for victims to have a say in the kind of ultimate sentence that is granted in a court. The Gladue reports work to inform on fit sentences, and the information included in those reports could be the effects of residential schools and the effects on an individual from systemic discrimination and economic and social disadvantages, if that is the case. And the government of Yukon, along with the federal government, continues to support Gladue report writing to meet the needs of Indigenous

offenders and the courts through the access-to-justice funding agreement.

The program is administered by the Council of Yukon First Nations and is carried out by trained First Nation Gladue writers.

A joint management committee provides oversight to the Gladue report-writing project. This committee is comprised of: the Council of Yukon First Nations; the Public Prosecution Service of Canada; the Kwanlin Dün First Nation; the Yukon Legal Services Society, also known as Legal Aid; and the Government of Yukon. It is an important aspect of the information and support to both offenders and victims. There is also an opportunity for victims to work with Victim Services to present a victim impact statement before the court that will educate the individual judicial decider, if I can say it that way, as to what the impact has been on a victim and the importance of taking all of those things into account to determine an appropriate or fit sentence.

That, of course, is with respect to matters of a criminal prosecution that comes before a court, but I guess I want to be clear to Yukoners that Victim Services, Mental Wellness and Substance Use Support Services — the supports that come through there that are available to victims are not dependent on a criminal charge being before a court.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response to that question.

In the minister's response, she mentioned Mental Wellness and Substance Use Support Services, Victim Services, the Indigenous courtworkers, the First Nation, and the health centre. One of the things I often hear in communities from folks who are involved in the justice system is that they indicated that they see supports or resources working in silos. I am just wondering what the minister is doing within the Department of Justice to ensure that these resource people are not working in silos or that the barriers they face that create the situation of working in silos are removed so that there is more space for collaboration and support for people involved in justice.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member for the question. It is a great opportunity to reinforce the attitude and approach that has been taken with all departments within our government but certainly within the departments that work closely together, including Justice and Health and Social Services. I don't want to speak for the former Premier, but I know that part of the determination of putting Health and Social Services and the Department of Justice with the same minister was part of the determination about the work that is so connected between them. I can indicate that both of my portfolios and all three of my deputy ministers and the deputy ministers from other departments — and the one-government approach that has been led by the former Premier and now the current Premier as an approach to all this work is incredibly important in the areas of Justice and Health and Social Services. We are working all the time to remove barriers because these organizations do — and must — work together.

I can indicate that Health and Social Services and the work that is being done with the individual health centres across the territory is ongoing and growing to be a collaborative approach.

We have restorative justice initiatives where Justice and Health and Social Services work together on those.

There are also examples in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* where Justice is responsible for certain aspects but only in collaboration with Health and Social Services. There are cooperative approaches to the land-based healing files and, as I said in the beginning, it is truly about attitude and approach. If we are working very hard to build partnerships with organizations outside of government, we need to make sure that, inside of government, the one-government approach is successful and that the deputy ministers of all the departments work very closely to foster that attitude and to make sure that we work on those projects together.

As the member opposite has noted, it's incredibly important that we do not work in silos and that we remove barriers to any collaboration. I can tell you that this is certainly the direction that we have given to the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Services. It really goes from the deputy minister level down through the departments so that each of those front-line individuals who provide services to Yukoners know that they will be supported by the deputy ministers in making sure that collaboration between the departments and between aspects of the departments that all work, for instance, on mental wellness are shown to be doing that together. Another example is the services for sexual assault victims, the SART program, because it cannot operate without collaboration and without an approach where everyone works together for the same purpose of providing those services.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response. My next question is in regard to the process of Gladue reports. One of the issues that I have heard from those who work in the court system or from people who are offenders — they have shared that, with the Gladue report-writing process and the referral process, it's not often clear to the lawyers how to initiate that process. In talking to a couple of Gladue report writers, it has been indicated that there is a timeline that you have to follow in terms of doing the referral, and what they're seeing is that the referral is often happening at the last minute through the court process.

What is the minister doing in her department to ensure that service providers who are involved with the court understand the process of accessing Gladue reports to ensure that Gladue reports are supported through the court process for offenders?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: In the 2023-24 budget, the Yukon government has supported Gladue report writing with a \$175,000 dedication to that project. The Government of Canada is committed to ongoing funding for the Gladue report-writing project through the access-to-justice funding agreement and the umbrella agreement for legal aid, Yukon public legal education, and the Indigenous courtworkers — all supported by both the Yukon government and the federal government.

The Council of Yukon First Nations, which is responsible for the Gladue report-writing process, has reported that, in the first quarter of 2023-24, they have received 15 applications, and 13 were accepted and seven reports have been completed to

date. This note was last updated in August 2023. In 2022-23, a total of 102 reports were completed.

Indigenous adults — overrepresented in admissions to provincial and territorial correctional centres and have been for many years — in 2013-14 accounted for nearly one quarter, or 24 percent, of admissions while representing only three percent of the Canadian adult population at that time.

In 1999, the decision in *R. v. Gladue*, which is the Supreme Court of Canada decision, referred to their overrepresentation as — quote: “... the tip of the iceberg...” Between 2016 and 2019, First Nation citizens represented 66.5 percent to 68.4 percent of admissions at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre here in the Yukon. Clearly, that needed to be addressed. In 2015, Council of Yukon First Nations, the Law Society of Yukon, and the Public Prosecution Service of Canada approached the Government of Yukon with a report and recommendations to establish a formal report-writing service, and these recommendations were put to the Government of Yukon and received approval in early 2018 under the leadership of CYFN and the Gladue Management Committee, and that program was developed and now receives ongoing federal funding.

The program has seen a roster of Yukon First Nation Gladue report writers trained to provide the court with Gladue reports, as requested. Annual Gladue report-writing training sessions have been held and the Gladue report writer mentoring program has been developed. A report template has been developed and serves as a guide for Gladue reports. Initially, there was a prerequisite. The clients had to be Yukon First Nation individuals and that prerequisite was changed in November 2018 to allow for Indigenous applicants from other First Nations or Inuit or Métis people.

The Council of Yukon First Nations has proactively engaged with others, including Victim Services and Yukon community corrections, to improve collaboration and services for Yukon First Nation citizens. Gladue reports support Indigenous accused persons, either adult or youth, and the judiciary and the justice personnel in applying the sentencing principles that are set out in section 718.2(e) of the *Criminal Code of Canada* and subsection 38(2)(d) of the *Youth Criminal Justice Act*. So, these have now been entrenched in the law of the country with respect to criminal matters.

Both statutes indicate that a court that imposes a sentence on an Indigenous offender shall take into consideration a number of principles. They include all available sanctions other than imprisonment that is required by the court and by the law, which may have played a part in bringing a particular individual before the courts. They have to consider the unique systemic or background factors of an individual, and they have to consider the types of sentencing procedures and sanctions that may be appropriate in the circumstances of the offender because of their Indigenous heritage or connection.

The Gladue report writing program has been quite successful here. It is led by the Council of Yukon First Nations. The Department of Justice supports it financially; Legal Aid and defence lawyers are very familiar with the process. Indigenous courtworkers are very familiar with the process and

being in touch with the Gladue report writing program. It is not a complicated situation; it is something that is available to any individual who is proceeding through the court process and has an Indigenous background. As far as I know, there is not an extensive waiting period. They are often ordered by the court or sought by defence lawyers or Indigenous courtworkers on behalf of an individual who is going through the process. All they have to do is ask the court to order such a report, and then the process is usually delayed. By that, I mean the matter could be adjourned for the purposes of an individual having that report completed with their cooperation and assistance. Then the matter would be adjourned until a time when the report could be completed and they come back to court.

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, with the Gladue report writers in the territory, how many Gladue report writers do we have in the Yukon? How many of those report writers are trained to provide the training? And how many Gladue report writers do we have located in communities, or are they centralized in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: That is not a number that I have with me. I would not want to guess — it does fluctuate from time to time. As I understand it, the Gladue report writers tend to be centralized in Whitehorse, but it is not required, and they certainly will attend communities for the purposes of completing a report, or they might do so virtually, being connected with a number of people by phone or by other methods of virtual attendance, in order to complete a report. There is no restriction whatsoever on a Gladue report being required in a court in Whitehorse, or it could be a court in Pelly Crossing, or it could be a court anywhere where the Territorial Court sits here in the territory. We can get numbers. We will have to contact the Council of Yukon First Nations; they are responsible for the program, and they hire the Gladue report writers. They train the Gladue report writers, and they have a mentorship program, as I said earlier, and I don't know what those numbers are, but we can return those numbers to the member opposite.

Ms. Blake: My next question is in regard to the income threshold for access to Yukon's legal aid services. I have been hearing from a few people who have applied for legal aid, but they didn't meet the income threshold, so they were denied access to legal aid. My question is: How is the department supporting clients who do not qualify for legal aid services, and is there a liaison or a person they could reach out to, to help navigate the legal support services in Whitehorse if they don't qualify for a lawyer through legal aid?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. What the member opposite is asking about is access to justice, which is an incredibly important criteria and issue for the Department of Justice and for our government. We have worked very hard to make sure that there are services available for individuals who need support through a court process or other kinds of support that might be outside of the court process but that support them for not returning to the court process. I am thinking intentionally here about the restorative justice process, which is supported financially by our government and is an opportunity for individuals who are going through that process

to have their matter dealt with through a restorative justice initiative.

Our government has a project that was initially a pilot project and now has been turned into one of restorative justice, connecting with the communities, connecting with every First Nation government, and connecting with community individuals and victims who might want to work through that process. I can advise that our Department of Justice officials attended a restorative justice conference — I believe that it was earlier last year or late 2021 — in Nova Scotia, where our program was truly heralded by other jurisdictions in Canada. The opportunity for the Yukon Department of Justice and our partners, including court officials and individual justice support workers for Yukon First Nations, et cetera, were sought after for information and asked to train other departments across Canada about how this can be spread throughout Canada and the impact of the success of that program here.

Legal aid is an incredibly important service here in the territory. We recognize the importance of predictable funding, as well, to ensure the continued operational stability and accessibility of this truly vital service for low-income Yukoners to increase their access to justice. Many Yukoners may know that one of the ministers of our government was the executive director of Legal Aid for more than 18 years.

I have a background of dealing with criminal matters through the court process as a Crown prosecutor and supported the Yukon Legal Services Society and Legal Aid Society throughout my career, and that has continued in my career here, in recognition of the important service that is provided by the Yukon Legal Services Society and doing so with increased funding to provide a stable core budget for the regular operations. The budget for 2023-24 has allocated \$3.288 million in core funding, which includes \$550,000 in time-limited funding to support a new legal aid clinic. We look forward to the continued support of legal aid.

With respect to the question regarding if someone doesn't meet the income threshold, there is discretion at the board level of the Yukon Legal Services Society to have the matter appealed. There are other opportunities, all supported by Yukon government, for individuals to have some assistance. Indigenous courtworkers are very skilled individuals to help a person go through the court process. They are available to anyone who is going through the court process; it is not only for Indigenous people. The courtworkers themselves are Indigenous, which is where the title comes from, and their specialized skills and traditional ways and knowledge of Yukon First Nation persons is always part of their support.

There is a family law liaison unit that provides free information to individuals about family law cases. There is the Yukon public legal education opportunity that is supported by Yukon government. There are individuals who provide pro bono services — lawyers here in town who support individuals who may not be able to afford legal counsel. All of those things — services and initiatives — are supported by Yukon government, and I know that they are supported by the individuals who assist people through the court process.

Ms. Blake: My next question is: Does the department plan to review the income threshold for access to Yukon's legal aid services?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Certainly, we meet with the Yukon Legal Services Society board on a regular basis, at least annually and sometimes more than that. Department officials work with them through the budgeting process, but the decision about income threshold and how they can operate the independent society, known as the Legal Services Society, is theirs alone, and the board would be determining what the threshold is for services.

Ms. Blake: Deputy Chair, my next question is from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre inspection report from May 2018. Has the government established a secure forensic unit at the Whitehorse General Hospital, as recommended by this 2018 inspection report?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to address this particular recommendation from the David Loukidelis report in May 2018. The secure forensic unit noted in that report has been renamed as the mental wellness unit. It is currently being constructed at the Whitehorse General Hospital. There is a secure forensic unit currently at the Whitehorse General Hospital, if need be. When it is not being used in that way, there is an opportunity for the hospital to use that space otherwise, but if it is needed, it is available at the Whitehorse General Hospital currently.

I can also indicate that we look forward to the mental wellness unit, which will be designed for the purpose of treating mental wellness, presenting mental wellness, and promoting mental wellness for individuals who might need such services. There will be a portion of that location that will be the equivalent of a secure forensic unit — again, if need be. We continue to support the complex needs of individuals who require forensic care, as well as the limited availability of resources here in the territory, recognizing that they have historically presented challenges. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre statutory designation as a hospital or a location will currently be maintained on a short-term basis until the mental wellness unit is available at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

As I said, that work is ongoing at the moment. The Whitehorse Correctional Centre does not have the capacity to house individuals who require forensic care for prolonged periods of time and require complex care in psychiatric facilities with medical professionals who specialize in forensic services. Currently, there is the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. If an individual is having complex care needs or forensic needs or psychiatric care, they are seen to by a psychiatrist here in the territory. A determination could be made that they should be at the secure forensic unit at the hospital that currently exists. Ultimately, if they cannot be served in either of those two places here in the territory to meet their medical needs, then they might be transferred to a facility that specializes in forensic care or to the complex psychiatric care in certain other facilities.

The Yukon government has agreements — arrangements — with certain places in Canada where individuals may be sent

for the purpose of their own safety and the safety of others, if need be. I look forward to having the new mental wellness unit open at Whitehorse General Hospital and ultimately making the necessary changes in law to make sure that place is recognized as one of safety and care for individuals.

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I thank the minister for her response to the previous question.

My next question is regarding the rehabilitation programs that are available to folks who are at WCC or those who are on community-based sentences. What rehabilitation programs does the government have available both in WCC and in communities, and how are those programs coordinated?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is coordinated there. It offers programming to both individuals who are on remand status or individuals who have been sentenced and are serving a sentence there. They offer programming regardless of incarceration status; however, the criminogenic programming is mandatory for all sentenced clients. Programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre is classified into four areas: criminogenic; cultural and spiritual; educational, vocational, and health promotion; and leisure, recreation, and well-being. Programming is offered through the facility-based program staff or contracted service providers, in some cases, or professional partners.

The Whitehorse Correctional Centre has a dedicated First Nation liaison officer whose work includes connecting clients with available cultural and spiritual supports. Cultural programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre includes opportunities for beading, carving, drumming, fire ceremonies, and talking circles. There is also work to build relationships with Yukon First Nations to provide ongoing support for offenders reintegrating into the community.

Over the past five years, the Department of Justice, I am proud to say, has been steadily increasing support for delivering culturally appropriate programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It has been a direction of our government and of mine as the minister that we should have as much appropriate programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre as possible. Plans for the 2023-24 year with respect to programming are to continue to deliver all the existing programs and expanding program options through in-house training of program staff and exchanges of ideas and program options in partnership with federal, provincial, and territorial colleagues in all four areas of care and development.

We will continue to partner with Yukon University to provide educational and vocational options for clients — or inmates. There is cultural programming, including emphasizing First Nation culture. Those services are contracted for the provision of carving programs, drumming, fire ceremonies, talking circles, and targeted referrals for individual First Nations for ongoing community support and assistance.

There is individual spiritual and cultural support by the Yukon First Nation liaison officer, which must continue. There are spiritual supports through partnerships with community, spiritual leaders in multiple faiths, including First Nation spirituality, group church services, individual clergy, and counselling, and one-on-one First Nation elders and

knowledge-keepers provide counselling services. There is bi-monthly health promotion programming on relevant topics provided by the centre's health services team.

In 2022-23, substance use counselling was offered by the Aurora Wellness Group in response to referrals submitted through WCC case management. This contractor began seeing clients in November 2022, and the substance use contract will be tendered again this fall, probably just right about now. Clients receiving physician-supervised opioid agonist therapy are required to attend substance use counselling as part of that treatment program, and the centre's health services teams refer all clients who are required to attend counselling to the contracted provider.

In conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre offers two 5-week intensive treatment sessions at the facility for substance use issues. A lot of this work to support individuals is done by case managers at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. They may also refer inmates to the forensic complex care team for therapeutic programming, if that is appropriate, and those counsellors and therapists conduct most of the therapeutic counselling and deliver most therapeutic programs. The therapeutic counselling may be individual or group-based and often includes individual counselling for criminogenic needs — for example, sexual offending or spousal violence. Individual counselling is also available to address other mental health or substance use concerns.

To support programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, staff are receiving training in respectful relationships, living without violence, and thinking leads to change — which is a female woman-focused program — and they also have training in facilitation skills on substance use management, and that is provided by the Justice Institute of British Columbia.

What I can note is that there are, at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and the youth correction centre — they coordinate and can start at — sorry, they can start at WCC and then continue with the Yukon community corrections in order to start programming inside at WCC and then continue that when it is monitored and assisted by Yukon community corrections.

They also — one of the parts of the question, Deputy Chair, was: What about when somebody is no longer in the correctional facility? Individuals are provided service to the Yukon community corrections — some people call it the “probation office”. They do both of those things, and those programs are coordinated with the individuals who are — some are provided for by the case managers or the staff at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but by far, most of these programs are provided by individuals who are contracted outside.

Ms. Blake: In the minister's response to my question, she indicated that there is a First Nation liaison at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. Is it just one First Nation liaison worker at WCC? Also, what is the current population of WCC, and how much of the population is First Nation? Also, how many of the staff of WCC are First Nation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Deputy Chair, for the question. There is currently one First Nation liaison position — one individual working in that position — at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, but a second person is starting next week. I don't have the current population numbers, but I do have some numbers that might be of assistance. I am told that 66.5 percent of the current population self-identifies as First Nation. With respect to the staff, there is a really large multicultural component of the staff now at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. It has been growing as a more diverse group of individuals and that is certainly supported by us going forward. I don't have the number with respect to how many staff self-identify as First Nations or other individuals, but we can see if we can determine that number.

I do have some numbers. In the 2022-23 reporting year, there were 293 admissions, and in 2021-22, there were 325 admissions, so the admissions are going down. Of the current total this year, of 98 admissions — that is in the 2023-24 fiscal year — 75 individuals were on remand, 18 are serving a territorial sentence of incarceration, four are serving a federal sentence of incarceration, and one individual was temporarily held while they were engaged in proceedings before the Yukon Review Board. Of the 98 admissions in the current fiscal year — for 2022-23 — 68 individuals self-identified as a First Nation person. Of the 293 admissions in the 2022-23 fiscal year, 133 individuals self-identified as a First Nation person. We can return with the additional numbers. I can present a return for you.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response on those numbers.

My next question is in regard to the case managers at WCC. How many case managers currently work at WCC, and what is the number of clients per case manager?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't have the number of case managers currently employed. I am told that there are at least four and that the average caseload is generally around 10 individuals, but I would like to confirm those numbers and present them in a return or in a response directly to the member opposite.

Ms. Blake: Of the four case managers, how many of those case managers identify as First Nation?

I will just add a couple of questions here. In reading the Auditor General's report from 2015, one of the areas of concern was in regard to case plans. Another question that I have is: How many of the folks at WCC have a completed case plan? What is the average length of time to develop a case plan, and what are the timelines that are incorporated into case plans to ensure that the goals are met by those in WCC? What programs are offered as part of the case plan to support those incarcerated?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: All the inmates at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre currently have a completed case plan. Case plans are initiated upon admission of an individual. They are growing, living documents. They are adjusted during their period of time that they stay at WCC. It's not possible to talk about the timelines that would be put in place.

They would be individual, depending on the case plan that is developed in relation to the individual who is either serving the sentence or spending time in remand and the case manager, and there would be different timelines for different people for different things. Determining how those timelines are met or determining how the plan is being assessed is an ongoing process with case managers and the individual who is either incarcerated or otherwise on remand at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

I need to determine if we can respond to the question about — with there being so few case managers — whether or not they self-identify. I don't know that anyone has self-identified, but we can certainly check on that. Also, what we will be doing is checking with that individual to determine whether or not they mind. Because there are so few of them, we are getting very close to discussing individuals' personal information and disclosing that here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, which is considered a public forum. I don't think that I will do that just now, but I can certainly check into that and determine whether or not they have any concerns about that information being provided.

I think that it is important for Yukoners to know that the Whitehorse Correctional Centre offers programming to both — as I said earlier — remanded and sentenced clients, regardless of the incarceration status, and that the important programming that I have spoken about earlier — in the last few questions, I think — that is available at Whitehorse Correctional Centre is what primarily makes up the case plan for an individual and their personal goals and the programming that they will participate in and ultimately hopefully achieve their goals.

Ms. Blake: My next question is in regard to the needs and risk assessments and core programs at Whitehorse Correctional Centre, which were indicated in the Auditor General's report. Needs and risk assessments are a step in case management that are supposed to happen at first contact, and the needs assessment is the basis of the case plan for those who are incarcerated, no matter what their status of incarceration is. The department's policy states that an offender's needs and risk assessment need to be reassessed every six months.

My questions in regard to the risk assessments are: Are case plans being built on these needs and risk assessments for those who are at Whitehorse Correctional Centre? Who monitors the timeline of the assessments? How often do case managers collaborate on the needs and risk assessments? And how are core programs responding to the needs of clients with what is identified in their needs and risk assessments?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Needs assessments are the first part of building a case plan. A needs assessment is the first part of that plan. It is initiated upon admission. I didn't make the breakdown in the answer to my last question, but the first thing that is done would be a needs assessment to determine what the priorities and goals are for a particular inmate. Those needs assessments and ultimately the case management plans are done by case managers. They are reviewed every six months — again, by the case manager — and probably more often than that if there are short-term goals. If there is certain programming that inmates want to achieve and they do so, then

that would obviously be a conversation that they have. I can ask if I can get some information about how often a case manager might meet with an individual, but it is certainly every two weeks — if it's not weekly or more often than that. Obviously, it can be casual or more formal.

Although I don't have the number — in one of the statistics I gave earlier — many inmates may not stay more than six months. Some will, of course, depending on the situation, but many inmates would stay for shorter periods of time than that. That isn't to say that the case management or the needs assessment aren't done; it would just be that the review of that would have to be sooner than every six months. I can also note that the average stay — I do have that — at Whitehorse Correctional Centre is 38 days, so that is considerably less. I note also that, based on the statistic I gave you earlier, 188 inmates were on a remand status — I just need a moment.

The information I now have is that case management meetings would happen at least every two weeks but sometimes every few days, depending on the needs of the particular inmate and, again, what they are trying to achieve and what is in their case management plan.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response. In the reports that I read recently, it was indicated that a high number of folks come into WCC with substance use challenges. I am wondering what withdrawal management supports are available upon admission to WCC?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member for the question. I did mention a bit about the substance use assistance — addiction assistance that is given to inmates if they want to participate in those programs. It is important to note that the WCC has a health services team. They focus as well on the whole person, but substance use counselling is an important part of that.

I noted that in the 2022-23 year, a contract began in November 2022; it is just coming to an end now. We will be looking to tender that contract again.

It was offered and met by Aurora Wellness Group and they provided substance use counselling and referrals to them through the WCC case management. I also indicated that clients can receive physician-supervised opiate agonist therapy. If they do receive that, they are also required to attend substance use counselling as part of that program. The centre's health services team refers all clients required to attend counselling to the contract service provider. We noted that, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services, the Whitehorse Correctional Centre offers two 5-week intensive treatment sessions at the facility for substance use issues. Case managers can also refer inmates to the forensic complex care team for therapeutic programming, as appropriate. Those therapists conduct most of the therapeutic counselling and deliver those therapeutic programs.

Therapeutic counselling may be individual or as a group. It also serves to address other issues of violence or substance use that might be of concern to individuals. We certainly are aware that individuals who come to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre might be struggling with substance use, substance use addictions, or withdrawal from those things.

They are supported by the health services team and through not only local physicians that we have who operate the opiate agonist therapy options but the physicians who provide services — and, may I say, the nursing staff who provide services — and counselling services at WCC.

Ms. Blake: Another area that was highlighted throughout the Auditor General's report from 2015 was with regard to transitioning back into the community or reintegration supports for those who are incarcerated. I am just wondering: How are reintegration plans developed and implemented within WCC, and what elements of the reintegration plan address the reduction of recidivism?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I agree that reintegration plans are incredibly important as individuals attempt to change their lives. All of the programs that I have noted in the response to a couple of questions here — and it's quite a lengthy list available at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre — remain available to individuals who are trying to reintegrate into their community through the Yukon community corrections programming. Yukon community corrections develops plans for reintegration with individuals who are leaving the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

I can also note that there are individual programs happening now through communities across the territory. I will take the time to note and to herald, if that is possible, the Dawson men's shelter program. A part of their work is focused on reintegrating people into their community, having individuals come and stay at their facility, and then supporting them through that and through a partnership with Yukon community corrections.

I can indicate that we are introducing a program for supporting on-the-land programs and the ability of individual communities to develop those kinds of programs in partnership with individual First Nations or First Nation community-led programming. There is important work being done through the restorative justice initiative. It works closely with individual communities — both with the individual offender and their home community. The level of community justice services available does differ from community to community, depending on the capacity and the priorities of that community, but we continue to be available to work with all of them.

Community-led programs are developed and implemented through collaborative work with Yukon First Nations and are responsive to their priorities as well. The roles and the responsibilities of the community justice workers and the Indigenous courtworkers, who work closely with this program and with individual offenders, are community-specific. Generally, they are responsible for establishing a community-based justice process designed to meet the community needs, supported by Yukon government. They work to promote community healing, to facilitate restorative justice approaches at a community level, to develop positive relationships with the community, and to educate the community about existing justice alternatives, demonstrating accountability to the community about justice matters and establishing a proactive approach to healing with long-term community wellness.

The Government of Yukon is truly committed to advancing restorative justice practices and building capacity in communities with key partners that include the Yukon First Nation governments, the Council of Yukon First Nations, the RCMP, the Territorial Court, therapeutic courts, Corrections, the Government of Canada, the Public Prosecution Service of Canada, and the Correctional Service of Canada.

Other work within the Department of Justice is also to advance the principles of restorative justice, and they include work to expand therapeutic court models.

The partnerships that I have described are designed to support individual inmates as they are returning to their home communities. The programs that are developed are designed to reduce recidivism and support individuals returning to their communities. We have more work to do with respect to these services, because it is truly an opportunity to support individuals in reintegrating into their community.

I can also indicate that, through the substance use strategy, we are hiring front-line support staff to better support people transitioning back into communities, particularly when they are struggling with substance use challenges. I certainly look forward to the development of land-based healing programs that will be designed, I hope, by individual First Nation communities to support the current gap in reintegrating. Despite all of these services, there is sometimes still a gap, and we hope that the land-based healing programs truly help not only to reintegrate people into communities when they have finished treatment for substance use or abuse or addictions but as they are reintegrating into their communities from the Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 8, Department of Justice, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. Blake: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I wanted to follow up on one of the responses from the minister with regard to opioid agonist therapy available at WCC. Can the minister confirm if folks at WCC are required to access counselling to access opioid agonist therapy, or is counselling optional when folks need to access OAT?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you for the question.

Clients receiving physician-supervised opioid agonist therapy are required to attend substance abuse counselling as part of the opioid agonist therapy treatment program, and the Whitehorse Correctional Centre health services team offers all clients required to attend counselling — refers them to the contracted provider, which I noted earlier was Aurora

Wellness. I think that their contract ends in November of this year, and I am sure that it has been tendered again, but I can also confirm that. The timing would be — it would seem that it would have to be out very soon.

Ms. Blake: My follow-up question in regard to mandatory counselling for folks to access the OAT therapy at WCC: How are folks supported if they are not ready for counselling but are in need of opioid agonist therapy but don't want counselling?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't think that I can answer that question for the member opposite. Those would be medical decisions being made as part of the care for the individual. I mean, certainly, someone who is being treated through that program would be required to go to counselling as part of that program, but that is because that is the entire wraparound service given to an individual who is searching for the alternative to toxic drugs, to poison drugs, and rightly so. As far as forcing someone to do that, I think that it is required as part of the program, but ultimately, those counsellors would work with individuals to determine what is in their best interest.

Ms. Blake: I thank the minister for her response. My next question is in regard to the programming that is available at WCC. Are there any Yukon First Nations providing programming in WCC, or is the programming mainly done by service providers here in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I just want to make sure that I understand the question. I think the question is: Are there any First Nation individuals providing counselling or providing any of the programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre; is that right? Is that the question?

Ms. Blake: Sorry, Deputy Chair; I should have been more clear. My question is: In terms of the programming that's offered at WCC, the minister mentioned in her response that currently the Dawson City men's shelter is offering a program. There are conversations happening with First Nations and service providers regarding land-based programming and restorative justice, so I am wondering if any First Nation governments are involved in delivering programs at WCC for clients.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I hope I can answer this. If I can't, I hope that the member opposite will tell me that I'm not addressing it. We continue to partner with Yukon University to provide educational and vocational options for clients. Cultural programming, including the emphasizing First Nation culture program, is delivered by contracted services for the provision of carving programs, drumming, fire ceremonies, talking circles, and targeted referrals for individual First Nations for ongoing community support and assistance. Those are all delivered by First Nation individuals or community groups or elders.

There is also the opportunity for First Nations — we have a contract with the Council of Yukon First Nations, which organizes First Nation programming at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. As I have noted, there are elders who attend to provide programming to inmates. CYFN is the largest provider for cultural programming, as they can address the needs of individuals. It is incredibly important that this

programming is delivered by individuals who are experts in the traditional ways and culture and can connect with First Nation individuals. I can also indicate that through the restorative justice program, which was referred to, and the land-based healing programs that will be forthcoming, those are all — the restorative justice one, for instance, is entirely built on having strong relationships with communities, organizations, and governments, all from First Nation communities for the purpose of making sure that, when we are dealing and supporting First Nation individuals to go through those restorative justice processes, the community has come forward and has the capacity and the interest in making sure that their community justice programs align with restorative justice principles and, more importantly, that the restorative justice principles align with what is necessary for their community members.

Ms. Blake: My next question is in regard to the cultural programming that was indicated by the minister, which included beading, carving, drumming, talking circles, and fire ceremonies. In the Yukon, we have 14 First Nations, and if there are 14 First Nations represented in WCC, I think it's important that we recognize the cultural diversity that is here in the Yukon and remind ourselves that some of these elements may not be a part of one's culture.

So, my question is — I respect the work that CYFN is doing in terms of providing cultural programs, but I do believe that the cultural experts are those who are located in communities that are part of the 14 nations here in the Yukon. How is the department working with each community to ensure that each Yukon First Nation's cultural practices are reflected at WCC?

I also know that, with First Nation culture — culture encompasses land; it encompasses language; it encompasses family; it encompasses community; it encompasses connection and relationship. My question is: How is the department working to ensure that those incarcerated at WCC are given an opportunity to build those relationships, especially when they are incarcerated at WCC?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, certainly we recognize the cultural diversity of the Yukon and the individual First Nations and their cultural traditions that are different from one another. It's incredibly important to recognize that. As one example, in the Victim Services branch of the Department of Justice, they work very hard to make sure that individuals are comfortable in their space when they need to be working with a Victim Services worker or with a support person, and in that room in particular, there is one where Victim Services has sought out one important artifact or aspect of each First Nation in the territory, and they all exist in that room so someone can see themselves there. That's the attitude and the approach that we have taken throughout the Department of Justice and, I would go so far as to say, across government.

In specifics, with respect to the Whitehorse Correctional Centre, I am advised that the First Nation liaison officer works on a care plan for each individual who they work with, and they do so by contacting their First Nation — the one that an individual identifies with. They work on a care plan with the

individual inmate. The purpose is to specifically reach out to each of those First Nations as they are working on those care plans for individuals, the purpose of which is to strengthen their connections with their First Nation should they need to be strengthened or to support an individual by being aware of how their First Nation would go about supporting that individual and hopefully ultimately work through these plans that we have talked about, including a reintegration plan when they go home.

Ms. Blake: My next question is with regard to return-to-custody interviews, which was indicated in one of the reports I read. My question is: Who is conducting return-to-custody interviews for offenders who re-offend and are returned to the custody of WCC, and how are these carried out?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think I understood the question to be: What is the process for supporting individuals who might be released from custody and then, for some reason, need to return to custody?

In that case, a case manager would be responsible, as if somebody were returning or coming for the first time to the Correctional Centre, and a new risk assessment would be done, and then a case plan with a case manager would either be updated, depending on how long someone was gone — that case plan updated — or reintroduce a new case plan to support the individual.

Ms. Blake: My next question is regarding probation officers in the Yukon. I am wondering: How many communities have a full-time probation officer? How many probation officers are based in Whitehorse? How often are performance plans reviewed with probation officers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I thank the member for the question. There are 11 full-time probation officers who work out of Whitehorse. There is one probation officer who works full time in Dawson City and a receptionist in Dawson City. There is a probation officer who works full time in Watson Lake and a receptionist who works in Watson Lake. Those communities that do not have a full-time probation officer have visiting probation officers — someone who is assigned to work in their community and with the individuals who live in that community and are otherwise being provided services through the probation office every two weeks.

Ms. Blake: One of the reports I read talked about the importance of cultural education training for probation officers or anyone who is a service provider within Justice.

My next question is: How is the department working with communities to ensure that their staff have access to community or cultural education training in communities that are not available in Whitehorse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Training is provided to all staff with respect to the Department of Justice staff. Certainly, we encourage individuals to become part of their community to build relationships in those communities. Cultural training can be and sometimes is part of that, either officially or unofficially, in building those relationships. We provide culturally based and culturally aware training to all of our staff. Individuals might have it in their own community if there were enough people and the opportunity to deliver it there, or they would be able to travel to Whitehorse to obtain that training.

Ms. Blake: This will be my last stack of questions. My next area of focus is regarding health and safety at WCC. On October 27, the Yukon Coroner's Service released the inquest report on the death of Leon Nepper, an inmate at WCC. This report laid out four recommendations to the director of the Correctional Centre and to the Deputy Minister of Justice.

These recommendations covered areas like medical intake information, emergency medical training for corrections officers, and the suitability of facilities, training, and policies for housing inmates with serious medical conditions.

Will this government work with WCC to improve its medical intake assessments to include information about advance directives and do-not-resuscitate orders and introduce a follow-up process with a doctor when this information is not available?

Will this government work with WCC to offer more opportunities for generalized advanced training for higher levels of care and emergency response for correction officers?

Will the government work with WCC to present the Nepper incident in internal training to improve future responses to inmates with medical concerns?

The last question is: Will this government evaluate the suitability of facilities to house inmates with significant and serious medical conditions and how the existing policies and facilities might be improved?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the questions. This is an important opportunity with the inquest having recently occurred and then ultimately the recommendations with respect to the impact on Whitehorse Correctional Centre — in particular, medical intake or follow-up with medical professionals.

I want to take the opportunity now to thank the individuals who participated in that inquest. It was required by law because the particular person died while technically considered to be in custody at Whitehorse Correctional Centre. The individuals involved considered the matter seriously. There were thoughtful and careful recommendations. We are reviewing those recommendations. I don't see any reason why they would not be implemented. We are always looking to improve that process and improve the training of individuals who provide services at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre. As a result, I think those four recommendations will allow us to make improvements and also to make sure that — which I think is a very important aspect of this — our staff are properly supported and properly able to evaluate in order to get additional support if they need to — whether that be from supervisors or from medical professionals — and the opportunity to make sure that inmates who present upon their arrest or are at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre and are very ill get the opportunity and get the medical care that they need.

Mr. Dixon: I just have one further question for the Minister of Justice. On the Order Paper, there is currently Motion No. 644, which was tabled by the Minister of Justice and reads: "THAT this House adopts the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism..."

I would just like to ask the minister: What is intended with that government motion? Has anything happened on that front? Has the government looked at including that working definition in legislation? Some provinces, I note, have taken the step of adopting the definition by regulation. What actions has the minister taken so far and what further actions is she considering with regard to that government motion?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I do recall bringing the motion. If I could have one moment, maybe I can get the answer. I recall the correspondence that I had around the time of presenting that motion. I don't want to comment on it because I don't want to get it incorrect. I am happy to get the correspondence — with whom I sent a letter dealing with this definition — saying that it was certainly acceptable and that I would commit to seeing if it was acceptable to the Legislative Assembly, and that is the basis for that motion.

We have not put that definition in regulation at this time. There isn't a legal or regulatory approach of adopting it here in the territory as there is in some other places. It would, in my view, be meaningful or relevant if we could proceed with the idea that the motion would be adopted by the Legislative Assembly if it were brought forward.

That is an opportunity to ask the other parties — which we can follow up on to see if that is a positive action. I will seek out the correspondence with respect to what we were thinking about in bringing forward this motion and provide it to the member opposite or perhaps table it here in the Legislature. We have not adopted that definition by regulation here in the territory, although I have presented it by way of a motion that it is a definition that would certainly be acceptable to our government.

Mr. Dixon: Just for clarification, Deputy Chair, can the minister describe what correspondence she is referring to? I am not quite sure — she referenced correspondence that she is going to table. I am just curious if she can tell us what correspondence she is referring to.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: My recollection, which I will say now is shaky, was that an organization in Canada was asking each government to consider adopting that definition. It was acceptable to me, as the minister, such that I introduced the motion so that we might discuss it here as a Legislative Assembly and provide direction. My recollection is that I responded to that organization and told them what we had done. But again, that is quite a long time ago and it is my recollection, so, rather than rely on that to be the facts of the situation, I will go and obtain the letter and provide it.

Mr. Dixon: Just one final point, I suppose — I think that the organization that the minister is referring to is likely the B'nai B'rith, and, of course, they have written to all three political parties about this. What is being sought is some sort of action or some sort of step taken by the Yukon government to act on this commitment that the minister has made by way of this motion.

I will just leave it there and note that what I think everyone is looking for is just a sense from the department or the government about what sort of steps could be taken to act on

this commitment. I would also note that I wrote to the minister on May 2 about this, and I have not yet heard back, so I would look forward to hearing back at some point in the future. I will leave it there.

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

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

Mr. Dixon: Deputy Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request 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 Copperbelt North 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 \$1,734,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,734,000 agreed to

Department of Justice agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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 now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Environment — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to return to Committee of the Whole with the Department of Environment. To my left, in my support, I have Deputy Minister Manon Moreau, and to my right is one of the assistant deputy ministers for the Department of Environment, Briar Young.

I have a few minutes here, so I will try to answer some of the questions that arose from the previous Committee of the Whole, and then we can move on to some other questions.

The Department of Environment continues to work toward reducing our emissions, building communities that are more resilient to the impacts of climate change, and ensuring that we continue to champion and protect Yukon's natural spaces and environment. I appreciate the opportunity to address some of the questions the members opposite had during Committee debate on October 30, 2023. I have had an opportunity to engage with the Department of Environment officials on these matters, and I hope I can provide some clarity before we resume debate today.

The Member for Whitehorse Centre inquired about the status of the *Our Clean Future* annual report. I have indicated that we are on track to release the report by the end of this year, which will highlight all the work that has been done in 2022.

Our Clean Future is an adaptive strategy that involves 14 departments and agencies and it is taking some time to ensure that the report is strategically focused on helping us reach our targets. Every year, we are and will continue to assess our progress and analyze where we can alter our actions to best respond to the climate emergency. For example, this year, we considered the recommendations put forward by the Yukon Climate Leadership Council and the Yukon Youth Panel on Climate Change, which are valuable resources to reach the goals set out in *Our Clean Future*.

We also look to knowledge-holders, researchers, and other experts to better understand how new technology and innovative solutions can be incorporated into a Yukon context. To better understand our progress and how best to reach our targets, we work with an independent consultant to provide objective modelling and analysis of our climate actions. Given this, it takes time to ensure that the report is strategically focused on helping us reach our targets. We will continue to work with experts, stakeholders, and partner governments across the territory and beyond to identify opportunities to accelerate and intensify our efforts to reach our ambitious targets.

Our Clean Future is the Yukon's path to addressing the climate emergency, and it's a strategy that continues to be strengthened year after year as we assess our progress, renew research, consider input from other organizations and bodies, and identify emerging and innovative solutions that will help us reach our goals.

I wanted to take a moment to highlight some of the work that we have completed to date that is helping us fulfill our commitments in *Our Clean Future*. We have legislated greenhouse gas emissions and targets and associated reporting through the *Clean Energy Act*. This year, we launched a five-year sustainable Canadian agricultural partnership, which will enhance the agricultural sector's resiliency and adaptation to climate change. We created the Better Buildings program, which is helping Yukon home and business owners finance energy retrofits to their homes and buildings. We established a geohazard mapping program to understand how our transportation corridors could be impacted by climate change.

This is just some of the work that we have completed under *Our Clean Future*. I look forward to providing a full update on the work that we have completed under the strategy by the end of the year. I will leave it at that. I do have more, but for now, I'll sit down, and I look forward to further questions.

Mr. Istchenko: I want to thank the staff who are here today helping. I do have a few more questions. I would like to ask some questions about the mobile abattoir — or lack of. I understand — I have been talking to local farmers, especially some of the ones in the rural communities who have stopped basically raising animals because of not having the mobile abattoir that can come out to their location, so I would like the minister to expand on this and maybe answer why there isn't one anymore.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In consultation with my officials, a brief conversation with the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, and also based on my understanding of this file, I understand that the provision of mobile abattoir services is under the purview of the Agriculture branch, which is the responsibility of the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources. It is certainly likely that he will be in a position to answer that question when he returns to Committee of the Whole prior to the end of the Sitting.

Briefly, I have been advised that the Agriculture branch is in consultation with the Yukon Agricultural Association on this topic and is also in conversation to try to incentivize the private sector becoming involved in this space, but as indicated, it is the responsibility of the Agriculture branch and by extension Energy, Mines and Resources.

Mr. Istchenko: I will get the critic for that to ask that question when the department comes up.

I have some questions around the sheep population in game zone 5. I understand from community locals that, because of a few bad weather years, the population is not good. When I asked the minister a little bit about this before — I will quote what he said in the House: “In fact, we have observed the lowest number of sheep in Brooks Arm since we started monitoring in 1974.

“Similarly, Parks Canada recently reported low adult sheep populations in the Tachäl Dhäl survey area — the lowest since their monitoring program began in 1977. Our Alaskan counterparts note similar patterns on the Alaska side of Kluane National Park, particularly in recent years.

“In the summer of 2023, we conducted further aerial surveys of the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary and the Brooks Arm, Ruby Range, Donjek, Nutzotin, and Flat Top sheep management units. We will continue our long-term monitoring of population estimates and recruitment rates across these areas to determine the need for further management actions.”

This government sometimes, when it comes to wildlife management, doesn't like to use the process set out in the *Umbrella Final Agreement* when it comes to a regulation change proposal, but I am just wondering if there will be any regulation change proposals coming forward this year from the department in reference to those populations in game zone 5, which would affect, I guess, the next hunting season.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the member opposite for the question and certainly for his ongoing concern for viable wildlife populations in the Yukon, wherever that may be and whichever species.

Just briefly, thinhorn sheep are an iconic species of Yukon wildlife and are economically and culturally significant. As the member opposite did indicate, aerial sheep surveys conducted by the Department of Environment this summer noted sheep population declines in several management units across southwest Yukon. Similarly, in recent years, other government wildlife agencies, as indicated, have observed low sheep population counts and low lamb survival rates in northern British Columbia and in Alaska as well.

As the member opposite has no doubt reviewed, the results of the 2022 and 2023 aerial surveys conducted by the Department of Environment were published on yukon.ca on November 2, 2023. It is likely that environmental factors such as deep snowpacks and late springs over the last few years have reduced survival rates and contributed significantly to the decline in sheep populations.

As the member opposite will know, due to a conservation concern with these populations, the Kluane First Nation cancelled their auction of the Kluane Wildlife Sanctuary sheep permit for the 2023-24 season. In the spirit of co-management, the Yukon government also cancelled the 2023-24 lottery for the single-permit hunt authorization.

To answer the member opposite's question, the Yukon government intends to work with affected First Nations in the southwest Yukon, the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and other stakeholders in order to create adaptive sheep management tools for southwest Yukon before the next hunting season.

Adaptive wildlife management tools would allow us to increase or decrease resident harvest in response to population fluctuations. We are committed to working with our Yukon First Nation partners and the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board, among others, to develop a sheep management plan for the southwest Yukon in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of sheep in the area.

The member opposite is quite correct that the areas impacted are Brooks Arm, Donjek, Flat Top, the K.W.S. permit area, the Nizotun, and Ruby Range. I believe that this answers the member opposite's question, but I am sure that there may be a follow-up.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that.

This morning, I drove here in a snowstorm and it got me thinking. I popped this letter up — a response from the Minister of Highways and Public Works — that I wrote back in 2020. It was a question about brushing. They had done a little brushing between Whitehorse and Haines Junction, and I know that you are the minister of both, but I am going to take this angle on Environment and ask you some questions here. They did some work out there, which was incredible because the wild horses, deer, and stuff like that can be seen now, but this morning, the elk herd that I passed was in the area that has not been brushed. The Minister of Highways and Public Works told me, in this letter of December 11, 2020 — and I quote: “Planning work for

the Roadside Safety Improvement Program is underway for the 2021/22 season. The segment of road you identified is planned for the construction season 2021/22 and 2022/23, subject to plan finalization and budget...”

We are at the end of, basically, the brushing season for the summer and it still hasn't been done, so I am wondering if the Department of Environment has concerns with the Department of Highways and Public Works, because if the minister could list the number of elk, deer, moose, bison, or feral horse — or even domestic horse — vehicle collisions between Whitehorse and Haines Junction — I am just wondering if the minister would be concerned about the Department of Highways and Public Works not getting that work done.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will try to be relatively brief on this. One of the questions is with respect to statistics on wildlife collisions. I am advised that I am in a position to provide that to the House and to the member opposite. We will certainly provide the most up-to-date data on that.

With respect to prioritizing vegetation control between Whitehorse and Haines Junction, I do anticipate that Highways and Public Works will be up again in Committee of the Whole, so I can certainly provide some additional information on that. Anecdotally, what I would say is that I did have the opportunity during the course of this summer to drive from Whitehorse to Haines Junction to Burwash Landing and further than Burwash Landing on three occasions, I believe — three occasions over the summer period. Of course, I am not the expert, but my observations were that I thought the vegetation control between Whitehorse, Haines Junction, and Burwash was pretty solid. Of course, it is never going to be perfect, and I am sure that there are areas where the wise Member for Kluane, who has the local knowledge, will know that there are areas that could use more attention.

I do have some late-breaking information here, but wildlife-vehicle collisions are another form of human-wildlife conflict, resulting in the deaths of 67 wildlife in 2023, with most being ungulates. The departments of Environment and Highways and Public Works work together to develop and implement adaptive strategies to decrease the rate of wildlife collisions on Yukon roads, such as signage and brush-clearing to improve visibility.

We manage these conflicts through prevention strategies like installing signage, brushing road corridors to improve visibility, and through our social media communication and advertising campaigns. Road ecologists and biologists have been contracted to analyze collision data and recommend appropriate and effective mitigation measures. This has included actions like the removal of snow berms in order to facilitate animal movement off the roadways.

As indicated, I do anticipate that Highways and Public Works will be back in Committee of the Whole, and I will certainly do my best to provide — assuming that question arises again with respect to prioritization. Once again, my non-expert opinion with respect to the roadway between Whitehorse, Haines Junction, and Burwash is that it is in quite good shape with respect to vegetation control. Actually, the road itself — my anecdotal observation is that it is in quite good shape as

well. Kudos to the hard-working Highways and Public Works teams today.

Nevertheless, it can, of course, be better and we certainly do wish to reduce motor vehicle-animal collisions. I can undertake to dig down into the data. I am sure that my department loves to hear when I provide these assurances, but I believe that we can probably dig down into that data and provide a geographic spot map as to where these collisions have occurred and provide that information to the Member for Kluane as to what the statistics look like between Whitehorse and his constituency.

Mr. Istchenko: I have one more quick question here. I asked the minister about the request from the Fish and Wildlife Management Board to the Premier that the outfitter guidelines be reviewed. He said that he had received the correspondence, and then he told me that he has responded to the board, inviting them to initiate the review. My question for him is: Is there a timeline for this review? What information will the department be providing to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board? Who will be the key players who will be consulted on that?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Government of Yukon has responded to the board that, given its mandate to make recommendations on all matters related to Yukon fish and wildlife management legislation, research, policies, and programs, the board could initiate the review and engagement on, among other things, Yukon outfitter quota guidelines. Should the board accept this role, the Government of Yukon is committed to providing the board with technical and financial support to undertake this work. We are waiting to hear the response from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board with respect to this and any requests that they may have for resourcing. We certainly anticipate that this consultation and engagement process will take some time and that they will be looking at a lot of different elements of the legislation. The preliminary meeting with the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board was quite positive, but we are waiting for them to respond and to advise if they wish to initiate the review and engagement and, if so, what resources they will require in order to initiate and complete said review and engagement.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the officials who have hung around so that we can have these brief questions at the end of the day. I really appreciate it. I want to start by talking about feral horses. I'm wondering how, if at all, they are protected since they are neither domestic nor wild animals and whether there is any consideration to bringing in regulations that would either protect or address that population. I'm curious if the *Animal Protection and Control Act*, when it comes into force, will have any impact on feral horses.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I thank the Member for Whitehorse Centre for the question.

The Department of Environment has received reports — as the members of the Assembly will likely know — of two young feral horses, one of which had an injured front leg, that were separated from adults in their band and were wandering in the Champagne area. We share the concerns of the community about the well-being of these animals, and an animal protection

officer from the Department of Environment attended the area last week but was unsuccessful in locating either of the two young horses.

Concerned citizens subsequently reported finding the bodies of two adult feral horses that are believed to be part of the same band. There was considerable speculation that the horses may have been shot and that the younger horse was injured at the same time.

The Department of Environment deeply values the welfare and respectful treatment of all animals. We understand that Yukoners feel strongly about the feral horse population and that there are diverse values and viewpoints. The Yukon feral horse population does not currently meet the definition of “wildlife”, according to the *Wildlife Act*. “Wildlife” are species that are wild by nature, and horses are domestic by definition. The feral population is wild by circumstance, and they have survived in the wild for multiple generations.

The animal protection officer and livestock control officers have authority under the *Highways Act* to deter feral horses from being on the highways or right-of-way for the protection of drivers. The tip line reports regarding these horses are being referred to the animal protection officer and the animal health unit.

Currently, the Department of Environment has limited options to manage or control feral horses in the Yukon, other than deterring them from roadways and responding to reports of injured or distressed animals. Animal protection officers and the RCMP have the authority to relieve any animal, including feral horses, of suffering. Animal protection officers do have the authority to relieve an animal of suffering, but the priority is to give any animal every chance to survive.

There are strong opinions in the Yukon and elsewhere about how feral horses should be treated. There is debate about whether they belong on the landscape or if they compete with wildlife and damage the ecosystem. In the past, efforts were made by the government to corral and rehome these animals. Some of the captured feral horses tested positive for a disease called equine infectious anemia, also known as “swamp fever”, which can be spread to other horses by biting flies. This disease is controlled by the federal government and affected horses and those in contact with them were ordered destroyed.

There were also few homes identified for feral horses, and the effort was expensive; capture was extremely stressful for horses and tragically resulted in the death of a wrangler in 2014. Feral horses can cause damage to agricultural properties, such as fencing, and have been reported to harm and injure domestic horses and their riders. They can also be host to winter ticks, which they share with elk in the Ibex Valley. There is concern for owners of valuable horses that might be infected by the feral horse groups.

It is currently an offense to violate the existing *Animal Protection Act*, which prohibits someone from causing distress to an animal. This applies to feral horses as well as owned animals, and the animal protection officer does investigate reports when presented with evidence that this may have occurred. The officer may take action to relieve the distress of a feral horse, provided conditions are met for an animal to be

euthanized. This includes whether a firearm can be used safely, surrounding traffic and environmental conditions, and the state of the animal. An animal protection officer can investigate allegations that someone has violated the existing *Animal Protection Act*, which prohibits someone from causing distress to an animal. If capture methods or the method of killing a feral horse caused distress, then a person could be charged.

We are working on this for greater protection. The Government of Yukon’s new *Animal Protection and Control Act*, which is not yet in effect, will provide a comprehensive legal framework for managing all aspects of animal protection and control in the Yukon. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Yukon NDP for supporting this incredibly important legislation — less so for the Yukon Party, but that’s for another day.

The act expands enforcement tools to address high-risk feral animals and prohibits anyone from capturing or killing animals defined as “feral” or “high risk” unless they have a permit issued by the department. Under section 46, it is stated that “A person must not kill or capture a feral animal or a high-risk animal that is at large unless authorized to do so in accordance with this section ... [and that] The Minister may, in writing, designate individuals or classes of individuals as feral and high-risk animal control officers.”

I can advise that we are working with the Department of Justice in order to expedite the regulations. The act and its extended provisions will come into effect in early 2024, once the development of the regulations is complete.

Our government has engaged and consulted with Yukoners extensively on the new act to be able to better respond to and have better tools in order to address animal protection and control. It will include permits and inspections of animal-related businesses, expand enforcement tools, and address high-risk and feral animals.

To answer the member opposite’s question, yes, there are currently some protections for feral horses, but as with many aspects of the new and updated *Animal Protection and Control Act* and the related regulations, which are in the process of being completed, they will be in many ways preferable and more significant in the provisions that they provide to protect all manner of animals in the territory. That is where we are at with feral horses.

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

Chair (Ms. Blake): 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.

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. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

Committee of the Whole has also considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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 sessional papers were tabled November 14, 2023:

35-1-128

Yukon Judicial Council Annual Report 2022 (McPhee)

35-1-129

Yukon Law Foundation Annual Report — November 1, 2021 to October 31, 2022 (McPhee)

The following document was filed November 14, 2023:

35-1-165

2023-25 Strategic framework for French-language services announcement (November 14, 2023) (Streicker)

Written notice was given of the following motion November 14, 2023:

Motion No. 839

Re: resources for municipalities to address accessibility (McLeod)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 158

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 15, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 15, 2023 — 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: Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of guests here today for several tributes.

I will ask us to welcome a few of the folks. First of all, Jason Cook is here from the Porter Creek Secondary School's Gender and Sexuality Alliance. We also have with us, from Yukon Brewing, Al Hansen and Bob Baxter. We have Anne Middler of the Kicksled Revolution and Anne's daughter, Juniper Middler, who, by the way, is featured in a show at Haa Shagóon Hídi right now on trapping. It's on, I think, until December 22. If you go down to Carcross, please make sure to check it out.

Could we please welcome them all?

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to help me welcome a few visitors who we have here today for one of the tributes that's going to be given.

Could we please welcome Jill Nash, Araica McPhee — particularly, I think Araica McPhee will be a great welcome — Marney Paradis, April Howard, and Donna Jones.

Thank you for being here.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues today to join me in welcoming people who are near and dear to someone we are tributing today. I am so grateful that you are here. We have Peggy Hanifan, Lisa Vollans-Leduc, Maralyn Rogers, Christine Withers, Stu Withers, Jessen Cardiff — thank you for coming — Haley Cardiff — the smallest, little visitor — and Jaclyn Cardiff. We have Helen Flaherty, Helene Dobrowolsky, Max Fraser, Barry Jenkins, and Sidney Maddison.

Thank you for joining us today.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Kathy Hanifan

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP and the Yukon Liberals to honour the life and legacy of Kathy Hanifan. Kathy was a mother, a sister, a grandmother, great-grandmother, teacher, mentor, activist, and a friend. She

was born on March 21, 1948 in St. Stephen, New Brunswick, and soon after, the family moved to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.

Her Ontario years were full of family and growing into an independent woman who loved adventure. At the tender age of 24, her love and adventure brought her to Faro, and this was the beginning of her 50-year love affair with the Yukon, living in Carmacks and Dawson City before finally settling in Whitehorse.

When Kathy moved to Whitehorse in the early 1970s, she took on a variety of jobs to support her family — everything from selling hunting rifles at Igloo Sporting Goods to greeting late-night arrivals at the Greyhound bus station. Many a time, she came home with exhausted travellers who had no other place to stay.

Her work with the Yukon government's Finance department led to her involvement with the Yukon Employees' Union. She championed Yukon government workers as a member of the YEU executive and then later worked for the union as a service officer for over 20 years. A colleague, friend, and neighbour who worked across from Kathy for many years on the employer side remembers her strong sense of compassion and desire for workplace justice. She said that Kathy always saw the person behind the claim and tried to present her cases as people first and alleged policy or contract violation second.

Kathy was not shy to advocate for people even when she knew and knew that the employer knew that there was no violation on paper. Kathy just wanted to make sure that people's working lives were better, and she put her heart into everything and everything into it.

Kathy was also one of the long-time mainstays of the Yukon NDP. She served three terms as president and managed Yukon and federal election campaigns for various candidates. She worked on many campaigns — always with enthusiasm, always willing to lend a hand, and always with the advice that made sense.

When the Yukon NDP won the territorial election in 1996, Kathy became the executive assistant to Lois Moorcroft, minister of the departments of Education and Justice. As the executive assistant to the Justice minister, she was known to many at the Justice department to be a person whom they could count on to champion their perspectives when needed.

Kathy put her time where her heart lay and volunteered on various boards. Some highlights included serving as the labour representative on the Employment Standards Board and as a founding member and chair of the Yukon Child Care Board. Her sound judgment and clear thinking were tremendous assets to the Employment Standards Board and to the parties that came before it. In her time on the board, she was instrumental in working with other non-worker reps to get their concurrence for a recommendation to increase minimum wage. She was proud of where we landed with minimum wage after the last election but always encouraged me to continue to work at closing the gap between minimum wage and a living wage.

Kathy was a mother who translated her care for her sons into activism toward the formation of the Yukon Child Care Board, child care standards, and served for the not-for-profit

daycare board of the day. Her work on the Child Care Board saw incredible changes over the years, but even with increases to childcare subsidies, she was always intent on the principle of universal childcare and was relieved that, even decades after her time when it would have helped her directly, universal childcare was finally adopted in the Yukon.

Kathy was a fierce advocate of the underdog — all of them — workers who were mistreated, people without resources, women who struggled, and new Canadians. She was always interested in discussing social issues and how to resolve them.

Kathy had a tremendous gift for friendship, with many meaningful friendships that spanned decades. She connected with such a variety of people. She valued people for what she saw at their core and it didn't matter where they came from or what work they did. She helped so many people, from providing a bed to finding the words to get them through rough times and inspiring them to be their best selves.

Her legacy is the three fine men she raised, the institutions for which she worked and volunteered, making them better in the process, and the many, many people who will cherish her memory.

Kathy taught us so much about love, life, and the power of going out on her own terms. She was tough as nails and soft as a teddy bear. She loved her boys, her family, and her dear friends more than anything. Kathy was a warrior straight to the end, and I would be remiss if I didn't close with some words that she lived by and what she said to many of us when the fight was wearing us down and what I know she would say today to those who are here for the T1D Support Network and, of course, those representing the Porter Creek GSA.

This is what she would part us with. She said, "Don't let the bastards get you down."

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to my friend Katherine Hanifan. Kathy and I go back to being co-workers in the Yukon Department of Finance. As the years passed, we grew closer and kept up with family goings-on and our ups and downs. We shared many stories about the various communities where she had lived and what our latest ventures involved.

She was always volunteering, as was I but with different interests. My family started a summer tourism business and my focus changed. I worked casual in the winter, as the government refused to consider a job share of 6 months-6 months. Kathy wanted to work summers and I wanted to work winters.

We were women who wanted to make a change, but it was a firm no — not like today where accommodation is an accepted part of the work world. Kathy was employed for 20 years with the Yukon Employees' Union as a service officer and so enjoyed the work that she accomplished there. She was passionate about her beliefs and always greeted you with the biggest smile and hug. She enjoyed being in the thick of politics, elections, and campaigns.

We didn't see each other often, and that is a regret I have, as when I heard of her passing, it was far too soon and unexpected. We were going to have lunch soon. So, whatever

happens, take those moments and go for that lunch. Kathy's sister, Peggy, had a wonderful idea. She invited Kathy's friends to come and pick a small memento to have as a memory. I chose a small, blue, antique trinket box that I treasure. I left Peggy and the family with a memory of mine. In a note I wrote — quote: "When I was sworn in as Commissioner, I gave tribute to my strong women friends who helped me accomplish what I had done to that date, and Kathy was on that list."

Thankfully, Kathy was there in person at my swearing-in ceremony, and she was very surprised, but we had that special bond. Rest well, my friend. You are missed.

Applause

In recognition of 2023 Hall of Innovators Awards

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 2023 Hall of Innovators Award recipients. The Hall of Innovators Award, presented by YuKconstruct, took place last Thursday on November 9. The night honoured individuals who are exceptional examples of innovation and leadership.

Innovative programs and projects enrich our communities and play an impactful role on the ongoing economic, social, cultural, and technological aspects of life in the Yukon. I was fortunate to attend the gala and was humbled to be surrounded by such accomplished and inspiring individuals and was able to share in the experiences of the recipients being presented their awards by the Premier.

Today, we take a moment to pay tribute to all recipients whose valuable contributions enrich the lives of Yukoners.

I want to start by acknowledging the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance, winner of the Youth Innovator Award. They have harnessed the transformative power of youth to champion safety, equality, and acceptance for all students in the Yukon, particularly 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals. Their impact extends beyond school walls, identifying and bridging policy gaps, leading to critical reforms that safeguard vulnerable youth.

I would also like to recognize Notable Innovator Award winners Anne Midler and Joella Hogan. In 2016, Anne brought the magic of kick-sleds to the Yukon with the kick-sled revolution. Anne's dream to evolve this initiative to a pan-northern social enterprise addressing climate change, health promotion, and bringing positive change to our territory is well on its way.

Joella Hogan, whose dedication to enhancing community through her business endeavours, resonates with Mayo's residents and visitors and beyond. Yukon Soaps has become a testament to the revival of ancestral practices, with every soap embodying a unique and captivating Yukon story.

I also want to celebrate the three recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award. Rich Thompson, who continually pushes the boundaries of innovation with his business and fosters environments where others can thrive creatively, and Bob and Alan Hansen, with their unwavering entrepreneurial spirit, became the driving force behind Yukon Brewing's success.

I also want to acknowledge the dedicated effort of the selection committee for the 2023 Yukon Innovation Awards

and express deep gratitude to the lead sponsor of the event, Yukon Brewing, for their generous support.

Innovation paves the way for progress, offers fresh avenues to realize our aspirations, and writes the Yukon story. The Government of Yukon is proud to be supporting this wonderful community through the new innovation strategy, which was launched at the Yukon Hall of Innovators Award Gala. I am confident that the 2023 Hall of Innovators Award recipients will continue to make the Yukon a better place to live, work, and learn.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to add our congratulations to the winners of the Yukon Hall of Innovators Award. As has been noted, the Porter Creek Secondary School Gender and Sexuality Alliance received the Youth/Emerging Leaders Notable Innovators Award. A Notable Innovators Award went to Joella Hogan and her Yukon Soaps Company and to Anne Midler of Kicksled Revolution and the Lifetime Achievement Award to Yukon Brewing's Bob Baxter and Al Hansen, as well as to Rich Thompson, with Northern Vision Development.

I would like to offer our sincere congratulations to each of these winners and to thank them for their work, dedication to their communities, and, of course, for their innovation.

Applause

In recognition of World Diabetes Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize that yesterday was World Diabetes Day. It is a day to raise awareness about the increasing health concerns associated with all types of diabetes. It is also a day to promote the importance of taking coordinated and concerted action to prevent, diagnose, and treat diabetes and all of its complications.

This year's theme is "Access to diabetes care", and I want to thank the dedicated staff at the Department of Health and Social Services and the T1D Support Network, who have been working together to implement a territory-wide T1D diabetes strategy. The strategy will address areas of management; treatment and care; data collection; learning and knowledge sharing; access to devices; medicines; and other supports.

The Government of Yukon has also partnered with the T1D Support Network and piloted a project to provide continuous glucose monitors to Yukoners with type 1 diabetes. With this successful pilot, the Yukon is the first in Canada to provide continuous glucose monitors for all individuals with type 1 diabetes and to offer financial support to cover the costs of their preferred glucose monitor device. Thank you to everyone who has had a hand in continuing to provide services to those living with diabetes.

The Yukon government's chronic condition support program offers one-on-one education, group education, and support programs. They empower clients to self-manage and live their best life through education and accessible support services. As of 2020, there are approximately 3,182 Yukoners living with either type 1 or type 2 diabetes here. Today, we take

this opportunity to celebrate the achievements and contributions of those in the Yukon who are living with diabetes, as well as the health professionals, researchers, advocates, supporters, and organizations working to improve the lives of people with diabetes.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an opportunity for us to recognize all those who work so hard to bring awareness and progress in the fight against diabetes. To all of you, we say thank you.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition and the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to World Diabetes Day, which is commemorated every year on November 14 to coincide with the birthday of Sir Frederick Banting, who co-discovered insulin along with Charles Best in 1922. The campaign is focused on access to diabetes care and is the largest for diabetes awareness, and it is expected to reach a global audience of over one billion people in 160 countries.

According to the International Diabetes Federation — I'll quote: "1 in 10 adults worldwide have diabetes. Over 90% have type 2 diabetes. Close to half are not yet diagnosed.

"In many cases, type 2 diabetes and its complications can be delayed or prevented by adopting and maintaining healthy habits ... knowing your risk and what to do is important to support prevention, early diagnosis and timely treatment."

Of course, type 1 diabetes is a different story, as people cannot simply make lifestyle choices to prevent it. Here in the Yukon, we are fortunate to have a group of very dedicated volunteers advocating for individuals and their families living with type 1 diabetes. The Yukon T1D Support Network was able to successfully lobby the Yukon government to provide continuous glucose monitors to every Yukoner with type 1 diabetes. This has been a game changer for so many people, as their health is easier to monitor and their quality of life has improved substantially.

The organization continues to work collaboratively on completing a T1D strategy for Yukon, hosting camps for young Yukoners with the disease, and providing a scholarship to Yukoners in the name of the late Rebecca Pollard.

We're also lucky to have the individuals at the Diabetes Education Centre in Whitehorse General Hospital. They offer teaching and ongoing support to those with type 1, type 2, gestational, and pre-diabetes. This is a very valuable service for Yukoners and those living in northern BC.

Mr. Speaker, five years ago, I read out the T1D footprint for one of my young constituents, Heidi Nash. Her mom, Jill, who is here with us today, has provided me with her current footprint to share here today so that people can truly understand what it takes to manage this disease. At that time in 2018, Heidi had been living with type 1 diabetes for 2,430 days. She has now been living with the disease for 3,174 days. She has endured 11,412 finger pricks and 22,218 insulin injections. She has lost the equivalent of 1,812 hours of sleep to T1D, although Jill told me that this number is a little bit low. She has spent 906 hours recovering from hypoglycemia. I think for anyone, these numbers are unbelievable, but for these folks, it's a normal part of their routine.

For all the families living with diabetes, we salute you and we thank you for your ongoing efforts to help those affected by this disease.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have tabling two legislative returns: one in response to questions from the Member for Copperbelt South and one in response to questions from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter addressed to the Minister of Justice and Health and Social Services from me. It is dated May 2, 2023 and it has not yet been responded to.

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

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

THAT this House congratulates the newly elected Members of the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that:

(1) since the Office of the Auditor General of Canada has confirmed that they have received the Yukon government's Public Accounts for the 2022-23 fiscal year; and

(2) the Minister of Finance has been in violation of the *Financial Administration Act* since failing to table the Public Accounts on the legally mandated date of October 31, he should immediately table the Public Accounts for 2022-23 in the Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create and enact accessibility legislation based on the *Accessible Canada Act*.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to start planning now for future educational reserves within the City of Whitehorse.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with First Nation development corporations to create housing units in communities.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop a remote work policy to encourage and support Yukon government employees to work remotely from Yukon communities where operationally feasible.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Diesel energy generation costs

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, on November 8 last year, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources said this — quote: "... the Yukon Party believes that we should have an investment in fossil fuels that we will have to have for the long term — no. We are going to work to get off the fossil fuels." Since making that statement, the Yukon Energy Corporation has revealed that this government is spending at least \$49 million this year on new, permanent diesel generators in three Yukon communities.

So, will the minister acknowledge that the amount that they are spending on new, permanent diesel generators dwarfs the amount that this government has spent on renewables this year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon has an islanded electrical grid. That grid requires, in order to make sure that we have affordable and reliable energy and clean energy, that what we do is have backup energy. That is for when we have blackouts. It is the responsible thing.

We will always continue to have those investments in fossil fuels, thermal backup, for our system. Yes, we will continue to invest in that and that is to be expected.

As well, we are growing, we have increasing energy demands, and we are trying to shift off of fossil fuels broadly. The way we will do that is to invest in renewables.

Over the short term, we may need to invest in some fossil fuels. That is why sometimes there will be rentals. I will continue to say that we should be careful not to invest in the long term for the growth of our system in fossil fuels because we want to shift off of fossil fuels.

That is the broad picture for Yukoners, and the Yukon Party is saying that we should invest in fossil fuels.

Mr. Dixon: It is the Liberals who are investing \$49 million this year in fossil fuels. For years now, the Liberals have been telling Yukoners that it makes more financial sense to rent diesel generators than it would to construct a permanent facility. When they first announced their decision to rent diesels, the Premier even said — quote: "We believe it's a good investment." Well, last week, the Yukon Energy Corporation told us that they're not so sure. In fact, they told us that they have hired a consultant to look at this — quote: "... the scope of work that Colliers is doing for us is basically doing that analysis on the financial metrics around renting versus owning over different time periods so that we can be sure that the costs of renting and the costs of owning are known to us when making decisions."

Does the minister stand by the Premier's assertion that renting is a better investment than owning?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite keeps referring to it as the Liberals being the ones doing this, but it was the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation who sat in this House as a witness and said that it was 20 percent cheaper to rent than buy.

Okay, but those numbers do change over time and I think it is important to keep watching those numbers. At that point in time, it was cheaper for Yukoners to rent than buy. It is not me saying it; it is the president of the Yukon Energy Corporation who has said that. The members opposite were here; they heard that. They never reference it, but they just continue to say that it's wrong. That's fine — they don't believe the Energy Corporation.

The point is that we think that it's important to continue to do the diligence on this work, so I support the Yukon Energy Corporation doing that diligence on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, they are doing that work because they know that they need to provide an analysis of whether it makes sense to continue to rent because, quite frankly, most Yukoners don't think that's the case.

According to the Energy Corporation last week, the current dependable capacity gap for Yukon is 37 megawatts. Yukon's peak demand for electricity is forecast by YEC to grow by 36 percent between now and 2030. As it stands, there are zero projects on the books of any kind that can meet that demand. This means that unless something changes, we will need to rent dozens of diesel generators for decades. Wind and solar projects are great and we support them, but they do not provide dependable capacity.

When will the Liberals admit that renting diesel generators for decades just doesn't make sense?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will continue to listen to the Yukon Energy Corporation and the analysis that they do when they present it to me. I have always said to them to do the smart thing for Yukoners. We need to make sure that our electricity is affordable, reliable, and clean. So, if the best approach for capacity is to purchase thermal, to build a diesel plant — okay. If the best approach is to rent those diesels — okay.

But all of this belies the bigger conversation that we need to have as Yukoners, which is: How are we transitioning off of fossil fuels?

The Yukon Party's idea is to just build more diesel plants. What we will be doing with that over the long term is paying fossil fuel companies. That's not what we want to do. I think that we should create more energy systems here in the Yukon through partnerships with First Nations and even through partnerships with Yukoners so that we get more renewables here.

By the way, if you invest in wind and battery, suddenly you get firmer baseload power, so that's the sort of approach that we will continue to look for. We do not believe that the future is fossil fuels.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on greenhouse gas emissions

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, in 2020, the Yukon Energy Corporation released a 10-year renewable energy strategy, which was planned to help Yukon meet its greenhouse gas emission target of a 30-percent reduction from 2010 levels by 2030. Since that time, we have seen the Yukon Liberals increase the targets to 45 percent and actually put those targets down in law. We have seen just about every project in that renewable energy plan either delayed, stalled out, or completely dead in the water. In fact, just a few years into the plan, the Yukon Energy Corporation has announced that it needs to be completely overhauled.

Can the minister tell us if indeed, with all the current projects committed to, we are on track to meet the legislated target of a 45-percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, to begin with, the Thäy T'äw wind project on Haeckel Hill is not dead in the water. In fact, the ribbon was just cut. The battery project is delayed by about a year, but the project is happening right now. We have seen delays with the Atlin project, but we will continue to work on every one of these renewable energy projects and we will continue to investigate for further energy projects.

By the way, at the Premier's suggestion about a year ago or just under a year ago, we are also starting to investigate how we can connect the Yukon's grid to BC's grid, and that would give us ample supply of energy. Yes, it would take a decade to do that work, but that would give us the needed supply, that would assist us in the energy transition, and that would help us reach our 45-percent target.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, by the Yukon Energy Corporation's own admission, the delay in the projects outlined in the renewable energy strategy would make meeting the 30-percent target by 2030 impossible. Now the Liberals have increased that target to 45 percent, even though there are currently no actual projects that will help achieve that goal.

I'm going to move on to electric vehicles. The *Clean Energy Act* commits that, within about six years from now, 30 percent of vehicles sold in Yukon will be zero emission and the Yukon government wants 4,800 electric vehicles on the road by 2030. We are currently nowhere near that goal.

Will the minister confirm whether or not we are on pace to meet that legislated goal?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, actually, the last time I looked at the statistics, the Yukon was third per capita in Canada in terms of electric vehicle uptake, and there was an event just recently — a couple of weekends ago — held at the Transportation Museum where dealerships here brought their electric vehicles to show to the public. So, the uptake has been strong. We don't expect it to be a linear curve. We have incentives out there for Yukoners, and that will help to accelerate things.

By the way, we should also acknowledge that we just hit a milestone with electric bicycles. I think we just had our 1,000th

rebate, and every time you have an electric bicycle out there, it can replace a whole car. That's great.

The solutions that we have for the Yukon — we are outstripping most of Canada in the uptake.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the legislated goal is 30 percent of vehicle sales and 4,800 electric vehicles on the road by 2030. The minister didn't even come close to answering where we're at and if we're on pace to meet that goal.

The *Clean Energy Act* commits that the minister must produce a report in 2023 that outlines progress made on all of the goals and commitments made in the act.

My question is simple: When will the minister produce that report?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, just to continue from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources with respect to electric vehicles, in 2023, the Yukon government received 13 gas hybrid pickup trucks that are now in use across the fleet and two full battery electric cargo vans that are being used in the mailroom. Members in the Assembly will have seen those vans around the Jim Smith Building. I believe that they have been very well received and, of course, they are great for the purpose.

In 2024, we will add two more cargo vans and three pickup trucks, all battery electric, that will be deployed to program areas based on the best use of these vehicles. In addition, we anticipate that 30 more battery electric cars will be delivered in the spring of 2024 in order to replace older gas models.

The estimates are that, in the fleet vehicles with respect to light duty, we will be approaching 10 percent of the fleet in fiscal year 2024-25. Yes, as the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources indicated, it is not linear, but we are pushing and I am pushing for this to be a priority. Highways and Public Works continues to meet with local dealerships to build relationships and understand market conditions so that we can maximize the number of electric vehicles in the government fleet.

Market stabilization and transition to EV production for battery electric trucks and SUVs is evident with recent bids from suppliers of EVs.

Question re: Affordable housing

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, for many Yukoners, the dream of owning a home seems further and further out of reach every day. With high interest rates and the skyrocketing cost of living, many people are giving up hope of ever being able to save for a down payment and qualify for a mortgage.

This government seems to think that developing lots is all they have to do to address the housing crisis, but most of these lots become large, expensive houses that are unaffordable to most people — particularly to those entering the housing market for the first time.

There are things that would help. The Liberals could be encouraging modular homes, which are cheaper and avoid the backlog of builders. They could be encouraging the building of smaller, more affordable homes. They could be investing in alternative housing models like housing co-ops.

But the Liberals haven't seemed interested in any of these options, so what are they going to do? Do the Liberals have any plans to help first-time buyers to afford homes?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, there are several things that we are doing. The first one is that we work with our municipalities, because they do the planning for our communities. They prepare the official community plans. They design the subdivisions.

We work with them, and we encourage that they do, for example, more townhouse lots, more multi-family lots, more lots that will lead to smaller and more affordable homes. That lead is the municipality's, but we are supportive of them in that work, and then we are investing in programs like the community land trust. We have investments that we are making into alternative models, and we will continue to do that and look for ways.

Finally, we are partnering with First Nations in their land development, as well, and the Minister of Community Services, I am sure, could talk more about that. There are several ways in which we are working to support Yukoners to enter into the housing market at a reasonable entry level for them, because we see housing as a spectrum, and we look to support it at all levels.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, one program that Yukon Housing runs that is supposed to help people buy a home is the Yukon home ownership program. The Yukon home ownership program is meant to help people build or buy a home when they don't qualify for a mortgage through a bank. For the many people who pay the equivalent of a mortgage payment every month in rent yet still can't get a mortgage, this program is the difference between renting forever and finally being able to own a home — or it would be if they could access it, because of the 40 people who applied this year, only one was approved. That is right — 40 people applied; 39 were rejected.

A program that helps one person and rejects 98 percent of the applicants is a failure. What is this government doing to fix this program so that more than one person per year can access it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I will provide some information, and I will pass on the question to the Premier.

Our government is committed to improving home ownership options and availability. That is why, in 2023, the Yukon Housing Corporation expanded the home ownership loan program with a rural-based program to include residents of Whitehorse. The mortgage lending program supports eligible Yukoners to build or purchase a home based on loans at one percent below the average posted five-year rate of the major banks and reduce the down payment rate of two and one-half percent.

Again, the Housing Corporation is providing loans for Yukoners, and I am happy to get more detailed information for the member opposite.

MLA Tredger: It is hard to say that program is supporting people when 39 of the 40 applications were denied. To add insult to injury, the 39 people who were denied had already put weeks of work into their applications. Before they could apply, each person had to line up a house and a seller who

was willing to wait for them to get approved by Yukon Housing. Then they had to go to a bank and get denied for a mortgage. Then and only then could they finally apply to the home ownership program, only to be denied and have the entire deal fall through.

They need to do these steps every time they find a potential house to buy. It's getting to the point where builders and realtors don't want to sell to people who plan to use the home ownership program, because it's not worth the trouble.

It would make a lot more sense and save everyone a lot of work if applications could be pre-approved through the Yukon home ownership program, just like other people are pre-approved through banks. This would be a short-term fix while Yukon Housing redesigns the program, but it would save a lot of people a lot of grief.

Will this government change the program so that people can be conditionally pre-approved?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, again, I'm happy to pass the question on to the Premier, the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation. One of the things I will say is that there are eligibility criteria for households, and it's about that they've already gone through the traditional process to ensure that they're not eligible that way. So, there are thresholds that are there.

I don't know the details that the member opposite is raising, but I do know that the Housing Corporation has as its underlying philosophy to support Yukoners and to help them with home ownership. I know from the past, when I have sat in on their housing initiatives, that they have broadly looked at the spectrum of housing and how to support Yukoners. I appreciate that the member opposite is trying to be critical of us as a government, but my experience with the Housing Corporation is that they work — they're very focused on clients and how to support them.

So, I think that we can get details back on the specific question. However, in principle, the Housing Corporation's efforts are to support Yukoners finding housing.

Question re: Rural emergency services

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, this September, the Dawson fire chief raised his concerns about firefighters having to do the work of paramedics. The Yukon government has said that they require additional volunteers in rural communities to provide EMS coverage. However, this morning, CBC Yukon reported that a new volunteer organization is stepping in to cover EMS gaps in Dawson, but government would not meet with them.

Can the minister tell Yukoners why Dawson volunteers are having to create their own organization to cover EMS gaps in their community and the government has not yet met with them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure Yukoners that we are extremely supportive of emergency medical services in the communities and emergency services that are provided both by employees of the Yukon government and by volunteers. I am looking forward to the conversations with the organization that has been struck in Dawson City. I can

assure you that our department is interested in having those conversations with them.

An e-mail was sent in October presenting the intent to form the Dawson City ambulance association as a separate entity from Yukon medical services. The Dawson ambulance association is requesting to meet and are seeking government support.

There are a lot of questions here to discuss. We are very keen to be at a table where we can see what their intent is — we have not been informed initially of their intent — and the proposal that is being brought forward, but there are a number of very serious issues, including the ability to provide this in a volunteer way that is not associated with Yukon government and the insurance that is provided through that association.

Ms. Van Bibber: We have been raising concerns for years about the declining state of health services under the current government. Earlier this Sitting, the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin shared that one rural EMS worker estimated that there are 50 fewer rural EMS volunteer members than 13 years ago, and 20 of those departures have happened in the past couple of years. It now appears that there are volunteers available in Dawson, but they are starting their own organization instead of volunteering with Yukon EMS.

Will the minister agree to meet with EMS supervisors from across the Yukon and hear their input on what the government should do to improve recruitment and retention of EMS volunteers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the answer is quite simple to that question — yes. We work with Emergency Medical Services in the territory all the time. In the last number of months, we have certainly made sure that it is a priority to determine how Emergency Medical Services is adjusting to being associated with the Department of Health and Social Services, the increased pressures on them, and the services that they provide to Yukon communities, which are second to none.

There are currently 98 community responders providing EMS services across the territory — volunteers for which we are immensely appreciative. The scope of practice for those volunteers is tied to the position of being a volunteer community responder. We make sure that those interested in volunteering have mandatory orientation training that is covered by Yukon Emergency Medical Services. Volunteers receive an hourly honorarium when they are on call and are paid an hourly rate when responding to calls that require them to go into the community and provide this amazing service.

Question re: Diabetes treatment

Ms. Clarke: On May 19, 2021, this Legislature unanimously passed a motion urging the Government of Yukon to develop a territory-wide type 1 diabetes strategy to be completed by September 2022, in partnership with the Yukon T1D Support Network.

It has been over a year since that strategy was supposed to have been finished. When will the strategy be completed, and what are the current hold-ups to getting it done?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Unfortunately, sometimes this Legislature brings forward — I'm going to call them "arbitrary

dates” — to have accepted by the Legislature, and the work that is required to complete the kinds of work that are determined here by vote sometimes take longer than we would want them to.

We are continuing to work with the type 1 diabetes — on the strategy for the Yukon. Our ongoing work with Yukoners with type 1 diabetes and their families, advocates, and service providers aligns, Mr. Speaker, with the recommendations in *Putting People First*. Our government is committed to enhancing supports for Yukoners living with chronic conditions, such as diabetes, and to improve the health outcomes.

We are absolutely committed. We have almost \$1 million this year put into the chronic conditions support program. Unfortunately, the Yukon Party didn't vote for that budget, and fortunately, that budget went ahead anyway and does provide support for the chronic conditions program.

As the member noted, back in May 2021, the motion was passed, and I look forward to continuing to provide information about the progress on the strategy.

Ms. Clarke: It is identified that children who are transitioning into adulthood are at particular risk for poor services in health care, and this timeline lasts for over a decade.

There is a subsequent need for an adult endocrinologist. They are specialists in the diagnosis and treatment of many conditions, including diabetes. Will the minister ensure that the services of an adult endocrinologist are made available for Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk to Yukoners about the work that we are doing with the territory-wide type 1 diabetes strategy and our work toward implementing such. An endocrinologist, frankly, is a medical — and the need for such in the community is a medical decision — and we work constantly with the Yukon Medical Association and with other doctors who can provide the kind of advice that is necessary to consider this kind of question.

The type 1 diabetes strategy is currently being drafted. Interviews and focus groups were completed by the T1D Support Network in the late fall of 2022. Unfortunately, that work took longer, but we must do the work well, and that is supported by the work that we are doing together. At that point, that work sort of forms the basis of the needs assessment for the strategy. We absolutely support the services and supports for individuals who are dealing with diabetes.

We thank the T1D Support Network for their advocacy, for their intensive work on the strategy going forward, and their work to address the importance of this kind of care for Yukoners.

Question re: Rural school replacement

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners living in rural communities have been following with interest the consultation process that the Liberal government conducted to seek feedback about a plan for replacing or retrofitting schools in Whitehorse, but it has been noticeable that the Liberal

government chose not to include rural schools in the planning exercise.

So, I would like to ask about some rural schools that have been ignored by this government in the planning exercise. Are there any plans for capital upgrades or replacement of the St. Elias Community School in Haines Junction, and if so, when will my community be engaged?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak about capital planning for the territory. The Government of Yukon's five-year capital plan includes some school replacements and renovation projects to ensure that all buildings are safe and suitable for many years to come. In terms of projects that we have underway, we do have a rural school that is being planned now that is in the Kluane area — the Kêts'ádañ Kù school is well underway in the planning. We are really looking forward, of course, to the ground-breaking for this project, although much work has been done.

I have had a lot of opportunity to meet with the First Nation School Board and with the Chiefs Committee on Education. The school that is being spoken about today on the floor of the Legislature is a school that has moved under the First Nation School Board. We are working very closely with them. I recently attended a Chiefs Committee on Education where we went over the conditions and issues in all schools but particularly the schools that are under the First Nation School Board. Those discussions will continue.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that I heard a clear commitment in that response, so I will try again with a different community.

The Nelnah Bessie John School — the little school that could — in Beaver Creek is certainly showing its age. Can the minister tell residents in Beaver Creek where their school fits in the capital plans of the Yukon government?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, we are working, of course, with school communities and with the capital planning — the five-year capital plan — that we have to look at the short-term, medium-term, and long-term needs. We work very closely with all school communities on any issues that they may have. We move projects, and if they are urgent, we will, of course, take immediate action on that. We work, of course, with Highways and Public Works.

The school in Beaver Creek is another school that has done a referendum to go under the First Nation School Board. This was another school that, when we met with the Chiefs Committee on Education — which we now have an agreement with the Chiefs Committee on Education to work closely with them on all matters relating to the First Nation School Board. This was one of the schools that we looked at, and we went over the details around the needs for that school. We will continue to work with the Chiefs Committee on Education and the First Nation School Board.

Mr. Istchenko: So, I'm not sure that I heard a very clear commitment there either, Mr. Speaker. I know that my constituents would appreciate hearing what the plans are for their school.

Let me move on to Ross River. There is probably no better example in the territory of a school that needs replacement than

in Ross River. I know that the re-levelling work and a new modular mechanical room are both projects that are occurring in this year's budget, but what folks in Ross River would like to know is when they should expect to see planning beginning for a new school for them.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, as Members of the Legislative Assembly have heard previously, the Ross River School is inspected quarterly by a multi-disciplinary team that includes an architect, a structural engineer, a geotechnical engineer, and a surveyor. The latest building condition inspection report, received on September 7, 2023, confirmed the school remains safe for occupancy. The next inspection report is expected to be received in December 2023.

Mr. Speaker, the installation of the new re-levelling system at the school was successfully completed in the spring of 2023. Over 200 permanent jacks were installed underneath the school and can be reused in the future to address any further movement of the school. There was significant participation with the Yukon First Nation participation plan provided for the Ross River Dena Council. Additional work related to the re-levelling — such as fixing the building, skirting, siding, drywall crack repairs, and readjustment of doorframes — will also be completed.

This was a contract that was awarded — the re-levelling contract was awarded in the amount of \$3.55 million, and a contract for the new mechanical room was awarded in the amount of \$1.2 million.

Mr. Speaker, we are certainly listening to the concerns of the community of Ross River, and we are improving the infrastructure at their school substantially.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 31: *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 31, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 31, entitled *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will take this opportunity to thank the Members of the Assembly for their contributions to the debate on this bill. I will review very briefly the key provisions that are being proposed with the *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*. The proposed legislation works to facilitate fiduciary access to a deceased or incapable person's digital assets and to prevent online service providers from limiting access to these assets and prevents them from not recognizing these rights for Yukoners.

The Government of Yukon is committed to ensuring that our legislation is adaptive to the changing realities of an increasingly digitized world. This proposed legislation will ensure that the digital assets of deceased or incapable Yukoners are managed in accordance with the respective wishes of those individuals. While online service providers may favour restrictive service agreements that limit access to only the original account holder, fiduciaries require access to digital assets to properly fulfill their legal obligations and to respect the wishes of deceased people or those who require someone to act on their behalf.

Once enacted, the legislation will invalidate any service agreement provisions that limit fiduciary access to digital assets, unless expressly agreed to by the original account holder through an affirmative act that is separate from their assent to the general terms of a service agreement.

The Government of Yukon is very pleased to bring forward this proposed legislation, which aims to provide stronger protections to the digital assets of current and future Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation will enable the government to align our legislation with best practices of other Canadian and international jurisdictions. I note that this legislation is in line with similar legislation that is in place in other jurisdictions across Canada, including New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island.

The proposed legislation is based on the recommendations from the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, as a reminder, and our government is taking proactive measures here to introduce this new law in order to reflect the world we live in by removing potential hurdles when dealing with a loved one's estate. By modernizing our legislation, we are ensuring that estate planning keeps pace with the ever-changing digital landscape.

Lastly, I would like to encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to support the passing of this bill to introduce the *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act*.

Mr. Cathers: This legislation is largely a matter of housekeeping, and we do support the concept of it. Unlike the minister, I will not repeat my previous remarks at length here in this Assembly. So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will wrap up my remarks, and we will be supporting the passage of this housekeeping bill.

Ms. Blake: The NDP will be voting in favour of this legislation, and we extend our thanks to the officials from the department for their work.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the comments from the members opposite. I would only like to correct one thing: This is not housekeeping legislation; it is a new law to protect the rights of Yukoners, and we are proud to bring it 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. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 31 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 31 has passed this House.

Bill No. 34: *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 34, standing in the name of the Hon. Sandy Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 34, entitled *Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023)*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for the debate in second reading and in Committee of the Whole, and I am looking forward to passing this legislation.

Mr. Cathers: This legislation is largely technical and housekeeping in nature; however, there are two parts of it that relate to policy decisions that we disagree with made by the Liberal government. Those are specifically the elimination of Central Stores and the elimination of the Queen's Printer, now known as the King's Printer, and so, we will not be supporting this legislation.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

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. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: 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.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 34 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 34 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 certain bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Webber 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: *Fiduciaries Access to Digital Assets Act; Technical Amendments (Finance) Act (2023).*

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.

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

Chair (Ms. Blake): 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. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I am looking forward to the conversation this afternoon. I will just welcome back Deputy Minister Lauren Haney and Assistant Deputy Minister Patricia Randell who are here to help provide information for opposition members through their questions about Energy, Mines and Resources. I look forward to today's debate.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I would like to welcome the officials here as well today to support the minister for this afternoon's discussion.

I am going to start off with some questions regarding the mining industry. Currently, the *Quartz Mining Act* and the *Placer Mining Act* are under review. I am wondering if the minister can give us a status update on that review and when he would expect those pieces of legislation to go out for public comment and then when he expects them to be actually tabled in the Legislature.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to remind Yukoners where we are at, I will go back a little bit. We pulled together the mineral development strategy that then highlighted the work toward

new mineral legislation. We formed a steering committee that involves government-to-government work with First Nation governments and we went out and did a broad engagement with the public. We got that information back from the public. The steering committee has held tables with industry and the environmental non-governmental organizations to get some feedback, and now we're at the government-to-government table — the steering committee is doing that hard work right now.

The whole point of that is to formulate a new legislative framework. It's difficult for me to put a timeline on that, but I have made commitments to First Nations that this is an important issue and that we will do our best to resource it to try to keep it moving as quickly as possible. I can't say to the Assembly today: Here is what we anticipate. But I do know that they are in the middle of that hard work right now.

I will also say — and this is a little bit for fun — that I would be happy to bring a ministerial statement back once I get that framework in place and share it with the House.

Mr. Kent: It was a couple of years ago this fall, I think, that we made changes to the *Yukon Lands Act* that were enabling changes to allow for the development of resource road regulations. At the time, the minister said that they would be ready in the spring and then that deadline slipped a couple of times since then. I am wondering if the minister can give us any idea when the resource road regulations will be completed and what complications with the process have been encountered that have led to this significant number of delays that we have seen.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There has been more time taken with the resource road regulations.

A couple of things that I can comment on — first of all, forestry roads are slightly different. They are handled in a different way, so this is really mostly about roads that will pertain to the mining industry.

I just mentioned in my previous answer when I got up that when I have sat down with First Nations, they really want us to keep moving diligently on new mineral legislation. This is a moment when I talk with them and they express questions or concerns about the resource road regulations. We also discuss how we also want to keep it moving as quickly as possible.

One of the things that I talked to them about is that, if we can keep it moving to the finish line right now, then there is still an opportunity for us to review those regulations and see how they start to work out there in the real world, because we're also doing successor legislation around lands. That's an opportunity where the resource road regulations could be looked at again.

I think that we have been in close conversation with industry as well, because as I mentioned, this will be important for the mining industry. We have had conversations with the Yukon Chamber of Mines and the Klondike Placer Miners' Association.

I am still hopeful for the timing for the regulations to be next year, but there is that back-and-forth right now with First Nations just making sure that we are aligned. I have written recently to several chiefs about the resource road regulations. We are still hopeful for 2024.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that response from the minister.

I wanted to ask a few other questions here. The minister's predecessor, who is obviously now the Premier — when I asked him in the previous legislative session, in the 2016 to 2021 session, whether or not his government supported the free-entry system for acquiring mineral tenure, he very succinctly told the House in one word: yes. I am just curious if that is still the position of the Liberal government. Do they still support the free-entry system for acquiring mineral tenure for staking claims, essentially?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When I rose two times ago and talked about the new mineral legislation, the steering committee, and the work that is ongoing — that is the conversation right now. What will we use as a model? I think it's fair to say that it is one of the key parts of the conversation.

I will share with the House that we don't think that the status quo is going to be the way to go. I am talking about overall — the legislation needs to be updated and brought forward in time. That will include questions about free-entry.

So, I don't think that it will be the same as it was. I think there may be aspects of it that are being considered, and that is a conversation at the table right now. The only other thing that I would like to say is that I want to recognize that First Nations have very clear views about these sorts of questions — or they feel that these questions are fundamental to the legislation — so we will work government-to-government to see where we can find a future path for the Yukon around minerals legislation.

Mr. Kent: I have asked the minister over a number of Sittings about implementation of the mineral development strategy. He has mentioned on a few occasions that much of that will be done with the legislative review, but a commitment that he has made is to provide us with a list of those aspects of the MDS, or the mineral development strategy, that are being done through the legislative review and which ones will be considered outside of the legislative review. I don't believe that I have ever received that summary from him, so I am hoping that he can rise today — if I am incorrect and he has provided it, I stand corrected. If not, I am wondering if he will commit again to providing us with that list of which commitments from the MDS are under the legislative review and which ones are stand-alone.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't recall ever having shared that list across — I apologize if that's an unmet commitment. I will let the department know that I would like them to pull that together for the members opposite or for the House.

Here is what I can say. There were a couple of hundred recommendations, as I recollect — or quite a few — under the mineral development strategy. What I was told when I came into the role as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources is that roughly half of those recommendations pertained to successor legislation and half did not.

What we said to industry and First Nation governments at the time was: Because successor legislation is our priority, let's focus on that half and we will keep the other half to look at following successor legislation or once it's well enough

underway that we can see the pathway and that we can pull resources on to the additional topics.

My apologies to the House that I have not yet provided that information. It just dropped off my radar screen. I will seek to get it back for the member opposite and table it as a legislative return at some point — or e-mail it around or in some way get it across to members opposite.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I look forward to receiving that document.

I did want to ask about the Yukon mineral exploration program. It was perhaps earlier this week and in a news release earlier this year that the minister announced that there was \$1.4 million in government funding, which leveraged over \$3 million in private sector funding. I just wanted to make sure — was all of that money spent in this exploration season since that announcement was made in the spring?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have asked the department to look into the status of whether that money has been spent.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that and I look forward to getting that information back from the minister.

With the Geoscience Forum coming up this weekend, I am just curious if the minister is able to share with us the 2023 season exploration and development numbers for the quartz industry and then what the placer production was for this year as well.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: You know, I haven't even had a chance yet to read over any speaking notes that I have for Geoscience — I think we all appreciate how busy the Assembly is — so, if there are numbers that the department has provided me with, I don't have them yet, but if they have put them in the Geoscience's speaking notes, I am hopeful to just wait until then to share that information.

Anyway, what I have been told is that — just on the previous question about the spending on the projects from the Yukon mineral exploration program — they expect to have a report on the spending to me by January 2024. It is at calendar year-end when they do that analysis to see how the dollars were spent. The \$3.2 million in private sector spending on these projects is the expectation of leverage.

I will try to look into the overall spend on exploration this year, but if they were saving it for Geoscience, I'm also going to beg my colleagues' indulgence to not do a spoiler for this weekend.

Mr. Kent: Presuming if it's next week or after the Legislature rises and the minister returns with those numbers or if they are announced at Geoscience, I am curious, as I mentioned, about the exploration and development numbers on the quartz side, the amount of placer production for this season, as well as the number of projects on the quartz side. I know that last year the Yukon government geologist from the Geological Survey mentioned that we were at a 57-year low in new projects, so I will be curious if that trend is continuing into this past exploration season — whether we are seeing just a few projects getting a large amount of money or if the pipeline is starting to fill up again with some of the early-stage exploration projects.

So, if the minister could provide that, too, and I'll attend some of the Geoscience and hopefully get an opportunity to hear what government geologists have to say this year about the past exploration season.

I do want to move to talk a little bit about land use planning. The Dawson land use plan — my understanding from talking to industry is that there is currently some scenario work that is being done with respect to projects. It brings a number of people to the table to get a sense for how projects would fit through the environmental and socio-economic assessment and the permitting side of things with the land use plan in place. I understand that there are some hiccups that have been encountered with respect to those different scenarios. I am curious if the minister can share any of his more recent knowledge. The conversations I had were at the Gold Show in the spring and more recently in September with some of the quartz mining individuals.

I am just curious if the minister has an update on that scenario and when can we expect the Dawson regional land use plan to be finalized and whether or not there are any changes that need to be made to it, based on the scenarios that they are running at this point.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just will back up for a second just to let the member opposite know that the Geological Survey has let me know that they're still compiling the numbers for this year, and they work with industry right up to the deadline. They let me know that they don't have the numbers as of yet, but they are working to get them and will share them at Geoscience — or their best estimates of the numbers. So, I don't have them yet, but they will be out and will be public as of Geoscience, is what I understand.

With respect to the Dawson regional land use plan, yes, we have done some scenario planning. I'll give a shout-out to the Klondike Placer Miners' Association. It was their suggestion to do that scenario planning. It was incredibly successful. When I talked to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the team at land use planning, they said it was very useful. They had industry and environmental groups there as observers to watch how it went, and there were debriefs afterward.

On the Dawson land use plan, we are working closely with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and our First Nation partners to seek consensus on our proposals following the recommended plan from the commission, including working with them to create any public-facing information on that, sort of like an update. Because we're right in with that conversation right now, I don't have more to say about specifics or details, but I will say that I have been encouraged by the work that I've seen from the department and from the government of Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation. They're working well together through those last issues.

Mr. Kent: I did want to check in on a commitment that was made in the original confidence and supply agreement — the 2021 version — with respect to providing resources to accelerate other land use planning exercises. Is the minister able to let us know if there is any money in the supplementary budget for that or if there is any money in the mains to

accelerate the plans and where they would be looking at proceeding to next, as far as the next regional land use plan?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The first thing that I will note is that it is in my mandate letter to accelerate land use planning. The direction that the Premier has given me is to, wherever possible, move land use planning ahead. The first step for me is to get the agreements in place with the First Nations, and a budget will follow. For example, we are in conversation — I mentioned the other day during Question Period — with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. They would like us to move ahead with the Northern Tutchone regional plan. We have, of course, spoken with the Selkirk First Nation and Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. Currently, those nations are, I believe, supportive of us moving ahead with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun but not yet themselves wanting to move ahead, but we remain open to their interests. So, we have those ongoing conversations.

We have reached out to all First Nations on the other three regional plan areas. The question was about dollars, so I should at least acknowledge that 2024 is a year when there was the expectation to revisit with the Government of Canada funding for issues such as land use planning, land use planning implementation, and many things around our land claims agreements. That work is being led by the Premier and the Executive Council Office, but this issue is an important issue, so we have also been keeping Canada up to speed about our interest in land use planning and its importance for shaping the direction of the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: One of the topics we have touched on a number of times is with respect to compensation for claims that are either indirectly or directly affected when it comes to land use plans. The minister has mentioned that a significant number of claims in the Peel watershed land use planning region have been relinquished in exchange for work credits on other properties that they may have within the Yukon, but as we have said — and we've talked to some companies — that's not an option for them; they don't have other projects or properties within the boundaries of the Yukon, and they've spent significant amounts of dollars exploring these properties. Some of them — the Michelle property, for instance — is located in what was supposed to be an area where mining was allowed, and I think it overlaps into an area where it is not allowed.

That said, I am wondering, as the acceleration of the plan goes forward, if the minister will develop a companion policy with respect to compensation when claims are directly or indirectly affected, recognizing that one particular way for compensation will not work for all of the claims that may or may not be affected by land use planning decisions.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the last numbers that I have are that there are about 9,000 mineral claims in the Peel that were underneath areas that were identified for conservation. Of those claims, 6,500 have been dealt with, possibly — it depends; it is a range of possibilities. They might have lapsed; they might have been relinquished; they might have had some non-monetary compensation. That is a significant amount of work that the department has undergone.

We always try to treat these on a case-by-case basis with claim holders to consider compensation requests. We don't

have a specific policy that the member is talking about, but we have identified, under new minerals legislation — under successor legislation — that it should be a question that is considered. It is not the first question that we will deal with as we develop that legislative framework, but it is on the agenda overall.

You know, we will continue to look for those solutions. Let me just, by way of comparison, talk about the Dawson plan. I asked the department to give me a sense of how many claims there were that — in-between the draft plan and the recommended plan — that came in, in areas under which then moved to have conservation. So, it's a different number; this is not the overall number, but it was under 400 claims.

So, that gives you such a huge swing in difference to try to understand. It is a way in which I have asked to try to judge whether the process that we used under the Dawson regional land use plan is going to head off these potential issues through the pathways that we have taken, and from my estimation, it is much more successful.

I appreciate the questions. This is not the first time that the member has posed this question. The answers that we have are: (1) we are working to resolve the existing outstanding issues, and we will do that on a case-by-case basis; (2) we are adopting our approach to land use planning so as to minimize these types of concerns; and (3) we will work through successor legislation to consider this question.

Mr. Kent: Just to take step back then to that number of claims that the minister mentioned — 400 — and I don't expect him to have this number with him today; I am hoping that he can come back with it — but can he give us a sense for how many quartz and placer mining claims are located under areas that are proposed for conservation in the Dawson area? I think that he mentioned for the Peel that it was 9,000 — I think was the number — yes, 9,000 claims, and 6,500 have been relinquished in some fashion. I am just curious for that Dawson area if he can get those same numbers for the Legislature. How many quartz and placer claims are now located in areas where there will be — that are designated for conservation?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I don't have those numbers available to the House today, but I can let members know that I have asked for this type of analysis, and I am looking to understand how the processes work and how we can move through land use planning as smoothly as possible.

Mr. Kent: Hopefully, the minister can bring those numbers back once that analysis is complete — if it's not complete already — and give us a sense of how many claims in the Dawson region would be affected in those conservation areas — with a breakdown, of course, between quartz and placer.

I did want to ask a question with respect to the Beaver River land use plan. My understanding from earlier in the Sitting and looking at the website at the time was that we were expecting a draft plan by December of this year. I am wondering if we are still on pace to get that draft plan. I won't go through all the history here, but the final plan was expected to be done in 2020, and here we are three years, three and a half, well over three years past that deadline, and we are not even at

the draft plan stage. Can the minister give us a sense of any renewed timing that he has with respect to the finalization of the Beaver River land use plan?

I know, as part of that planning process, that there was a court case launched from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun versus the Yukon government. The First Nation was successful in that Yukon Supreme Court case. It was appealed by the Yukon government, so I am just curious if the minister can share any information on timing for that appeal and when he expects it to be heard or if it has been heard already.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: A couple of things. The first one is: Let me acknowledge that the plan has taken much longer than we as a government and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun anticipated when we first signed our agreement. I know that they have been working this year — and I also know that Mayo was evacuated for fire, and there are challenges that they face, and those impacts are meaningful.

The other thing I will say is that what I feel the Beaver River land use plan has done is that it has broadly focused the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to the necessity of regional land use planning. I think that, even though we're slow on the Beaver River sub-regional plan, I am impressed with the interest and focus that NND has on the Northern Tutchone plan — or the northern portion of the Northern Tutchone plan. So, that's positive.

Then the member opposite asked about timing on the appeal. I think it's going to be heard sometime in the coming weeks.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that information with respect to the appeal from the minister.

I do want to ask a couple of questions related to Faro. It was a number of years ago that the Faro reclamation project was transferred back to the federal government for them to lead that work. The Yukon government kept a number of the other type 2 sites. I'm just curious: When that transfer — and again, the minister may not have this information with him today — but when that transfer happened, how did it affect the staff at the Assessment and Abandoned Mines branch? Were any of the staff transferred to the federal government, or were any staff subsequently laid off when that large Faro project was transferred away from responsibility for the Yukon and to the responsibility of the federal government?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am just checking in with the department. I know that there were no layoffs. What I don't know is whether there were any staff who chose to move across to stay with the project.

There were not any staff transferred, Madam Chair. I look forward to further questions.

Mr. Kent: So, all of the staff in Assessment and Abandoned Mines stayed in place, even after this very large project was transferred from their responsibility. I am just curious and wanted to make sure that is the case: that all of the staff, even though a huge part of their work was transferred back to the federal government, still remained at Assessment and Abandoned Mines.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The first thing to understand is that this is not the staff who are remediating mines. They are

overseeing that work, of course. What I can say is that we still have other sites that we have to take care of, and through attrition, there is always a natural reduction of staff over time, depending. We always balance out, but it wasn't that we laid people off, because that project went.

The department, every year, does an assessment to ensure that it is rightsized around the services that are being delivered. When necessary, it looks for staff, through advancement or lateral moves, to move into other areas. I would have to look back over time to ask the department to let me know how big that branch was when Faro was still their responsibility and how big it was, say, a year after. Government adjusts over time to make sure that we have the appropriate number of staff to deal with the appropriate workloads.

Mr. Kent: I think it was a little over two years ago, in the summer of 2021, that the Ross River Dena Council, through their development corporation, and Broden Mining formed a partnership to reacquire, explore, and develop the claims within that Faro complex, the claims on the eastern plateau — the old Vangorda and I believe the Grum pit and some of the other claims there. From the minister and in speaking with some individuals, it sounds like that process has stalled out. I'm wondering if the minister has any explanation.

I know that Canada plays a significant role in what's happening there, but if the minister can give us an update on where we're at with that Faro project and the redevelopment of the eastern part of the Vangorda Plateau.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Under the devolution transfer agreement, the next step that we have identified on the project really has to do with First Nation government to First Nation government actions, so we have been working to assist that where possible. I know that the Ross River Dena Council government and the Selkirk First Nation government are in conversation or dialogue. That is what we believe needs to be next and we will continue to assist as possible.

Mr. Kent: Does the minister have any indication on when we will be able to move to the next step in that process and when exploration can recommence — or commence, in some circumstances — on that property and all of the other actions that need to be required with respect to the transfer? Or is all that complete at this point, or are we at a First Nation government-to-government table? The question is: Does the minister have any indication on when those conversations will conclude and when the project will be able to move forward?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The timing is dependent on this next step is what I am given to understand. We certainly have heard from the industry partner on this issue, and as a result, we are working to facilitate the conversation as best we can. We are therefore not able to give a sense of the timeline, but we are able to indicate that we seek to facilitate as best as possible.

Mr. Kent: I did want to jump over to the minister's mandate letter with respect to critical minerals development. On page 3 at the very bottom, it says that the minister has been instructed by the Premier to work with NRCan on the implementation of Canada's critical mineral strategy and consider other made-in-Yukon solutions to expediting the development of the Yukon's critical mineral inventory.

I know that Minister Wilkinson from NRCan at the time — and still is the minister — was to have held some regional roundtables. I am curious if the minister can provide us with an update on those regional roundtables — if there was one held in the Yukon. Can the minister also comment on any progress he has made in expediting the development of Yukon's critical mineral inventory with the made-in-Yukon solutions that are referenced in the mandate letter?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The regional energy and resource tables are the bilateral tables that we have with Natural Resources Canada. We are now working on that together.

When we say in my mandate letter that it's about expediting the development of the Yukon's critical mineral inventory, we are not talking about just assessing how much in critical minerals we have; the geological survey has a pretty good idea of that. It's about the infrastructure which would assist in the development of those critical minerals.

In one of my answers to the member opposite — or maybe it was in Question Period; I can't remember now — I talked about the mineral exploration program and how we added a focus around critical minerals. That was a way in which we were trying to adjust.

Our main focus — our primary focus — under the regional energy and resource table — apologies, Madam Chair. I just think of it in the acronym and I always forget the words underneath it and I try hard not to give acronyms for Hansard.

Our main focus under that table is grid connect — us connecting with British Columbia. We have identified that priority with Natural Resources Canada and they have been working with us. For example, there was just, at the end of October, a workshop hosted by the Council of Yukon First Nations — or broadly by First Nations — on energy questions. Natural Resources Canada was there to talk about grid connect and to talk about our work with First Nations to move ahead on grid connect, because that question really does unlock making sure that you have the capacity for renewable energy, which then unlocks mining to be able to be done with much lower emissions and on our path to net zero. That is the major focus and that work is now underway with Natural Resources Canada.

Mr. Kent: I'll hopefully get a chance to come back and ask some more questions about that BC intertie and the status of it before I turn the floor over to the Member for Takhini-Kopper King later today.

Just one other quick question with respect to mining. It's a logistical question regarding the office hours and accessibility for the mining recorders' offices across the territory. I've had a number of prospectors and others — placer miners — reach out with concerns that the Whitehorse mining recorder's office is closed. You have to book an appointment. It's something, obviously, that is a remnant of COVID, which was understandable at the time, but I'm wondering if there is any consideration being given to returning to the pre-COVID operations of these offices where they are open for individuals to come in and ask questions without booking — I believe the appointments are booked in 15-minute time slots. It is proving

to be a bit of a challenge for some of the individuals whom I have talked to.

I am just looking to get a sense if the minister or his department is thinking about moving back to the pre-COVID office hours and operations for the mining recorders' offices in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This wasn't really just about COVID. There were a couple of things that happened. My recollection, anyway, was that there were a couple of times when there were some folks coming to the mining recorders' offices — a handful of occasions — who were a little elevated. There were some tensions and maybe even conflict.

So, the plan was to move to appointments so that the mining recorder folks could better prepare, get information, make sure that things were lined up, and try to de-escalate a bit. They felt that it has been successful — or they feel that it has been successful. You know, I hear from the member opposite that he is hearing that there are people out there who are concerned with this in how they prefer to do business.

I have just asked the department to maybe identify someone within the branch whom we could provide for miners so that, if they have concerns, we could get them to share those concerns so that we could get a read on it and then maybe consider some modifications. The approach was purposeful. It was meant to try to improve services for miners. I appreciate that might not have been universal, but the department felt that services had improved.

I will just make that offer that if there are miners out there who feel that they could be better served a different way, that we find a way to connect with them to work through that with them.

Mr. Kent: Yes, I can assure the minister that the service change was not universally well-received by those in industry whom we have spoken to. Hopefully, he gets a chance during this Geoscience weekend to talk to some of the prospectors and placer miners and others who are affected by this.

I wanted to ask a few questions — or just a couple of questions — with respect to some of the local area planning initiatives that are underway. The local advisory councils for Ibex Valley and Mount Lorne are looking to have their local area plans reviewed. In the case of Mount Lorne, I know that both me and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, on separate occasions, visited with some of the area residents around the Kookatsoon gravel pit, which needs to be rezoned so that fuelwood processing can take place in that area, but I think that one of their concerns is that they would be looking to have the local area plan reviewed. I know that I have heard the same thing from my colleague the Member for Lake Laberge with respect to the Ibex Valley local area council and the fact that they would like their plan reviewed and would also like to look at some targeted wood harvesting to reduce the wildfire risk in that area.

So, I am just wondering if the minister can comment on whether he has received those requests from those two local area councils to have their existing local area plans reviewed, and if so, is there a plan in place to ensure that would happen? And if he could comment on the timing, that would be helpful.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I was excited to hear the member opposite say that the Ibex Valley LAC was interested in doing some fuel reduction. That is great to hear, and I will make sure that the Forest Management branch and also Wildland Fire follow up with them.

I often attend the Southern Lakes local advisory councils. That includes Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, Tagish, and Carcross — South Klondike — local advisory councils, and everyone of them would like to see their local area plan updated. Local area plans are a partnership; we work with First Nation governments and local residents when we seek to update a plan. I can say that, for the Mount Lorne area respectfully, I hear from — I don't know that it is universal across First Nations — but I am certainly hearing from some First Nations that they would prefer that we complete regional planning first and then local area planning — or updates to local area plans, of course, because Mount Lorne would be an update.

I don't have a note in front of me regarding Ibex. I will reach into the department to try to get that extra information, but we do have several local area plans at work: Alaska Highway west and — I probably will mispronounce this — the Łu Zèla Mǎn, or Fish Lake, local area plan. We are working on the zoning regulations for Golden Horn, et cetera. I would be happy to talk about the area around Kookatsoon, but that is the general lay of the land.

Mr. Kent: It is my understanding that Marsh Lake and Tagish have not been finalized yet, so that wouldn't be a review of an existing plan. Those ones haven't been finalized. I believe that Fox Lake is another one that is underway that hasn't been finalized. I just wanted to confirm that's the case. Can the minister confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In Southern Lakes, there are a couple of local area plans that are in place, and those local advisory councils would like to see them reviewed and updated. There are a couple that are not in place. The Marsh Lake plan is not in place. I don't believe that the Tagish plan is in place, but the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area plan is in place, so it is mixed.

What I am trying to say is that every one of the local advisory councils would like to update or initiate their local area plans.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for that clarification.

I did want to move on to some energy questions for the minister. We asked earlier today in Question Period about the requirement in the *Clean Energy Act*, which was passed last fall, with respect to reporting requirements starting in 2023 — reporting requirements on aspects contained in the act. I believe it was the minister's colleague the Minister of Highways and Public Works who responded to that question, but he did not mention anything about the reporting requirements contained in the *Clean Energy Act*.

I wanted to ask the minister now. You know, we are quickly running out of runway for 2023, and I am wondering when those legislative reports will be ready.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Minister of Environment, when he stood to respond today, was talking about the *Our Clean Future* annual report. I understand that one is still

coming for this calendar year, I believe. I think that's what I heard him say.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear, these reporting requirements are written into the legislation that was introduced last year, so will those reports be ready for tabling before the end of the 2023 calendar year, as is stipulated in the act?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We're just back looking at the act to try to see where it says that we're required to table something here in this House. I've asked the department to review and make sure that we're living up to our obligations, but I'm not aware of a requirement to table in the Assembly.

Mr. Kent: I never mentioned that anything had to be tabled in the Assembly, but if the minister looks at section 9 of the act, on page 4, it says, "Report by Minister". Section 9(1) says: "The Minister must report on the following ... in 2023 and in each subsequent year, the total greenhouse gas emissions in Yukon, including by sector if a reduction target has been set for a sector for the year ... in 2023 and in each subsequent year, the methodology used to determine those greenhouse gas emissions..." And it goes on and on; I won't read the entire section.

As I said, I never mentioned that anything needed to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly, but it does say that it needs to be done by the end of this calendar year. That's what the question was about. When can we expect, between now and December 31, these reports to be ready?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The intention has been to put it into our annual report with *Our Clean Future* and to put in there those emissions amounts. That report is coming. The lead on finalizing that report is with the Department of Environment. As the minister has said today and as I've reiterated today, the plan is to have that report out before the end of the calendar year.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear, when we asked this question earlier in Question Period, the Minister of Highways and Public Works stood up and talked about electric vehicles and how many were in the Fleet Vehicle Agency; so, he didn't respond to that particular question, but we will review the Blues, and we'll look forward to getting that annual report before the end of the calendar year.

Just for background, last year's report was dated in August, and it was released in September. I'm just curious why there seems to be delays to getting this year's report out the door. That said, we'll hold the ministers to the legislated timelines for producing those reports, and we look forward to getting them or seeing them prior to the end of the calendar year.

I did want to ask a little bit more about the proposed BC intertie project that the minister referenced earlier as part of his work on the critical minerals strategy and the made-in-Yukon solutions to expedite the development of the critical minerals inventory here in the territory.

I am just curious if the minister can give us a sense for where we are at. When we last checked in with him, there were discussions with the affected First Nations. I note that the Premier travelled to British Columbia and talked to the MLA for the area as well as the Premier of BC about that, so I am just curious if the minister can give us an update on where

discussions are at with the BC intertie. Are there any milestones that we can see where we would move on to the next phase of that work?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I want to apologize. I just checked with my colleague the Minister of Environment. He did not talk about *Our Clean Future* being tabled by the end of this year, but I can confirm that it is the intention. Those are my words — apologies for that.

Second of all, the question is around new activity and milestones. I just want to be careful to say that — for example, when the First Nations held their energy summit last month and we were there talking about grid connect, it isn't just with First Nations that are along a route. We see this as an opportunity for all First Nations if they wish to become investment partners and be part of the project. We are talking with all Yukon First Nations.

That energy summit will lead to another set of meetings, I think, late this month where there will be more conversation with leadership. I know that the department is doing some of the initial technical work on the project. It's just that ongoing work that needs to happen.

I know that the Premier has asked me to work directly with my counterparts in British Columbia and for the department to work with their counterparts in British Columbia.

I think it is also worth noting that the Premier continues to prioritize this project whenever we are in discussions with the federal government. It is our focus, for example, for the regional energy and resource table.

Mr. Kent: I have quite a few questions left, but my time is running short here today.

I did want to turn the minister's attention to a document that was produced last summer. It's a feasibility study of small modular reactors in the Yukon. In the executive summary, in the first paragraph, the last couple of sentences — I will just read them into the record here. It says — quote: "Yukon 2020 emissions modeling suggests that the existing commitments along with federal policies and programs, are expected to reduce 2030 GHG emissions by approximately two-thirds of the 45 percent target." This, of course, would be 30 percent. "Additional measures are therefore needed to achieve the Yukon emissions reduction target." This is from Calian Consulting, which was tasked with, as I mentioned, the study of small modular reactors in the Yukon. I am wondering if the minister can comment on what additional measures the government is looking at to achieve the Yukon emissions reduction target and how small modular reactors will play into that work.

What are the next steps beyond this feasibility study for SMRs in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: A couple of things to try to unpack there. The first one is that, just a moment ago, the member asked why the *Our Clean Future* annual report is a little bit later. The main reason is that we have been integrating those actions that were presented to us from the Climate Leadership Council, so that takes more time. We understand that there are some of those actions that we could get at right away, but some

of them have to be costed and put through our internal processes, so that is the delay.

I have stood in this House and said the exact same thing. Probably, the folks who did the small modular reactor report are getting their information from the department, which is the same information that I have, which is that we believe that the actions that we have — anticipating the actions of the Climate Leadership Council being added to the mix — gets us to a 30-percent reduction. We have a gap and we have known that. We have identified a group of folks to sit down and try to talk about that gap and how to close it. It includes folks from Energy, Mines and Resources; it includes the Department of Environment; it includes the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation, and we have grabbed a couple of the folks from the Climate Leadership Council who went through the exercise to try to bring them in for some technical expertise. That work is to identify what the best projects are to reduce the gap.

One of the things that I find interesting when I look at the work of *Our Clean Future* or the Climate Leadership Council — you can really boil it down to a handful of the actions — the ones that really make a critical difference to the emissions. So, those will be the areas where we tend to focus.

With respect to small modular reactors, we have always said that we need to keep looking at this. It is what I would call a long-term solution around energy. The Yukon is not a jurisdiction that has any sort of regulatory framework or legislative framework for small modular nuclear reactors, so that is something that would still need to come into place if we were to go down that path.

We remain allied with other provinces that are investigating small modular reactors — for example, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, New Brunswick. Those provinces are looking at small modular, and they are considering — well, Ontario in particular has the lead at doing some trials with small modular. I think Saskatchewan is likely next in that queue. We will keep abreast of those projects to see about their feasibility for the Yukon. Of course, there is such a huge scale difference between Ontario or even Saskatchewan and the Yukon, so we need to understand that scale difference as well.

The time horizon for small modular has to be quite a ways out. It would be further than, say, a grid-connect project, but it depends on many factors. We continue to look at small modular reactors as a potential solution for the Yukon — a long-term solution — but we are not trying to rely on it in our 2030 goals, because we don't believe that it can get us there in that time frame, but it is a potential long-term solution for the Yukon. So, we continue to work in particular in partnership with other jurisdictions that are further ahead than we are on these technologies.

Mr. Kent: Just one suggestion for the minister: The air force base in Fairbanks — Eielson Air Force Base — I believe, next year, will have a combined heat and power small modular reactor in place to replace a 40-year-old, I believe, coal-fired co-gen plant, so that would be another project for the minister to keep an eye on.

With that, I know that we are going to go to break soon. I just wanted to thank the officials. I am going to turn the floor over to my colleague after the break, but I thank the officials for attending here this afternoon.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: Welcome back to the officials and the minister in this debate. Initially, I just thought I would pick up where we left off and we would just silently slide in like it wasn't a month and four days later, but I am just going to go back to October 10, which is the last time the minister and I had an opportunity to discuss Energy, Mines and Resources.

There was a very last question that I had put on the record before we moved to report progress for the day. I said that I wanted to talk about the proposed wood processing facility in Mount Lorne in the Kookatsoon gravel pit. It's not a bad thing that it has been this long since the minister and I had a chance to talk about it, because now he has had time. I look forward to having the conversation from where we left off and will just pick it up there. I want to start the conversation around the proposed wood processing facility in the Kookatsoon gravel pit.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will say that I have had a whole bunch of conversations about this very question with the community of Mount Lorne and the residents of Kookatsoon. Just as a starting point, we are looking to find areas to do some wood processing all around Whitehorse.

We are looking for an area at the north end of Whitehorse, in the middle of Whitehorse, and at the south end of Whitehorse.

The folks at the Forest Management branch looked at several possibilities, and the one that they felt was the most suitable was this old, disused gravel pit that is just south of Kookatsoon Lake. The closest property — and I think that the member opposite was referring to that property the other day — has really specific zoning around it. I will get the name of it —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, rural residential secluded.

That type of zoning is meant to have a buffer of about 50 metres around it — that's how it's designed — to make sure that there is no impact.

The truth of it is that the property, for many years, was a dog kennel. It was also about trying to make sure that neighbours who might come nearby wouldn't get noise. It

wasn't the other way around, but now that's not the case. That's fine.

That property boundary, which is the closest to that gravel pit, is about 200 metres away from the gravel pit. Then it's a little farther until you get to where the project would be happening. It's quite a bit farther than the 50-metre buffer that is typically provided, but it still doesn't take away from the point that I think the member opposite is raising about noise. The next nearest property is about half of a kilometre away. Then you get to Kookatsoon Lake, and the properties that are along Kookatsoon Lake may be a kilometre away, but it would be easier to say they are about half a kilometre away. The reason is that, once you get through the forest and you get to the lake, sound can travel pretty quickly across the lake. I would be careful to not just use distances at that point.

What are we talking about with respect to the project? I have had the opportunity to go with the Forest Management branch to listen to the sound of the project that is being proposed. I would say that the sound is less than a chainsaw. The type of wood processing that we are talking about is a crosscut saw. There may be a genset there and that might be the loudest thing that there is.

The project is pretty far away from residences. When I went and listened to the project, what I did was I walked about 100 metres away to try to listen to it operating, and you could have a person-to-person casual conversation, and it was just fine. What we are talking about does matter, and I have had many of these conversations with the folks in Mount Lorne. I will acknowledge that there are still worries and concerns, but the biggest concern that was raised was about noise, and for this reason, I think that the project actually has some potential, because it is not that noisy.

Ms. White: When did the minister go to hear some of the equipment that would be used? What time of year was it? What was the temperature? I guess that I am looking for the time of year and the temperature when the minister went.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I will have to look back through my calendar, but I am pretty sure that it was in the spring; it was cool out. I don't think that it was full-on winter, but it was earlier this year, is my recollection.

Ms. White: Something that I always thought was really interesting as a kid is that the colder it gets, the more sound travels and how it is amplified. You can hear trees — if it gets really cold, you can hear them explode as the sap freezes. You can shout across a valley to someone on the other side of a mountain, and they can hear you perfectly well when it gets cold.

The reason I am asking what the temperature was is understanding that this proposed project would probably be processing wood for a good portion of the year, including through winter. It is different depending on the temperature. The reason why I asked the minister when it was is that sound travels differently when it is cold. Knowing that he has gone out to hear the equipment in operation and he talked about one saw and possibly a generator, has the minister taken out anyone who is concerned about the noise in the area? Has he invited

the residents out who have been writing letters and those who have been organizing against it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am not the operator of the equipment, but I know that the local advisory council in Mount Lorne has somewhat of a ward system, and the councillor for Kookatsoon, who happens to live along Kookatsoon Road and would be the property that is the closest to the gravel pit on Kookatsoon Road, has been invited.

The last I heard is that trip hadn't happened yet. Yes, I'm aware of the differences of sound in winter. I also happen to live on a lake, so I totally know the difference — if it's a calm day on the lake, man, you can hear right across the lake; if it's not a calm day, you can't hear very far at all.

I guess that one of the ways that we can talk about this is looking at ways to ensure that — for example, if the project were to move ahead, then you could put measures in place about decibel levels. There are ways to try to make sure that the sound is not an issue. The other thing that we have discussed — I have discussed with the department and I think I have talked to the local advisory council about this and certainly some of the residents I have been in conversation with — is that, if we were to issue a permit, we would do so on a shorter term basis at first just to see how it's working and then figure out what the sound issue is.

I have talked with the councillor who lives in the area and am encouraging them to get their — I missed the local advisory council meeting just last week, because I got double-booked with something else, so I haven't had a chance to follow up since the most recent meeting, but I'm sure that I will talk to them shortly.

Ms. White: If there were concerns around decibel levels, does that mean that the department would supply nearby residents with meters to register them? And if there was a complaint, who would call, and who is in charge of enforcement if there were sound complaints in the area?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, the YESAB decision outlined a noise protocol or complaint protocol to be put in place, so there is something there. I'm not sure that the measure is at people's homes. I think you design the permit so that it works year-round. Then the operating equipment — that's where the sound is, I think, typically measured. You just try to design it so that it's going to be okay with neighbours.

I'm trying to say to the House that this thing we're talking about is about the sound level of a chainsaw. We are saying that the closest neighbours are more than 200 metres away. Other neighbours are 500 metres away and more. I hope, as Yukoners, that this is within our realm of okay.

How do we deal with concerns? I think it's a typical process for us. When we issue permits, I think it is our Compliance Monitoring and Inspections — sorry, I'm being told that it would be the Forest Management branch. But there would be folks who go to check it out, and if there are complaints, they would be followed up on.

Ms. White: I'm just going to use an anecdotal story. Off the Alaska Highway and next to a mobile home park, there is a gravel pit. A gravel pit has hours that it is allowed to operate within. If it is operating within those hours, residents who live

next door who were there before the gravel pit are told that it's just the way it is. I can say that it has really diminished people's ability to live next door.

When we talk about this proposed project, the concern is that rural residential, for example, is secluded. They bought their home with the expectation that they would be able to live there quietly. We have talked previously about the importance of these things in the past. Knowing that it's the forest resources branch that would be in charge of enforcement, there are lots of questions about what would happen if someone is operating outside. What are the warnings, the tickets, or the stop-work orders and the series of those things?

One thing that definitely was brought up when I went out there — well, there are a couple of things. I would say that the stretch of road where it is — I would ask the minister what kinds of vehicles are proposed to be going in there and what size of trucks. Are we talking about hauling? Are we talking about logging trucks — big, long, heavy loads? I say this in terms of where the gravel pit is. There is a not a whole line of sight in both directions. There is a bit of a line of sight, but it is certainly not an area that you would want to pass in. To be honest, I didn't hit the gravel pit the first time I was looking for it. Residents around there have concerns about safety. They have concerns about the highway. They have concerns about traffic. They have concerns about the state of that highway during the winter. Another thing they brought up multiple times is: Were there other areas that were proposed? They felt that this one was landed on because it was easy and government had painted themselves into a corner, and that goes back to — I would suggest, from opposition questions — having a wood yard and making sure that we can get a stockpile of greenwood so it can age and so we can have access to firewood.

The questions that I have, again, are: In this process, has the highway access been looked at from a safety lens? What kind of vehicles will be accessing it? What other areas were proposed? I would hope that there were other locations and I would like to know about those other locations.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I guess I should have invited the member to some of the LAC meetings where we talked about this a lot.

Yes, there have been — I started off by saying that the department has looked for sites at the north end of town, in the middle of town, and at the south end of town. This was deemed to be the most suitable, best site at the south end of town. Were there other considerations? Yes. As an example, there is another gravel pit further north and closer to the cut-off. That one was looked at — and why not that one? Well, number one, it is an active gravel pit, so it has other things going on with it. That was the biggest concern, but there were other concerns as well. Drainage isn't as good in that gravel pit; it wasn't as preferable for dryness. In terms of a woodlot yard, it wasn't as good.

Was the highway looked at — turning radiuses? Yes, it was and that was considered.

Was the size of trucks considered? Yes, they were.

The other way to think about it for members today is that this used to be a gravel pit. It used to have gravel trucks there.

It used to have crushing. It had noise, dust, and activity. Those things were in the past — I understand that — but we are looking for locations where we can have activities that are important for Yukoners, because I think that it is important that Yukoners have firewood. That is a good thing.

In particular, one of the things that is happening right now at the south end of town is that we are trying to reduce fuel loads. Through Wildland Fire and the Department of Community Services, there is this attempt to reduce that wildfire pressure. Rather than, for example, taking that wood, putting it in a slash pile, and burning it over the winter, we are trying to take advantage of using that energy. This is, in my mind, right there in with the whole approach to addressing climate change.

The balance, in my mind, has to do with: What are the levels of impacts that we're talking about for neighbours? How far away are those neighbours? What is reasonable? In my neighbourhood, for example, someone firing up a chainsaw is not that big a deal. It does go on pretty frequently. I suppose it might be different if it were happening day in, day out, but I have a neighbour who is right next door — or on three sides, I guess.

The sizes of the trucks — I think that they are anticipated to be in the range of about 10 to 15 cords on a truck. It will depend a bit, but there is probably a difference between the trucks in their amount as they come to the yard — which is already happening, by the way, so that yard is being used or that gravel pit is being used as a storage yard. Those trucks are coming and taking wood away at other times. If there was firewood processing there, then there would be different types of trucks hauling the wood away. I think they are smaller on the backhaul than they are on the haul to the site. Anyway, that is the rough picture.

Ms. White: I was invited out by neighbours, residents, and members of the LAC to that actual gravel pit to have a discussion. They wanted me to see what they were talking about and where the location was. It was helpful because it definitely puts it in place when you are standing in the spot that they are talking about, pointing out where their houses are and all those things.

There was a wood processing facility in Carcross that moved because of the disruption to neighbours. There were people who were farther away than 200 metres and it affected them deeply. Again, I will raise my concerns.

When I attended this meeting at the gravel pit, one of the things that had been mentioned by the residents — and I am trying to find the e-mail that referenced it. There is a Yukon government road back toward the Carcross Corner on the right-hand side, travelling from Carcross. They said that this was a road that had access off of it and where people were farther away and it would be less disruptive to neighbours, and they had suggested it as a possible location. Their concerns were that, from the government perspective, there was no interest in going there because there would be work required first, including probably clearing trees, which, if it was going to be a woodlot, I guess it would be an opportunity to get a few additional trees in your piles to season.

I apologize, because I don't have the kilometre marking for where this road is, but there is a very distinct Yukon government road back on the right-hand side of the highway between Carcross and the Carcross Corner, close to the Carcross Corner side. Residents had suggested that, so was that one of the areas the minister looked at? Why wasn't that one deemed suitable?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, there was a project that had begun during COVID — that is my recollection — with wood processing, but they didn't go through the YESAA process — let's say that. They have properties that abut their property, so let's call that "zero metres away". It's not zero metres away from where the house is to where the processing is, but what I've been trying to measure is from the edge of properties, not from houses. Finally, the type of processing they had was much noisier than the other one we are talking about now, so these are all differences.

If I understand — I mean, maybe I could look on a map with the member opposite afterward and try to talk through where the various places are that I think we are talking about, but yes, from talking with the local advisory council, there was a suggestion to use the gravel pit which is north of the proposed gravel pit. It is the one that I described. First of all, the Forest Management branch did seek that out. They did try to assess it as a potential site. Number one, it didn't come out as the best site, and number two, it had a conflict. When I met with the LAC, it was requested again. I went back. I asked the deputy minister to go speak with the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works to assess whether it would be a more suitable location. Again, there was a review done and another response sent to me about why it was not the better choice. It was not a suitable choice.

So, there has been continued effort to try to seek other solutions. It is hard to find a location where no one has a concern. That's easy for me to say. This is an important thing. Then I think it comes down to that balance. I acknowledge the concerns that have been raised by the residents, but in trying to look at them and weigh them against the advantage that would come from having access to more wood — especially more wood that is being removed from the landscape because of the risk it poses, so to try to find a use for that wood which could displace fossil fuels and at the same time weighing what the impact is — it is running equipment that makes roughly the sound of a chainsaw and which is a couple of hundred metres away from the nearest residence. Yes, that is what we are talking about. It was the best solution that the Forest Management branch could come up with for a location for such a yard. That is how it was judged, and yes, there was effort put into trying to find alternate locations.

Ms. White: I will be sure to send that information out to folks who have — well, continue to send e-mails of their concerns around it. I think their concerns stand. I am happy to hear what the minister's thoughts are on the matter, but I will change topics.

On May 13, 2023, the *Yukon News* had an article that says: "Ombudsman finds Yukon government policy unfair — Jason Pedlar has found unfairness in Energy, Mines and Resources

department's lot enlargement policy." He stated that there were no clear criteria for accepting or rejecting an application and that it lacked transparency and consistency. I am hoping that the minister can share with Yukoners changes to this policy to make it more fair and to make it more transparent so that when folks are going through the process of looking at getting their lot split, it's clear — that they understand ahead of time what the limitations or requirements are. So, again, this was a finding from the Ombudsman this spring, and I'm just looking for where we're at — an update on that from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I am just asking the department for an update, and I will just suggest that if we keep moving with questions, if I get some information, I will make sure to share it when I get back up on my feet.

Ms. White: For sure, and just for clarity, the news article talks about a complainant who is asking to make their lot larger and then the process that went on. I mean, I can read the article when we get back to it, but I will wait for the minister.

One of the — also talking about lots, actually, the confidence and supply agreement includes a commitment by the Yukon government to reform the land lottery system through a public engagement. Is there any update on this? When will the engagement begin? Will reforms be ready for the building season of 2024?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I can say that, with respect to the lot enlargement policy being revised to meet the Ombudsman review findings, I am just asking the department what the timing looks like on that. Second, there are two things that are happening with respect to the lottery system for lots. The first one is the deeper one, I guess, which I will talk about. We are doing successor legislation for lands. When we were close with that and then when we started the successor mineral legislation, First Nations asked us to reset and use that process as well for lands. We agreed, but that will have a public engagement portion to it, so — I don't know — I think the timing is next year on the public engagement piece that will be there.

Second of all, we have been working with the City of Whitehorse. They asked us to adjust how the lottery system works, because they had heard concerns. We used a process through a city committee that made some suggestions. We have been doing some tweaks in between now and then to try to improve the system in the interim.

I just received a note from the department, and they are expecting the lot enlargement policy to have its update done this coming spring.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer and for the officials behind the scenes who were looking for that answer.

I can't remember, honestly, if it was during Question Period or during budget debate, since that all kind of meshes together at a certain point in time, but the minister had indicated that — so, concerns had been raised at the beginning of October that buyers of residential lots were stuck in limbo all of a sudden after being able to access their Whistle Bend lots. The minister indicated that they would not be charged the interest on those lots before construction. I'm just looking for clarity.

My understanding was that buyers were accruing interest on lots that they could not access when they opted to pay in installments and that the interest is paid directly to Yukon government. I believe that the minister had said or alluded that there was a solution in the works for that. I'm just looking for clarity on that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When this was first drawn to my attention, I just asked the department to not charge interest. Unfortunately, it's legislated, so it became a problem. Then I asked the department: Can you please try to find a work around for these folks?

So, yes, they are doing that work to find some way to rebate the money to the landowners. The construction completion certificate was — they happened in two chunks. One group of them was done by September 21, and the second group was done by October 6. All of those — it is lots in phase 6B. They are all now accessible, but folks missed a building season, effectively. Interest would be charged to them in May of the following year. So, that is when it would come due — that interest. What I have asked is that the department have a solution for those folks before that point so that they are not out, effectively. Unfortunately, we couldn't just do a quick adjustment to it, because it is legislated.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I thank the minister for that, and I wish the people trying to find the solution Godspeed in that work. It may be a significant or insignificant amount of money, but for what it means for the individuals who will be paying it, it is important, and so I wish them luck in the work — in figuring that out.

Funding for organizations under the *Umbrella Final Agreement* — for example, renewable resources councils, Fish and Wildlife Management Board, and land use planning commissions — my understanding is that the funding for those boards ends in March 2024, that it comes through the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources. I am just wondering if a solution has been found ahead of — we are told all the time that the government is planning next year's budget, and I just wanted to make sure that this had been addressed ahead of that funding running out.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I was referencing this issue earlier when I was talking with the Member for Copperbelt South. The funding for this is wrapped up in that whole ongoing dialogue with the Government of Canada under the land claims implementation funding. I might have the name wrong — the title of that wrong — but that is essentially what it is, and it is the Executive Council Office that is the lead, so the Premier is the lead in this dialogue with counterparts federally.

Wrapped up in that is land use planning, land use planning implementation, et cetera, so that's where that funding lies. I understand those conversations to be ongoing with the federal government.

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

One of the challenges — and I realize that it has been two years since my responsibilities changed and I'm not the critic of 50 percent of everything, but often my departments cross and I forget which department is responsible for what thing because, at one point in time, I had a good half of everything.

At times, it was confusing and one of the challenges that I find myself in is with the Better Buildings program, because it's partially under Community Services, which I am still a critic for, and the other half is under Energy, Mines and Resources, which I am also still a critic for, but at times, I ask the wrong questions of the wrong minister.

I have, at this point in time, talked with the Minister of Community Services about the Better Buildings program, so now here I am talking to the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources about the Better Buildings program. I know that last time I was in Community Services, I had been told that 55 applications were made and that the total value of those applications was — or maybe the ones accepted were \$292,000. Anyway, I am just looking for an update. Maybe the minister would like to walk me through it again.

How many applications have been made? What is the total value of those applications? How many were accepted and how many were rejected or had to be pushed back a year? How much is left in the budget for this year for those applications to the Better Buildings program?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Only in the Yukon — there are now 56 applications.

Can I also, just for a second — and the Member for Takhini-Kopper King has been kind with her remarks and I would just like to echo them. The public servants who do all this work in the background try to provide us with the information and deliver the services — there is a lot of work that they do and it goes unsung most of the time. Today, I would like to sing their praises along with the member opposite. I really appreciate the hard work that they have done.

With respect to the Better Buildings loan program, the public-facing part of it is Energy, Mines and Resources. That's the part where Yukoners go and talk to the Energy branch and deal with them. It's just in the background where we are dealing with local improvement charges that we are working with municipalities on, so that's where Community Services comes in.

There has only been one application so far that has been denied, and that's because of their tax status. That's the note I have. I am not sure what that means exactly, but generally speaking, people are getting through the program. Not everyone is choosing to follow up. The cost of borrowing is high right now and it's challenging to find a contractor. There are a lot of folks who are busy out there.

\$291,000 is what I have as being committed to date under the program. There is lots of room for that program right now and we will continue to work with Yukoners to try to promote it.

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

Now, understanding that only one application was rejected, out of the 56 applications, how many are currently going forward? How many are kind of in a holding pattern? I am just trying to look for an understanding of where we are out of those 56 applications, knowing that one has been rejected.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The note that I have for today is that seven have completed — or nearly completed — their projects. That's where the \$291,000 comes from. I have a note

that says that several of the 56 applicants decided not to proceed, and the reasons were ones that I have just given. Other ones were that they had been approved, but we were unaware of the status of whether they are moving or not. We will continue to follow up with them, of course, but that is part of the challenge right now. What I would say is that 55 of those projects are still in the works, but only a handful of them have their work underway to a point where they have been coming back to us to get the dollars for the project. Some of them may have started and we don't know yet, but that's just the difficulty of the project.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

It is a really interesting time to see, in the last number of years, the number of photovoltaic panels that have gone up on roofs — solar panels, of course.

I've talked on more than one occasion in here about Tony Seba, who is an energy disruption specialist. His point always was that the more a technology was utilized and put into work, the price would come down. We have seen that with solar panels. I wanted to know if there was a certain point where the microgeneration program for solar — where we would top out.

Partially, I ask this question in terms of having done a tour of the Yukon Energy complex. I actually went up into what I can only describe as a very stressful room with people who control the entire energy grid from one spot and learned from them that clouds in one area of town can actually affect Yukon's energy generation, because they don't actually know where all the microgeneration projects are. They can't tell if they are in a cluster. They don't know if one area, depending on the weather, will go down and that would affect their need to bring up, for example, the hydro.

I'm just looking to find out if there is a time when the microgeneration program will not have room for additional solar projects or if there is an unlimited amount of space for that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I got a report the other day that Natural Resources Canada does to try to assess renewable energy comparisons across Canada. The Yukon came out second in Canada for solar. We've exceeded what our target was, so we're about to pause the program.

One of the things that the Member for Takhini-Kopper King was discussing which is a real issue that we have to watch — I just was invited to meetings with ATCO and Yukon Energy to talk about the grid system writ large and how we are trying to upgrade it over time. As the system is developed now, I think ATCO is starting to look at more smart metres. There is a better term for it than what we usually call it, but the whole point is to try to then know where those resources are and what you can do with them.

There is a move to develop distributed energy resources through your grid — like, eventually, the batteries that people will use in their electric vehicles could become a resource for a utility, if done well. This is where things are moving and we understand that it is changing.

The microgeneration program has moved faster and further than we anticipated. We need to see how it will work with our grid as we change our grid. The utilities are saying to me right

now that it's time for us to press pause, review that program, and redesign what it should look like on a go-forward basis and where we should take it from there. This is part of that whole move toward our transitioning of the energy system across — and in anticipation of the demand that is coming as we move off of fossil fuels.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I'm not surprised to know that the Yukon is second. We are often leading in our early adaptation and I think people here try to do their part. I mean, the real challenge, of course, when we talk about solar panels is that additional power is generated when we don't really need it. So, the next question is: What microgeneration program will come online that will help us generate electricity in the winter months, the snowy months, the cold months? That is really why it's so exciting to see the four turbines on the top of Haeckel Hill.

My former colleague Jim Tredger came to that meeting — the opening, actually. I have to say that in the first five years after I was elected, the discussion around wind wasn't kind. I didn't think that we would ever get to the point where we would see it, and I'm glad we are. I have been told that there are up to 400 megawatts in the territory for wind — that we could look at having installations across that would really bolster our system, which I think is something that we have to look toward.

Understanding that we are getting close to topping out on the microgeneration program, my understanding is that, with the IPP, we have reached our limit for solar generation and that we are now looking for projects that are joint — so maybe solar and battery storage or things.

I don't think that is a bad thing — to know that we set a goal and we have reached it and in some cases exceeded it. I don't think that is a bad thing. I think that it is just a matter of trying to find that technology. I really believe that technology is going to help us out here — the technology that helps us generate in the winter.

One of the things that I have discussed previously is that — I really — and I appreciate that the minister talked about smart meters, because really, both utilities have tried to go forward with smart meter programs, and they have both been shut down at the Yukon Utilities Board. So, that is a problem when we talk about demand-side management and we talk about our ability to utilize and control our power. I look forward to that.

I am a person who signs up for all the pilot projects, so I was part of the initial pilot project around water heaters, but sadly, the company went under during COVID. I told Yukon Energy at first to just leave my meter there; it's fine. But when it finally did something funny and shut off my water heater, I asked them to come and take it off, but I am signed up to be on the new project, and hopefully, the next company will have better luck.

One of the things that there has been a big move for — and I am grateful for that as well — is going toward the air source heat pumps. It is interesting, because I can look at Twitter — now known as "X" — and other communication out of Alberta and other jurisdictions that are talking about: Are heat pumps really — will they work in northern climates? I chuckle a bit,

because my heat pump was installed in 2016, but my dad's first heat pump was installed in the 1990s — long before it was tried or tested here.

Again, when I got my heat pump installed, the fantastic folks at the Energy branch installed a meter, because we were looking to collect actual, factual information as opposed to just anecdotal stories as to whether or not they worked. I am happy to be part of that, and it was wild to see that the rebate that I got in 2016 was \$500. I shook my arms a lot and said that it was really not enough for the \$32,000 I have just spent in trying to do this, and I got up to \$1,500, which was three times the amount. So, to see the program now where it is 30 percent, up to \$8,000, is huge and to know that, when I started, I was the only heat pump on my block. I can walk down the alley between two streets, and there are six heat pumps now between Antwerp and Cassino, the back end of Cassino, which is great, but there are concerns around that, and my colleague from Whitehorse Centre brought it up in discussion with Yukon Energy. I have brought it up before, and I will bring it up again: There are people who would like to get off fossil fuels, but when they are told that they have to upgrade the transformer on the power line to the tune of \$50,000-plus, it seems a bit steep.

I can say again, on an individual purpose, that I got to install my very own power pole for \$3,000. I did, at the time, tell ATCO that I was marrying myself for the rest of time by installing a heat pump, but I still got to install a power pole. I have called it “my power pole”, and they have corrected me, saying that actually it is their power pole, but I say, “I bought it”, so the discussion goes on.

I can't imagine that I would have wanted to install my very own transformer for that, so maybe the minister has some thoughts about what kind of work is being done with the utility. But as we try to encourage and support people to make different decisions, knowing that we get stuck in a process where they are told that the only way forward is with that kind of investment to the utility which is a for-profit business is really a hard, bitter pill to swallow. I will give the minister a chance to add some thoughts there, and I will move on to my next question.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are a few things I want to say, and thanks for all of that.

First of all, solar and battery is great, but it's not so great for the winter, really. The member opposite will know, because she heard me, when I was at the ribbon-cutting event of Thäy Tăw — the Haeckel Hill wind project — I heard the Chu Níikwān say, “Let's build the next one”, and I said, “Yes, the next one should be wind and battery.” That's right, because if we get wind and battery — and I said this earlier during Question Period — then we have firmer power. I wouldn't quite call it a “baseload”, but it gets us much closer so that the amount of diesel you need in order to make it baseload is much, much less. When we are talking about our off-grid communities, solar is great for there, so whether it is Watson Lake or Beaver Creek, solar is terrific, because it's offsetting against diesel.

Yes, we definitely want more integrated solutions. Yes, there is pressure on the system, and for those early adopters, sometimes they are moving out in front. The member talked

about a rebate of \$500 and then \$1,500, and now it's \$8,000, but when we combine that with the federal program — and we have been working with the federal government to be able to combine our programs so that we could be the one-window shop for the rebates, that we can be the deliverer of the federal program — they have been receptive to that.

Sorry, I am referring to heat pumps now. It will make it seamless for Yukoners. My shop told me that there were some challenges with Yukoners navigating through the federal system, and if we combine our programs, it will make it more accessible for Yukoners.

By the way, just to make sure that I say it here publicly, heat pumps do work in the Yukon — I agree with the member opposite — at minus 15 degrees, which is our average winter temperature. They are twice as efficient as any other heating system. They are going to cost you half as much to provide the same amount of energy. It's amazing.

At minus 30 degrees is when they get about as efficient as our other systems. They get less efficient as you get colder, but that's still a pretty good bang for your buck. As my wife and I drove into town, we were discussing heat pumps. What a great world. I know that the Minister of Environment and I have signed up for the peak smart program, so just a shout-out to Yukon Energy for getting that program back up and running. I encourage all Yukoners to get there.

Let me just return again to the overall grid that we have. It does need to be overhauled; it really does. For example, as we build subdivisions that have more electric heat load — when the power goes out and they come back on, it's like a big hit all of a sudden, because there is just this huge demand for electricity in a rush. We do need systems that are going to allow us to feather on one street at a time and get them back up so it doesn't overload the system as it comes back up.

We are going to need to upgrade things as people put more vehicle charging in their homes or heat pumps so that our transformers can take it. There is a massive backlog on transformers across North America — well, probably across the world. I am told that what used to take a couple of months now takes closer to a year. So, the planning has to be done more deeply.

All this is to say that I appreciate the challenges that individuals experience when they lead on some of this stuff, but I do know that the utilities are looking at this as a whole-of-system approach. We have asked that they be in conversation at all times with the Energy branch, with not just Yukon Energy but ATCO, and, for that matter, the university, because there are some smart cookies up there — Dr. Michael Ross and his team — who do energy planning and an assessment for the north, so that's a very useful group to be working with.

Anyway, there is a lot of work out there being done right now to think about the system upgrade. I think I mentioned earlier the direct energy resource. It is one of those things that our utilities specialists say will be an important way to smooth out the capacity peak that is growing.

Lots of work, and yes, there will be challenges as we go through that and if I can call them “hiccups” along the way as we move forward, but the utilities are working together to try

to make that as seamless as possible, because we can see that transition is coming.

Ms. White: I'll again highlight that I don't believe that the customers should be paying for those investments in that infrastructure, which is part of what the problem is now. I'll just leave that there.

The minister and I received an e-mail from my friend Dave Weir out of Haines Junction, and I think it's really important. I'm going to read part of the letter in, because it's a real-world example of a family who is making a really important decision toward electric vehicles.

A couple years ago, they bought their first electric car, which was a Chevy Bolt. They have been impressed by the Bolt. They say that it's really easy to charge, and they're grateful for the charging network across the Yukon, and they think that a super job has been done. Fast-forward and we get to the point where the Ford Lightning comes online. Dave is a carpenter in Haines Junction. He does a lot of work in Haines Junction.

He makes the decision that he is going to sell his favourite, like, Toyota Tacoma, which he uses all of the time for runs to Whitehorse to pick up supplies, and he is going to park the diesel truck and he is going to 100 percent use a Ford Lightning for the purposes. Interesting things that I will put out there — and hopefully the minister can petition the federal government. If you get an electric vehicle with a bigger battery, it is viewed as a luxury vehicle — maybe a luxury if you live in downtown Toronto, but if you live in the Yukon and not in Whitehorse, it's probably not a luxury; it's probably a necessity.

The Ford Lightning that he got was the basic package, but it had the bigger battery, and therefore, he didn't qualify for the federal funding. That is just an aside. Hopefully, this government can petition the other government to talk about what is truly luxury and what isn't luxury.

He says that he thinks that, in order for the Yukon to hit the target of 45-percent electric vehicles, we're really going to have to tackle pickup trucks, and I don't disagree with that at all. I had my heart set on, at one point in my life, a Rivian — I'm not sure why I'm fixated on a Rivian, but I really am.

I'm just going to read directly from his letter now: "In driving my Lightning over the last couple of months I have made a couple of observations about our charging network, observations that I did not make while driving our Bolt. I would like to pass these on to you, in the spirit of trying to make our vehicle charging network the best it can be, and increase our chances of reaching 45%.

"I drive to Whitehorse about once a week in my Lightning to pick up supplies and run errands. I often pull a trailer in order to maximize what I can haul back to Haines Junction. It has become apparent to me that the chargers in Whitehorse leave a lot to be desired if you have a truck and trailer. The chargers at the Tourist Info Centre and the charger at Yukonstruct can not be used when you have a trailer attached to your vehicle. The charger at the Transportation Museum can be used with a trailer only if there are very few vehicles in the parking lot. Indeed, rural chargers in general seem to be better set up for trailers than the chargers in Whitehorse. Of the rural chargers I have

used so far, Haines Junction, Mendenhall, and Pelly are passable for a trailer, and Stewart Crossing is excellent. To use the chargers in Whitehorse, I often have to take my trailer off and leave it at Wal-Mart while I charge. It seems to me we are in need of urban chargers that can be used with a trailer attached.

"Secondly, driving a Lightning with an extended range battery it of course takes a while longer to charge my truck than it did to charge our Bolt. Often the 1 hour time limit on the chargers is not adequate to get enough charge to make the next step on my journey. More typically, 1.5 hrs or more is needed and I find myself charging first at Yukonstruct then going to the Tourist Info Centre and charging again. This is particularly true in a place like Mendenhall where the charger is only a 25kW charger. It seems to me that we are in need of higher powered chargers and/or longer time limits on at least some chargers.

"Lastly, I often find myself competing with Whitehorse residents for the use of chargers, and returning multiple times to find a charger that is available. I find this particularly annoying because more often than not, Whitehorsians have the option of charging at home and are using the public chargers to save a few dollars. For those of us from the communities, we often have no choice but to use the public chargers in order to be able to get home. Even with the extended range battery and without a trailer, at an air temperature below 0 degrees or so I can not make it to Whitehorse and back without charging my truck. I find myself wishing that the free public chargers were not free so as to decrease their use by folks that have a choice to charge at home.

"To illustrate my points, I will relate the charging history of a trip I recently made to Whitehorse, towing my cargo trailer with air temperatures in the range of -12 to -15. I charged the truck to 100% before departure. I stopped in Mendenhall on the way in to top up the battery and charged for a half hour or so at the 25 kW charger. I continued to Whitehorse and picked up the supplies I needed. I then went to Wall Mart, disconnected my trailer and charged at both downtown chargers (waiting for 20 minutes at Yukonstruct) for a combined total of 1.75 hrs to bring my battery up to 90% (the highest it will charge with a fast charger). On the way home I stopped at Mendenhall to charge for a total of 2 hours (it takes a long time on the 25 kW charger) to make it home. I arrived home with about 60 km of range left on my battery, comfortable but not a huge safety margin. And in case you are wondering, I keep the cab of the truck at 15.5 degrees, just enough to keep the windshield clear.

"I relate this story because I think that it illustrates that the current state of the charging network in Yukon isn't adequate for a lot of the users that are going to need to convert to electric vehicles in order for us to meet our 45% emission reduction target."

He is so kind in this e-mail because he says: "I hope you will consider my suggestions, and I hope that you feel free to contact me if I can be of any help or provide any clarification."

The interesting thing and the reason, partially, that I wanted to read this into the record was that I don't have an electric vehicle currently and I am not towing a trailer, so I

wouldn't have known — I wouldn't have thought about it — until he pointed it out that the visitor information centre works for cars, but it certainly doesn't work for trailers.

YuKonstruct, when you think about it, doesn't work for towing. The Yukon Transportation Museum could work if there weren't cars parked behind it.

One of his suggestions partially ties into T7 of *Our Clean Future*, which is about legislation to allow private businesses or maybe even the Yukon government to sell electricity at the charging stations.

I know that we are almost out of time. I will let the minister go. I will give him the floor, and hopefully Dave's concerns can be addressed.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me give a shout-out to the public, like Dave for his letter. Yes, I got it, and by the way, I know that the Energy branch has written back to him thanking him. I know that they have set up meetings to sit down and talk with him to try to work through some of these things.

I know that we have a good initial charging system, but yes, we need to grow it. I listened to CBC Radio this morning and they were talking about bike parking and maybe how it needs to be tweaked. This is just an example of that for our folks who are going to drive electric trucks.

By the way, I think that the issue with the federal government is not about the size of the battery; it's about the cost of the vehicle. That is what they use as their threshold. We will be sure to have those conversations. I was actually on a call today with the Minister of Natural Resources Canada on another issue.

Lastly, to Dave's suggestion about when we start charging, I have asked the department to accelerate that and bring it back to me more quickly, because I think it is an important part in our progress on this.

Again, the Yukon has been ahead of the curve in this adoption. It is amazing to me to see where the Yukon is with respect to renewables broadly but, in this case, electric vehicles. I am impressed with their keenness around this issue. We will continue to invest in our infrastructure to make sure that it will match that focus from the public.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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 5:28 p.m.

The following legislative returns were tabled November 15, 2023:

35-1-108

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to a ministerial statement re: Minto mine closure and reclamation (Streicker)

35-1-109

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. White related to general debate on Vote 53, Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — miners' liens (Streicker)

The following document was filed November 15, 2023:

35-1-166

Working definition of anti-Semitism, letter re (dated May 2, 2023) from Currie Dixon, Leader of the Official Opposition to Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Justice (Dixon)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 159

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 16, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 16, 2023**

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. The following motions have not been placed on the Notice Paper as they are out of order: Motion No. 841, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; and Motion No. 842, 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?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, could we please welcome guests who are here today for our tribute for geosciences.

We have from the Chamber of Mines, President Lorelee Johnstone. We have Stuart Murray, director from the chamber. We have Brienne Warner, the executive director, and Angelique Bjork, the office manager. From Energy, Mines and Resources, we have Lauren Haney, Stephen Mead, Michelle Crossfield, Todd Powell, Karen Moir, Will Tewnton, Richard Potvin, and Sevn Bohnet — if we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: She may be here for the other tribute as well, but Carolyn Relf — if we could welcome her, too, please.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I will be tabling, later on, the Cannabis Yukon annual report, so I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome to the gallery today David Sloan, who is one of the chairs for the Cannabis Licensing Board.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleagues to join me in welcoming — and saying good-bye at the same time — Pascaline Etter. Pascaline has been the chief of staff for the Yukon NDP for just about two years and has shepherded us through some incredible challenges and some very high highs and some not-quite-so-high lows. It has been an absolute delight to have her. She is on her way to explore the world, and for that we are grateful. We have Nicole Dhillon, who is one of

our newest staff, and Laurie Tritschler, who has joined us from Alberta.

Please join me in welcoming them.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome Cheryl Rivest and all of her friends from the Stix Together initiative, and we are going to be speaking about that in a few moments. I would also recognize Mel Johnson, co-owner of the Lumel Studios here in Whitehorse. I thank them for being here.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize — there are a bunch of folks here today. There are some names that have been taken and I want to make sure that we address this. I know that they have been invited by both sides of the House. I see Karen Forward up there, who is our fearless leader. I think today there is a tribute, of course, to the many years — 20 years, I believe — of work on the Festival of Trees. I want to welcome you today. I believe that you are here supporting the work of the other folks who are here. I know that tribute is coming very soon. Mr. Forward, good to see you as well — and Carolyn Relf supporting them. To the rest of the folks who are here today, thank you all for coming. I know that this is the team that is being supported and all the work that you do to help fundraise for the Yukon Hospital Foundation. Thank you very much.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the members to help me in joining a few people today who are friends of mine in the gallery today and are with Stix Together. We have Anne and Harvey Jessup and Chantelle Rivest, as well, so thank you.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I had assumed that the Minister of Health and Social Services was taking names. I do apologize. I see Maralyn Rogers, Deb Bartlette, Susan Hamilton, Arjay Hill, and so many more. Thank you for being here.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Geoscience Forum and Trade Show

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Liberal government to pay tribute to the 51st annual Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show. November 19 to 22 we will have the chance to hear from leaders of the territory's mineral exploration and mining industries as well as the latest geoscience updates from our experts at the Yukon Geological Survey.

The event is organized as a partnership between industry and the Yukon government and it is a good example of working

together to accomplish great things. I would like to thank the event's organizers for all their hard work. Gold mining continues to be an important part of the Yukon's economy and the transition to a clean energy economy is creating new opportunities for the territory to supply critical minerals. Responsible mining of these minerals is a way for the territory to make a positive contribution to Canada's green shift while also creating well-paying jobs.

We're working with the Municipality of Skagway, Alaska, on their port redevelopment project to ensure that Yukon mining companies have access to tidewater infrastructure for decades to come. We're also beginning work on connecting the Yukon's and British Columbia's energy grids. This will help the territory meet its grown demands for clean electricity and assist mining with emissions reduction.

As well, we're collaborating with First Nations to jointly develop new minerals legislation that better reflects First Nation relationships with the land and supports a modern and sustainable mining industry here in the Yukon. Our government is doing its part to help support the exploration industry. To help stimulate new discoveries, we're investing \$1.4 million to support 44 exploration projects through the Yukon mineral exploration program. This investment is expected to leverage an additional \$3.2 million in private sector spending on these projects.

The Yukon continues to attract interest from investors, explorers, and miners due to its mineral potential, identified resources, and stability. In recent years, the territory has seen investments from major players, such as Rio Tinto, Teck, Mitsubishi Materials, Agnico Eagle, and Newmont. Exploration spending in the territory remains healthy. Natural Resources Canada's spring 2023 preliminary forecast for mineral exploration spending in the Yukon is \$145 million. We have seen an increase in the number of claims staked compared to one year ago.

The Yukon supports a strong, sustainable, and responsible mining industry, and this year's geoscience conference will provide many opportunities to learn more about the territory's latest mineral exploration success stories. I hope to see folks there.

On a sad note, I want to acknowledge the sudden and tragic death of David Gould. Born in Dawson City, David was part of a multi-generational placer mining family, and he was 77. David had mined on Hunker Creek since the 1980s and was a well-known member of the placer mining community. Friends remember him as a true Yukoner who spent his life helping others. I would like to offer my deepest condolences. His death is a real loss to the placer community, to his family, and to his friends.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Yukon Geoscience Forum. This year's conference and trade show kicks off on Sunday, November 19 and runs through Wednesday. This premier event focuses on the mining and geology sectors,

highlighting everything the mining industry has to offer here in the Yukon.

Over 650 delegates from across Canada and beyond will take part in information sessions, panels, discussions, and have the ability to network with others involved in the industry, governments, First Nations, and local communities and organizations.

This year's geoscience awards are still to come, but I wanted to talk a little bit about a couple of other things that have involved local industry. I would like to congratulate Ryan Burke, a young Whitehorse geologist who won the NextGen Prospect Challenge in 2020 for his exploration and samplings of the Pike Warden site. This award offered him a substantial prize and led to a lucrative deal with Transition Metals Corporation that could see his dream proposal through to the establishment of a producing mine.

Transition announced this summer that it is starting a new phase of exploration on the 3,700 hectare property south of Whitehorse. I would also like to say congratulations to John McConnell and the Victoria Gold team. They were awarded the 2024 Viola R. MacMillan Award, which is given to an individual or organization demonstrating leadership in management and financing for the exploration and development of mineral resources. Victoria Gold not only operates a prosperous and safe mine, but they provide immense community support through the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society's Every Student, Every Day funding program, and so much more. John and his entire team are very deserving of this recognition.

I would also like to thank all the other industry partners and organizations for the incredible acts of community support throughout the year all across the territory. So many organizations rely on this support to operate, and the mining industry continues to help our communities thrive in this way.

Enjoy the forum and trade show and the many events sponsored throughout the week.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the 51st Yukon Geoscience Forum and Trade Show. It's always a challenge being the third voice delivering a tribute. You don't want to dredge through the tailings of what has already been said twice, but you want to be sure to strike on what needs to be celebrated.

This four-day event that allows folks from across the country and beyond to get together, learn, swap stories, and more is certainly worthy of celebration. With presentations and discussions from industry leaders and innovators, government and First Nations, there is much to learn in the next few days, so congratulations to this year's soon-to-be-announced Yukon Chamber of Mines' winners and to the industry that supports them. We look forward to hearing about the community- and industry-led solutions that come out of this year's "meeting of the mines".

Applause

In recognition of Stix Together

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize Stix Together. Stix Together is a group of like-minded women who paddle the Yukon River Quest to raise money for the Yukoners cancer care fund. Stix Together is truly grassroots and is the epitome of Yukoners helping Yukoners. Stix Together's first race was in 2016 but the idea was planted well before.

Organizer and Stix Together member Cheryl Rivest had watched the start of this world-famous race and wondered to herself: Why on Earth would anybody do such a thing? Later, her "why" would be to help Yukoners affected by cancer.

The Yukon River Quest is the world's longest annual canoe and kayak race, spanning 715 kilometres from Whitehorse to Dawson City. It is not a casual float. After Cheryl Rivest completed her first race, she realized that if she was ever to do it again, she would need a purpose to justify all of those blisters. Cheryl had lost a brother to cancer, which ended his life far too soon. While he was still battling cancer, Cheryl saw the immense support that people offered to him. He was cared for and supported in a way that not everyone has access to. This kindness was pivotal for Cheryl and she knew that she wanted to help others to get the support that they needed.

The Yukoners cancer care fund provides this support. The fund provides financial assistance to Yukoners and their families who are facing a cancer diagnosis and may be having financial difficulty. This fund has helped over 300 individuals and their families since 2014.

Armed with purpose and perseverance, the Stix Together team has been able to raise over \$100,000 for the fund. Their purpose is contagious as the team has inspired many Yukoners to help their cause. Several members and supporters of the Stix Together have joined us here today, and we are so pleased — I am so pleased and I know that all members of the Legislature are as well — to have the opportunity to thank all of the dedicated and brave paddlers, past and present, for their compassionate and unique support for Yukoners.

Stix Together is, in turn, supported by more than 50 people on the support team that has kept the boat afloat over the years. Thank you to all organizers, volunteers, and donors. Yukoners who would like to donate to the Yukoners cancer care fund in support of Stix Together can visit them on Facebook at [stixtogether](https://www.facebook.com/stixtogether).

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to tribute the Stix Together paddling team. The Yukoners cancer care fund, YCCF, was formed to assist families through the journey of cancer with a small financial donation. The fund helps many, and we hear the appreciation from those families. Karen Forward, president of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, can attest to that. Each year, the fund still falls short to support everyone in need.

A group of women joined forces to paddle the Yukon River Quest. After completing her first race, Cheryl Rivest stated:

There is no way I would get back in a boat and do that again unless I have a really good reason to.

The really good reason she chose was YCCF. Stix Together was born.

From 2016 on, they have paddled every race, sharing hot tea, consuming a steady-trickle feed of protein balls and lemon drops, laughing and singing as they pass other boats. From 2017 on, they have placed first in the women's voyageur category. The prize money and their funds raised all go to YCCF. To date, they have raised over \$100,000.

The team's crew — 23 women in total — has changed over the years. The commitment of time and energy, suffering through blisters, sore and stiff muscles, through rain, thunderstorms, wind, hot sun, and high water — they are athletes to be honoured.

In 2016 and 2017, Stix Together rented a boat and trailer. Even with a sponsor, it was expensive. One snowy day in February 2018, Scott McDougall, owner of Kanoe People, popped into her shop and asked Cheryl: What colour of a voyageur do you want for Stix Together?

A group of anonymous people bought a boat and trailer so they wouldn't have that extra expense. The team calls them "Casper", as in the friendly ghost. Scott made sure that a discount was given to the buyers. Cheryl says she still gets teary-eyed when she tells this story.

Other paddlers from the Yukon River Quest donate their winnings as well.

A new incentive added to the mix, Schmidt Mining donates a large gold nugget to the team. No purchase is necessary to win the nugget, but a donation is encouraged. This summer, they partnered with Lumel Studios, Lu and Mel Johnson, where glass art was created and live-auctioned right on the spot. Music by Claire Ness and the Rubies, finger food, cash bar — it was a fun, fun evening.

With a fundraiser at the Fireweed Market and bhangra dance with Gurdeep Pandher, they continue to amaze with innovation and ways to raise awareness and donations.

The team gives a shout-out to all of their sponsors, the volunteers, paddling members, and families, past and present, who support them on this journey.

A quote from Booker T. Washington: "Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others." The kindness of people abounds, and I am humbled to be in the company of these amazing, awesome Yukon women, Stix Together. Thank you for all you do for others.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to pay tribute to Stix Together on behalf of the Yukon NDP. I first got to learn about Stix Together at a women's hockey tournament in Haines Junction a few years ago. It's a pretty common experience at hockey events since a number of the founding members are also avid hockey players.

It was a noisy and celebratory room, and Cheryl Rivest got our attention — if I remember correctly — by standing on a chair, though I may have made up that detail. She told us how the Yukoners cancer care fund was funded by Yukoners for

Yukoners facing the hardest time of their lives. She told us how the fund was for whatever they needed, no questions asked, no strings attached.

She told us about the passion that drives all of the members of Stix Together to fundraise for the cancer care fund and asked us to support them. After her heartfelt, optimistic, passionate speech, I don't think there was anyone who held back that night. I can't remember the dollar figure that was raised, but I remember being very impressed, and I know that I left feeling grateful to be part of such a caring community.

The Stix Together team has a lot of fun and they never lose sight of their goal of fundraising to support Yukoners living with cancer. When they do their annual Yukon River Quest race, each member pays for their own entry fee, hotel room, and transportation home so that all of the money that they raise can go to the cancer care fund. Every year, they do a draw as a fundraiser. For the first few years, Cheryl Rivest donated a paddle pendant, and for the last four years, Schmidt Mining Corp. has donated gold nuggets as the prize. This year, they have donated another gold nugget that is as beautiful as it is large. The draw will be opening up this year in late January, so keep your eyes peeled.

Stix Together also gives each of their paddlers a paddle pendant after they complete their first Yukon River Quest, so if you see someone wearing a paddle pendant, ask them about it; they will have a story to tell for sure.

I want to give a heartfelt thank you to all of the Yukoners who have donated to the Yukoners cancer care fund and a huge thank you to all of the members of Stix Together, past and present, for inspiring and leading us to support each other. You show us what true community care can be.

One last thing — if you need Christmas gift ideas, a donation to the cancer care fund is a great gift. It's easy to wrap, it fits everyone, and it makes a huge difference in the lives of Yukoners. Thank you, Stix Together.

Applause

Speaker: Introduction of visitors outside the usual time provided.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to make sure that our visitors' names get properly recorded in Hansard and that their attendance today is well celebrated. I would like to take the opportunity, therefore, to properly introduce some of our visitors today: Cheryl Rivest, Monique Levesque, Anne Jessup, Deb Bartlette, Chantelle Rivest, Nathalie Haltrich, Susan Hamilton, Sandra MacDougall, Maralyn Rogers, Karen Forward, Arjay Hill, and Mel Johnson.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 16 of the *Liquor Act*, I have the honour of tabling the Yukon Liquor Corporation annual report. I also have the honour, pursuant to section 15 of the *Cannabis Control and Regulation Act*, to table the Yukon Liquor Corporation annual report specifically for cannabis.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the *Yukon University Act*, section 53(3), I have for tabling the Yukon University annual report, including the audited financial statements, for the year ending March 31, 2023.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a letter addressed to the Premier from the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in reference to a visit in that community at the beginning of August.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a legislative return relating to questions posed by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

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

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

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(1) of the *Human Rights Act*, does appoint Nathan Cross and Leonard Wall to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does revoke the appointments of Samantha Dawson and Keely Bass, effective immediately.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Roxane Larouche to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 13, 2023; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, does revoke the appointment of Marius Courteau to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, effective December 13, 2023.

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

THAT this House recognizes Whitehorse Motors for their donation of \$250,000 over five years to enhance mental health and wellness supports for Yukon University School of Trades students.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to table all required reports under the *Clean Energy Act* prior to the end of the 2023 Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a comprehensive on-the-ground response to support suicide prevention across the Yukon.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address youth homelessness in the Yukon by providing Safe at Home options for youth, both in Whitehorse and in the communities.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce policy and legislation to limit speculative real estate buying from individuals or entities residing outside of the Yukon Territory.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Land-based healing fund

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to announce the launch of the land-based healing fund, a new initiative jointly led by the Government of Yukon and the Council of Yukon First Nations. This new initiative, supported by an investment of \$9 million over the next three fiscal years, is a testament to our commitment to improving mental health and well-being in Yukon First Nation communities by reconnecting individuals to traditional teachers, culture, and the land.

The land-based healing fund is designed to address the impacts of historical injustices and intergenerational trauma. By focusing on initiatives that teach traditional skills, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and outdoor survival, the initiative aims to build community resilience, strengthen connections to the land, and celebrate Indigenous culture. These activities are not just about learning skills; they are about healing and reconnecting with Indigenous heritage.

The Government of Yukon is entrusting the management of these funds to the Council of Yukon First Nations, who will administer them to the Yukon First Nation governments and organizations conducting their own eligible healing projects on the land. This approach ensures that the healing is led by communities that it aims to support, maintaining a culturally appropriate and community-driven focus.

Thank you to the Council of Yukon First Nations for their partnership and work to support Yukon First Nations in accessing funding. Aligning with key government strategies,

including *Putting People First* and the Yukon strategy on missing and murdered women, girls, and two-spirit+ people, this initiative ties to the treatment approach outlined in the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy*.

Recognizing land-based healing as a vital component of recovery and ongoing well-being, the land-based healing fund also supports our broader goal of improving safety and health in downtown Whitehorse and other communities. Our government is proud to invest in initiatives that promote reconciliation and healing, which have been priorities of this government since day one. This fund is a partnership that embodies more than just funding. It represents a profound commitment to healing, to acknowledging past traumas, and to building a brighter, healthier future for all Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, it has been 22 months since the Minister of Health and Social Services declared a substance use health emergency. Since that time, the Liberal government has failed to create even a single new addictions treatment space or expand programming. We are relieved to see that they might finally be doing something.

We have repeatedly called for the government to increase addictions treatment and emphasized our position that the number one goal of any substance use emergency strategy should be helping as many people as possible break free of their addictions and live healthy lives. Last month alone saw four Yukoners lose their lives due to toxic drugs. Mr. Speaker, this is a serious problem in need of more action.

We believe that land-based healing is one of the options that should be available to Yukoners in need, and we hope that this will result in other successful healing programs. We also note that this idea is one that was put forward by the NDP in their confidence and supply agreement with the Liberals. This, of course, raises questions about the status of other CASA commitments that the Liberals haven't delivered on. They promised to expand the capacity of detox. Almost half the clients interviewed at the 405 Alexander Street shelter said that they had been turned away for detox due to capacity issues.

Can the minister tell us: Where is the promised expansion of detox? What happened to the promise to fund out-of-territory addictions treatment?

They promised \$2 million in additional money per year to enhance recruitment and retention of new health care professionals. The Liberals previously eliminated the doctor recruitment position. While they have now provided funding to the Yukon Medical Association to cover half the cost of their locum recruitment position, that position is focused on helping doctors find locum coverage. Thousands of Yukoners don't have a family doctor and there is not one single person who is focused on recruiting new doctors. Will the government provide funding to the YMA focused on recruiting new doctors to the Yukon?

What is the status of the walk-in clinic? Can the minister tell us what they are doing to recruit new doctors to staff it? When will they deliver on their commitments regarding fertility treatment and surrogacy? What are they doing about hemodialysis?

Mr. Speaker, these are all commitments that they made in CASA, and as far as we can tell, the Liberals haven't delivered on any of them.

Can the minister tell us whether or not she is concerned that her failure to meet these commitments could result in the NDP pulling the support from this Liberal government?

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP is pleased to see this announcement regarding land-based healing. Visiting and connecting with First Nations across the Yukon, land-based healing is so often mentioned as an integral part of what mental health support should look like.

The 2023 confidence and supply agreement that the Yukon NDP signed with this government includes a commitment to directly support Yukon First Nations to design and implement additional government-funded land-based healing programs in their respective communities. This commitment was requested because many governments have spoken about the lack of capacity in navigating government programs and funding and the lack of clarity about what type of funding was available and under which criteria.

We look forward to knowing when this commitment will be completed and to knowing the details on what direct supports are available to Yukon First Nation governments and organizations to support them in designing and implementing their vision for land-based healing programs in their communities.

When we talk about the lasting impacts of intergenerational trauma, addictions, and mental health challenges, I think about how, so often, I see many friends and families from communities end up struggling on the streets in Whitehorse or getting lost in their addictions and the detrimental impacts and added trauma that this brings to one's mental health and well-being.

Then I think about how I see many of these folks out on the land in their traditional territory with very little, and they thrive. They thrive in establishing themselves to survive off the land through applying the knowledge and skills that they inherently carry while naturally gaining strength. This vital connection to the land brings not just healing; it also brings life to those who spend time on the land in their traditional territory.

Land-based opportunities in communities are so important for the many people who don't want to leave their home, their support systems, and their security to access help outside the community. It heals the individual and also communities through building relationships across generations. These relationships are so important because that is how communities exist and how communities have thrived for thousands of years. There is so much strength that comes from the land that can't often be put in words or found in the city and concrete.

The establishment of this fund is a start to making the concrete changes that are so necessary. There is an urgent need to work directly with the communities that want to provide more community-based resources, supports, and programming in ways that are adapted to their specific and unique needs. We have heard from communities that, in terms of accessing funding opportunities to establish land-based healing programs,

there is a need for administrative support for program planning, proposal writing, and to empower First Nation governments and communities to not only build lasting land-based programming but to also build a program that encompasses their culture, traditions, language protocols, and ways of being.

I want to thank all who worked on establishing this new fund, including the Council of Yukon First Nations. I also want to extend my gratitude to all those in the communities who do the hard work of building programs and supports in their respective communities.

Mahsi' cho.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, land-based healing is a crucial investment in supporting the continued strength and well-being of Yukon First Nation communities. It is about re-learning, reclaiming, and reconnecting. Our government recognizes the harms and deep trauma caused by colonization and we understand that land-based healing opportunities promote reconciliation, increased wellness, and better overall health outcomes through collaboration and connections. It is also an approach that adds a comprehensive aftercare experience and supports Yukoners who are in various phases of treatment or transition.

Advancing reconciliation is a key chapter in *Putting People First*, our road map to transforming the territory's health and social services system, and this includes land-based healing. The new land-based healing fund speaks directly to not only the recommendations in *Putting People First* but also the Yukon's strategy on missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people, and it fulfills a recommendation under the substance use health emergency strategy.

Mr. Speaker, it also is aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, specifically call to action 22, which calls for the recognition and use of Indigenous healing practices. In partnership with the Council of Yukon First Nations, we will ensure that supports are available to assist both Yukon First Nation governments and First Nation-led organizations in making application to this low-barrier fund.

Two positions within the Council of Yukon First Nations will be dedicated to this purpose and also support the reporting and evaluation component. The \$9-million fund for this initiative is based on a comprehensive evaluation of the projected needs and goals of the initiative over the next three fiscal years. It will, of course, be monitored closely. Success will be measured through regular reporting and evaluation, ensuring that the activities align with the goals of promoting mental wellness, reconnecting with ancestral traditions, and addressing intergenerational trauma.

The Yukon government has been investing and collaborating on land-based healing programs for over a decade. Successful programs include the Jackson Lake healing camp, week-long family camps, and youth-led wellness camps. Connecting with one's heritage and the transformative power of healing through land and traditions is incredibly important. Culture and language camps, traditional food harvesting, and programs for elder and youth knowledge-sharing, like

traditional medicine gathering, are just a few of the examples of land-based healing opportunities that we know can — and have — significant positive impacts on communities.

This fund goes beyond education, though. Land-based healing fosters community resilience and partnerships, honours local strengths and resources, and is an essential part of a health system that is responsive to the needs of Yukoners. Our government is truly proud to invest in this initiative.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Physician recruitment and retention

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government has been in power for seven years, and for most of that time, recruiting doctors to move to the Yukon hasn't been on their priority list. Thousands of Yukoners don't have a doctor and the Minister of Health and Social Services and her colleagues actually eliminated government's only doctor recruitment position before finally being embarrassed into supporting the Yukon Medical Association's effort to fill the gap left by government inaction.

Now, after failing to open the walk-in medical clinic that the minister originally said would open in the spring last year, they are planning to open one in January. Can the minister tell us what, if anything, she is doing to try to recruit new doctors to move to the Yukon to work at the walk-in clinic?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, I have been asked this question many times, but I am very pleased to be able to have the opportunity to respond and give Yukoners accurate information. There is much in the beginning of that question that is not accurate.

Health human resources present one of the greatest challenges facing Canada and the Yukon's health care system today. Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges, including an insufficient supply of health care workers — front-line workers — and we truly appreciate having the opportunity to support them as they support Yukoners. The Government of Yukon recognized the seriousness of these shortages. It is somewhat of a perfect storm post-COVID. Health human resources shortages, individuals making different choices about their lives, and an increased aging and growing population here in the territory have all conspired to make this a challenging time. At no time have we not recognized this to be such.

We have formed a Health Human Resources Steering Committee, which has jointly been led by the Department of Health and Social Services and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The committee is using an intersectoral approach to create a Yukon health human resources strategy that I am happy to continue to talk about.

Mr. Cathers: Unfortunately for the minister, dismissing the facts doesn't change them. The Liberals' first attempt at a government-run clinic, the Constellation Health Centre, opened without any doctors. The only doctors they have been able to get to provide any services there have been poached from other parts of the health system. Now we have learned that with the

planned walk-in clinic, the minister is deliberately trying to get local doctors who already have a family practice to leave their own clinics to provide services at the government's clinic. This approach will take doctors away from serving their current patients in exchange for being paid a premium to see others. This isn't fixing the doctor shortage; it will simply move busy doctors to another clinic and increase wait times for their current patients to get an appointment.

Why is the minister taking this approach instead of focusing on recruiting more doctors to move to the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I think that the member opposite should get their facts straight. The Health Human Resources Steering Committee was unique in the territory and perhaps unique in governments across Canada, comprised of representatives from across numerous Government of Yukon departments, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, as well as Yukon University, the Yukon Medical Council, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Employees' Union, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, and First Nation representatives.

The committee was formed for the purpose of bringing together the front-line individuals who are aware of the concerns and issues that must be addressed, and their work included aspects of the health human resources crisis, including retention, recruitment, planning, learning, and innovation. They are also working to help coordinate support and influence the health human resources work that is underway in their respective organizations so that it aligns with the committee's recommendations and priorities.

We can take an approach where we all work on this issue together, something that is incomprehensible to the members opposite. The work of this committee aligns with the ongoing collaborative efforts of the federal government and the provincial and territorial governments working together through ministries and other officials, and we are supporting the recent investments in health human resources in Canada.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the minister can try to pretend that she's not trying to take doctors away from the patients that they have now, but the facts say otherwise. In the expression of interest that her department issued, it is clear that the government is directly trying to recruit physicians with existing practices to work at the walk-in clinic. In fact, they are even offering those doctors more money per hour than they are willing to pay new doctors who might move here.

Doctors who have a family practice are already working as much as they are willing to, as there are thousands of people on the Find a Doctor wait-list. Taking family doctors away from their patients may serve the Liberals' political interests by trying to keep the NDP from pulling their support if the walk-in clinic fails, but they are undermining the health system and leaving other people waiting longer for health care.

Will the minister actually focus on recruiting new doctors to move to the Yukon and stop trying to take doctors away from their patients who need them?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, the facts are not correct, but I also want to note that unfortunately in the lead-up to this question is the idea that there is only ever one solution

to a problem, and that is simply not the way that our government approaches things; it is not the way that our government works. We work with our partners. In this case, we work with our partners who are front-line health care workers. The January 2023 commitment to open a walk-in clinic — a walk-in clinic that I might note has been designed with the assistance of three physicians here in the territory who run family practices, who run general practices, and who have front-line knowledge of how such a clinic should be designed and should be available to Yukoners — the plan is for the clinic to be opened at a temporary location and then at a permanent location so that individual Yukoners will have access to the services of a walk-in clinic. At full capacity, we anticipate that the clinic will be staffed by nurse practitioners as well as serviced by physicians on contract hours that will not take away from their original practices. I think they can design their businesses.

Question re: Mammography services

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, mammography is the only technique proven to be safe and effective in screening for breast cancer. Early detection of breast cancer is key to successful treatment. Thanks to the support of fundraising and both public and private contributions, Whitehorse General Hospital has state-of-the-art mammography equipment. Unfortunately, we have learned that the wait time for mammography is now over a year and growing.

Can the minister confirm that this is the current wait time, and what is the minister doing to bring the wait time down?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: As a matter of fact, I have been working to address this issue today, so it's a timely question from the member opposite. I too am concerned about the issues around timing for wait times for mammographies and for individuals who are accessing those services at Whitehorse General Hospital. I met yesterday with the CEO and the board chair of Whitehorse General Hospital. This is among the things we discussed, and that work continues as we collaborate to determine how to best serve Yukoners through the Whitehorse General Hospital and the other two hospitals here in the territory.

Ms. Van Bibber: We are very lucky to have state-of-the-art technology for mammography and we understand that we have systems in place that would allow over 30 per day. Despite this, we have learned that due to budget constraints with the Hospital Corporation, the number of screenings per day has been cut to 15 this month and just 12 per day in December.

Will the minister consider providing additional funding to the Hospital Corporation so that they perform as many mammograms as possible?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that "as many as possible" is necessarily responsible, but I certainly will commit to working with the Hospital Corporation to determine what is the appropriate number — what is the appropriate number that staff can manage, what is the appropriate number for which we currently have staff and for the additional services, like radiology, that come as a result of those kinds of

tests being done. This is an issue that has been drawn to my attention today, as a matter of fact, and I look forward to being able to determine how we can best serve Yukoners and reduce wait times in order for them to have the health care that they need.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, we have continued to raise concerns about the Liberal government's chronic underfunding of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Both the wait times and the number of screenings that can occur are directly affected by the level of funding.

Will the minister agree to provide Yukon hospitals with more funding to ensure that women in the Yukon don't have to wait any longer than necessary to receive a mammogram?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity to address for Yukoners and to Yukoners our government's commitment to ensuring that they have the services and the supports that they need, particularly through the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I am very saddened to hear yet again from the members opposite the story that the Yukon Hospital Corporation is underfunded. We work diligently with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, firstly, to meet the needs that they request through their core funding transfer payment agreement and through many additional transfer payment agreements, and then we work closely with them at year-end each year to make sure that they have the appropriate funds to provide services that Yukoners need and deserve.

In 2023-24, we budgeted \$512.3 million in the Department of Health and Social Services in O&M for the department. We budgeted an amount for the Yukon Hospital Corporation that met its request for core funding. I noted the other day in some answers to questions that we meet weekly, bi-weekly, and monthly with officials across the department with the Hospital Corporation so that we can work together to make sure that the budgeted needs for the hospital are appropriate.

Question re: Community medevac services

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, medevac requests from community nurses used to be triaged by trained health care professionals. These workers knew how to best respond to medevac requests. They knew which first responders to dispatch and what medications to bring to medevac patients. But last December, this government handed these vital triage decisions to a computer program. This software triages medevac patients based on two pieces of information: the medications given and the medical equipment being used to treat the patient. That's a problem, because most medevacs happen in the communities where nurses typically don't have all of the right medications or all of the right equipment to treat many medical emergencies. That means that the software can't accurately triage most medevac calls.

So, why has this government put rural Yukoners at risk by handing out community medevac triage to a computer program?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will again need to determine whether or not the facts presented here are accurate. I don't believe they are. What I can say is that individuals who

are highly trained — as our medevac team is — and responsive to individuals who need medevac services, either from a community into Whitehorse or ultimately from Whitehorse to Outside, are served in great capacity with great professionalism and great care by the individuals who are front-line workers.

All of the decisions with respect to how Health and Social Services operates, how the Yukon Hospital Corporation operates, and how individuals who provide front-line care are instructed to operate revolve around our collaborative work around patient-centred care. That is our focus and it will continue to be.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, maybe it is time for the minister to do proper due diligence within her department.

According to the software designer's website, the software is intended for patient transfer between high-tech urban hospitals. It may work fine to transfer a patient from Whitehorse General Hospital to Vancouver, but this government has also been using this software for emergency medevacs from the communities to Whitehorse. It was not designed for that.

Some patients in communities need medevacs because community health centres have limited equipment and medications to treat many emergencies, but because they have limited supplies, the software won't recognize them as a high-priority emergency. We can all see there is a problem here. The software can't reliably triage medevac patients in communities. In fact, the software might increase the wait times.

When will this government stop endangering Yukoners' lives and end the use of this software for medevac triage?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately and interestingly enough, I would have been happy to respond directly to the member opposite if there is a particular situation that she is describing. Ultimately, I support the medevac program that we have here in the territory.

Are there issues that arise from time to time with respect to Health and Social Services? Absolutely. Are there issues in any other department in government? Of course. Are we proud to make sure that we are addressing each and every one of those issues as they arise? Yes. Are we giving Yukoners and designing a system and transforming the health care system here in the territory in order to put patients at the centre of this program and every program and in order to put patients at the centre of a health system that is no longer biased, is no longer discriminatory, is no longer racist, and provides care for Yukoners at every part of the territory, as is appropriate? Absolutely. That's the work we're doing, and that's the work I'm proud to say that we will continue to do.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, this computer program doesn't put the patient first; that's the problem. The software provider has been awarded two contracts by the Yukon government totalling nearly \$85,000. That's a lot of money for software that doesn't work for most of the Yukon.

Instead of saving time for EMS staff, this change has required two additional dispatchers for every shift, and these changes have frustrated workers, cost a lot of extra money, and, most importantly, have put patients' lives at risk. EMS workers are highly trained medical professionals who care deeply about

their work, and this system has taken a toll on their morale and frankly their trust in this government.

We have heard from medics who were put in situations where the software incorrectly triaged a life-or-death call as a low priority. Getting these triage decisions right is paramount to patient and worker safety, and the computer program this government purchased to replace medical professionals is not getting it right.

Why won't the minister admit that this change was a mistake and give triage decisions back to human health care workers?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to doing is determining what facts may or may not be correct in the question here today and determining what focus Emergency Medical Services can have and whether or not they can be improved. Actually, that's the work that we're doing every day, all day, with respect to the implementation of *Putting People First*, a true examination of the issues that exist in the health and social services system. Many of the recommendations in that report have already been addressed and are continuing to be addressed.

We have taken on the work of transforming Yukon's health care system. Are there continued issues? Absolutely. May they always be there? Let's hope that they are wildly reduced and drastically made better so that Yukoners can have patient-centred care, can have issues — perhaps like the one being brought up today, perhaps not — addressed in a way that is patient-centred, in a way that is responsible, and in a way that is dedicated to the health and well-being and will improve such for all Yukoners.

Question re: Shakwak project funding

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, ever since the US government passed a new federal infrastructure funding bill in November 2021, Yukoners have been hopeful that it could mean a return of American support for the Shakwak section of the Alaska Highway. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* even specifically mentions the Alaska Highway in the Yukon. According to the minister's briefing notes in February of this year, the State of Alaska, in collaboration with the Yukon, applied for a \$31-million USD project for the Shakwak. We have heard that this application was unsuccessful.

Can the minister confirm that our application with the State of Alaska for this funding was indeed turned down by the Biden administration?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to answer this question.

Our government's continued work with the US and Alaskan officials led to the inclusion of the north Alaska Highway in the 2021 *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. While the act does not commit any specific amount to the reconstruction project, it does allow Yukon and Alaska to apply for US funding for this part of the highway.

In December 2022, the US Department of Transportation announced \$1.5 billion in funding through the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity — also known as RAISE — discretionary grant program for 2023. This

grant would make it possible for our government to restore some of the worst sections of this critical part of the north Alaska Highway into Alaska that is adversely affected by thawing permafrost and climate change.

The State of Alaska, in collaboration with our government, applied to the RAISE grant program on February 27, 2023, seeking approximately \$25 million USD for the north Alaska Highway. Unfortunately, at that time, the RAISE application was not successful in securing funding. However, I have spoken to the transportation commissioner in Alaska this summer, and working with our Alaskan counterparts, we submitted a similar funding request of \$31.25 million USD over the six years to a different US funding program — more to come, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, in June of this year, Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski and Senator Dan Sullivan jointly announced the projects that were successful in receiving money from the US government. The Alaska Highway Shakwak project was not one of them, as the minister noted, so why did the Yukon government not share the news with Yukoners that their application had been denied?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that the Premier is certainly in regular contact with his counterparts in Alaska, as I am with my counterparts in Alaska. I am just finishing the answer from the first question.

On August 1, 2023, working with our Alaskan counterparts, we submitted a similar funding request for \$31.25 million USD over six years to a different US funding program, the multi-modal project discretionary grant, also known as the MPDG, and the department expects to receive the results of this submission by the end of 2023.

We have received guidance from our Alaskan counterparts on how to make the application more likely to succeed, both from the transportation commissioner in Alaska and also from the consul general for the US from Vancouver who met with us recently as well. These conversations continue and we know that the previous government let Shakwak inexplicably lapse. We are picking up the pieces.

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, this is the last one I have on this for the minister.

The application that the State of Alaska and the Yukon sent to Washington was for a total of \$31.25 million USD. Both Alaska and the Yukon had committed 10 percent each to the bid, which is about \$4 million CAD. Despite the application being unsuccessful, will the Yukon government still spend the much-needed over \$4 million on the Shakwak that was committed to in the project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate that we've looked at the different funding pots that are available to work with. The State of Alaska, I know, has been in conversation with the Governor of Alaska in the last two weeks. We are just looking at putting together an agreement on shared priorities. Of course, Shakwak is one of those items.

I want to thank Governor Dunleavy for his support and the work that he is doing directly with his secretary of transportation. We do feel that the second fund is a better route at this particular time. I think that there are other priorities that

the federal US government made decisions on. We are still committed to ensuring that we upgrade this road. We know that it has languished and there was failure over the years in getting a true multi-year plan in place to support this very key transportation route. I felt that it was a very positive outlook from Alaska in our last conversation. I think there will be more to report in the coming weeks and months.

Question re: Teacher recruitment and retention in Teslin

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, last week, the Teslin school council wrote what they called an “urgent letter” to the Minister of Education. They were seeking urgent additional support for that school. The first thing they requested was additional staffing resources. They make the case that they need a full-time principal and vice-principal and at least one to two full-time teachers due to burnout and a desire to reduce the use of three-grades split classes. What is the Minister of Education’s response to this request for the Teslin school council?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that I am in receipt of this letter. I have reviewed it. We are working to respond to it and to, of course, work with the school community. School council members and school board trustees play a very important role in supporting school success. The government of Yukon is committed to enhancing community involvement in school governance. I want to thank all current and previous members of school councils and the associations that work to support them as well.

I recently attended the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees meeting. I heard some of the concerns that are outlined in the letter that I have been in receipt of from the school community for Teslin. Of course, we will work very closely with them. We continue to always work in collaboration with our school communities and I look forward to having direct discussions. I have certainly had discussions with Teslin Tlingit Council on issues that arise from the schools and I will continue to do that work.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to seeing additional resources dedicated to the Teslin school.

The next thing that the school council requested was for the Yukon government to reconsider its housing policy for teachers and to ensure that sufficient housing is available in Teslin. They note that the lack of housing in Teslin has been a barrier for new and existing teachers to work and stay in Teslin. In particular, they note that the Yukon Housing policy whereby teachers can only stay in a Yukon Housing unit for a maximum of three years is hurting their ability to recruit and retain teachers. Will the government agree to waive this policy in Teslin and will they commit to making more housing available for teachers in that community?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. The Government of Yukon, of course, recognizes that staff housing plays a very important role in supporting, recruiting, and retaining teachers in Yukon communities. We are continuing to work within available resources to assist staff in rural communities to meet their housing needs.

A teacher's ability to receive extensions on staff housing gives them the security and confidence of housing. The Department of Education, the Yukon Housing Corporation, and the Public Service Commission created a solution in alignment with the policy where the department will recommend extensions annually on behalf of any teacher subject to renewal. This solution ensures that teachers will not receive notices of term end and it supports the department's recruitment and retention strategy.

Again, I am looking forward to working with the Teslin school council to address the concerns that were outlined in the letter that I received this week.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, the final issue raised by the Teslin school council was what they described as — and I'll quote: "... slow or non-existent service for school maintenance issues..." They claimed that even the most basic of requests for maintenance takes unreasonable amounts of time and they have noted that the maintenance system is unresponsive to them. One example that they raised was the school's 3D printer, which was sent in for repairs three years ago, Mr. Speaker, but they have never actually been able to get it returned.

So, will the department find a solution for improving maintenance requests in that community, and will the Department of Education agree to at least return Teslin's 3D printer?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to continue to work with all of our school partners. School councils play a very important role in ensuring that our schools are run well. I am looking forward to responding directly to all of the questions, including the one that has been raised here today.

Regularly scheduled preventive maintenance occurs throughout the school year. Maintenance that impacts school programming is scheduled normally during school closure times.

We continue to invest in ongoing building maintenance of all of our facilities, regardless of age, including routine and emergency maintenance. The Yukon government ensures that all Yukon buildings, including schools, are safe to occupy. The Department of Highways and Public Works maintains all government buildings. Yukon government schools are equipped with all of the updated ventilation systems and other regularly maintained infrastructure in schools.

Mr. Speaker, again, there is a very specific question that has been raised here today, which I will be following up on with the Teslin school council very soon.

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

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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 Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Order, please. Committee of the Whole will now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Yukon Housing Corporation — continued

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate?

MLA Tredger: I wanted to start out by asking about an article that I read recently about the Ryder Apartments being demolished for new housing. I think that's great. One thing it said in the article is that the new units are going to be rent geared to income. I wasn't clear on whether that's the designation that applies to all Yukon Housing Corporation tenants or whether that's specifically the people who are only applying to Yukon Housing Corporation because of the need for lower rent, as opposed to the priority groups.

Could the Premier clarify that for me?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are looking to use the building. We have gone out for design work right now, and it's really about getting the demolition done. The contract has been signed now, I believe. We had a successful candidate — a local construction company — that has won that work. We are looking to get some design work, and it is for clients of Yukon Housing Corporation. That is the concept, but I think we have also had

discussions on this topic with Vimy. I think it is important, and I just want to put on the record that in some of our exchanges previously, I have spoken to the lead on the Vimy file and talked about the fact that this is a downtown location; it's a good location. It's near amenities, and they, of course, have a lot that we have provided in Whistle Bend, but some of the thoughts that we had were that this could be an option.

We are in a position right now where we are getting some design work completed. We want to make sure that we are fluid in getting our work done. To answer your question directly, yes, this is about individuals who are on our wait-list whom we would be looking to house. Of course, then we can use rent geared to income based on that list of clients.

I will flag — and I want to put it on the record today, in case we do have a bit of a change on this — that we do think that this is a good option. When it comes to the Vimy conversation, we're really looking to — I met with our senior folks over the last couple of days, and we are really looking to try to get a final plan in place. We have a series of different options that we will table, but it is important for me to be transparent to the House that I have had discussions directly with Vimy on this location. We think that, for some of their needs, it could be workable, but again, we want to present a number of items to Vimy and have them take a look at what will be best for their organization.

MLA Tredger: I am excited to see what comes, and I look forward to asking more questions when there are more details about what will happen.

I wanted to follow up on a question I asked in Question Period yesterday about the Yukon home ownership program. I had made the suggestion and asked whether people could be pre-approved for the program before they go out to find a house and find a bank that denies them so that they know already in advance: Am I eligible for this program? I understand there are conditions that need to be met in order to get into the program, but I think it would be really great if people could find out what they would be eligible for and then have that approval conditional on being denied by a bank and finding an appropriate house, et cetera.

Is that something the Premier will direct his department to do?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First of all, good work by the Legislative Assembly to be able to listen to QP yesterday from being highly induced by NeoCitran, but an opportunity to listen to some of these questions — great service provided there by Computerisms to log in.

I also just want to thank the team over at Yukon Housing Corporation. I know that we have President Justin Ferbey and Acting Vice-President Beth Fricke today, but also to our finance team: Thank you for pulling together numbers today and to our policy folks and coms folks for all the work you did to prepare us for this debate but also today. I thought this might be a question, and so there was a lot of fast work done today because we wanted to share with members of the House and with Yukoners some background information after those questions yesterday.

First, just to share a little bit about the home ownership program. We are committed to improving home ownership options and availability. This program has gone through a couple of iterations. This has been a program that has been successful. I know a number of Yukoners who have used this program and accessed their first home, and we want to continue to see that success for Yukoners.

What we saw over the last number of years was that the real need was in our communities. It was hard to access mortgage financing in our communities. The first thing that was happening was a lot of institutions would say that there wasn't comparables; they were having a hard time getting comparables for new assets that were being built. I heard that in Carmacks; I heard that in Teslin and in a number of places. We wanted to really focus the program in our communities and it was hard to get significant loans. We provided that to the communities; it was done under a previous minister. Then there was a request through, at that time, the mayor of Teslin, in his role with the Association of Yukon Communities, but also from his experience to increase the amount that we would provide through Yukon Housing in those communities. We did those things. We listened to Yukoners and we made sure that those loans were available.

When we started to see a change in the interest rates across the banking sector and we also were made aware — there was a lot of work done in the House — the Leader of the NDP, I know, had a lot of conversations with me around people who were buying lots and having a hard time to get access to build on those loans. There was a lot of back-and-forth on that. We have tried to make sure that those in Whitehorse can access those dollars.

Again, unfortunately, part of it is that our expanded home ownership program has not been able, in many ways, to bridge the affordability gap to assist Yukoners into home ownership. It is really about affordability issues caused by the high interest rates and home prices. Again, while supporting Yukoners into home ownership is part of how we are addressing housing pressures, we are looking at different options. We are looking at a number of options and the team is looking at — I will flag for the House and it can go on the record — we are looking at models for rent to own. We are looking at land trusts. We are looking at co-ops. We are trying to make sure that our legislation and regulations that support that type of work are in place. Our teams are looking at a number of different models because we are trying to figure out how to unlock these opportunities.

We are also trying to ensure that we don't have Yukoners walking into situations where they are taking on a significant amount of debt and they can't service that debt. We don't want to set anybody up for failure. Of course, we are just using the standard — we have made it a little more flexible for folks as compared to a bank. The interest rates are favourable as well, but we are trying to ensure — and even the amount down — the down payment is very flexible as well.

There was a number that was brought up by the member opposite about the applications. There were 40 applications. What the team did quickly — and that is why I really wanted to

say a big thank you — what we saw was there was the one approved under the credit to total debt service. That is a standard formula. We are a little bit more flexible than the banks. We have 12 of those applications that had too much personal debt. We are not making up equations here; we are not making up models. This is industry standard, banking standard pieces.

I'll preface that by saying that we are trying to figure out ways to help people. We had 10 applications that were just absolutely incomplete. We had 10 applications that were ineligible — we can't get into the specifics on individuals, but they were ineligible; three of those applications were second residences — so, they already had a home, but they wanted a second home; I think there were two that were withdrawn; and there are two that we are still looking into, out of the 40. You can see that really primarily it was around debt and around some of the eligibility requirements that were in place.

Those are some things that we think — you know, there was the Third Party question, though, that I thought was something that was a good point, which was: How can you prequalify? We talked today about it. The language is pretty codified for us in our programs, and we need to do some program change to look at that, but the two things that have to happen — and that is the way the program has always been — is that we went out, and you try to access financing from a banking institution, and if you are turned down — that would be the first thing — then you could come to us, but you also had to have an offer in place — a deal in place. I get the points that were made yesterday, and I thought that there were some good points made.

What we are going to take a look at is: One, maybe if you go through that first step, which is that you go to the bank, let's see if you can hit a number, and how do we do that? It will go to our board as well. Any of these changes, of course, go to the Yukon Housing Corporation board, I believe — it's what has been for changes in the past. Can we have somebody go apply and then, if they are turned down to prequalify at the bank, can they then go through a process with us? You know, then we will leave it to the technicians to figure out how long that offer will stand, the flexibility that we have, and then, of course, that would give them — you know, I think it would be a cleaner path forward. So, I thought that was a good point on the Third Party's question yesterday.

Just quickly, I will let you know that, of our applications, three were from Carmacks, five were from Dawson, one was from Destruction Bay, one from Haines Junction, and three from rural Whitehorse, but about 27 were from Whitehorse of that total package of applicants who came through who were having challenges — just to understand the distribution.

MLA Tredger: I thank the minister for that.

I would like to follow up on a couple of questions I asked about Yukon Housing in the spring. In the spring, I brought up the issue of people calling Yukon Housing and not being able to get through to anyone on the phone. This is something that I hear a lot. People come to me, and every time someone brings up an issue they are having with Yukon Housing, I say, "Have you called them and told them this?" I often hear, "Well, I tried,

but I could never get through, and no one called me back from the voicemail."

I brought this up with the Premier and he said — quote: "I agree; it has been an issue." Then he said, later in the conversation — quote: "We will let you know what our approach is and how we are going to improve on that as soon as we have updated information."

I am hoping he can provide me with some updated information.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I know that we're in a process right now of trying to pull data from the phone system and taking a look at what we have for coverage from a staffing perspective and then what we're getting from the volume that we have going through the system.

I think that there is more information that I need to share with the member opposite, because I have had some communication directly to me in the last number of weeks, and it has been reiterated to us, to me again, so I don't want to say that we've solved this problem, but I also want to dig a bit deeper with our team to understand if it's folks who are calling once and we're in the middle of trying to deal with call volume and they are upset because the first call doesn't get through. The e-mails that were sent to me talked about multiple calls and having a really difficult time trying to get through. Also, in some cases, a former member of the Assembly was trying to help somebody else and making multiple calls, trying to help folks.

I know that the officials just shared with me that the first 10 days of the month are also very difficult, because a lot of our clients are coming to the front counter to pay their rent, too. So, we have folks who are again multi-tasking with what they are trying to do. They are doing client-centred work face to face and, at the same time, trying to deal with the phone lines.

I think that this is something I will have to come back to you on. Again, I want to know what the call volume is, but I still think it's a challenge, our ability to properly manage the requests that are coming in and, at the same time, deal with some of our work. I will leave it to the officials to come back to me, and then I will have more information for you on that topic.

MLA Tredger: I will ask again in the spring, and I hope that, at that time, there will be an update.

One thought that occurred to me while the Premier was talking was if, every month, the first 10 days are difficult, could we staff up for those first 10 days?

When it's predictable every month, it feels like a problem that can be solved. Of course, there are going to be days when, for no particular reason, the phone is ringing off the hook, but if we know that, during the first 10 days every month, it's hard to get back to people on time, that seems like something that could have a pretty straightforward solution.

Another thing I asked about in the spring was bedbugs. I was told that the department's policy is that initial treatment for bedbugs should happen within two weeks of the tenant reporting a problem. I had asked if the department collects data on how often that target is achieved. The minister said — quote: "We are going to pull some data, and we can kind of see what

that looks like on our response time or the response time of the contractors.”

I wonder if he has pulled that data, and what did it show?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: While bedbugs are not considered a health emergency, the corporation treats all cases with importance, as we understand the disruption and stress that this can cause our tenants. The Yukon Housing Corporation conducts monthly inspections of all common areas in multi-unit buildings in Whitehorse. We also provide information on bedbug prevention and treatment to all tenants at the beginning of tenancy through tenant meetings, quarterly newsletters, and as needed.

The Yukon Housing Corporation takes all bedbug reports seriously and schedules inspections and treatments to address issues as soon as possible. The corporation engages a certified pest control contractor to conduct inspections and provide treatments, if required, including two follow-up inspections by the contractor.

Some of the data I can share with you here is this: Since January 1, 2023, the corporation has treated 25 units, with eight treatments currently ongoing. That was as of early October. The relocation of tenants is sometimes in place temporarily for treatments, if required. Bedbugs are not known to spread disease in bites but generally require medical attention.

We know the amount of anxiety this causes tenants. It was a good opportunity to meet with most of our larger, multi-unit buildings here over the last year, and it gave us a chance to have discussions and understand what has happened. I am going to ask for a legislative return to come back just to give some further data on our timing on how quickly we are getting to folks for the 25 cases.

I also want to speak to a few other things. A lot of the dialogue that we have had in the Legislative Assembly around this is, in some cases, opposition members bringing forward concerns in confidence from folks they are representing and trying to amplify their voice, and at the same time, I'm getting different types of information, whether it's directly from clients or from staff, and I also want to be very sensitive to personal information.

What I will say is that, in some of our buildings, some of our challenges have been that we're going in quickly, we're addressing the issue fast, and then either the tenant or somebody on that floor continues to live in a manner that is enhancing the situation for bedbugs, and that could be that they have pulled stuff in — furniture or items that they got their hands on — that is infected with bedbugs, or when we have requested that we need to go in and do a thorough treatment, they haven't followed through on all the steps. That becomes a challenge to the point where I heard that, years ago, there were meetings pulled together and somebody said that they are having problems with bedbugs, and then they come down to a shared area, everybody meets together — and the person is still dealing with bedbugs — and the bedbugs get shared in the meeting and then people go back. It is a difficult scenario.

So, I have had deeper conversations about how — with our current housing situations and pressures — do you get to a place where you can reallocate a number of folks — not just a

number of units but on a floor — and how do you get in there — I think the Leader of the NDP spoke to this before too and said that there's sort of a tent-type treatment, a very thorough piece of infrastructure that goes in, and it gives you the ability to really do the most impactful work.

Again, we have only two certified contractors in the Yukon who treat bedbugs, and so if anybody is looking for a new occupation, there is probably lots of work in that. Sometimes tenants don't want to report the situation because of their own concern. They feel uncomfortable about that; they feel embarrassed — they shouldn't. In many cases, this is something that could have been just spread through the building and may not have had anything to do with any action they did, and it's something, of course, that hasn't always, I don't believe, been as prevalent here as in southern parts of the country.

We are making some improvements to units under renovation to attempt to limit the movement from one unit to another, but it is an ongoing challenge.

We have tried to take a thorough approach to it. I have asked the team to think about doing multiple units at once. It is something that is still a real challenge. I can get back to you with data on just how quickly we are responding, but there were 25 units and we were working on eight of those units as of last month. I will have to get updated information for you in the Legislative Assembly just to see where those eight units are at and if work has been finished on them.

MLA Tredger: I look forward to getting the data, because I am curious if that target of two weeks is being met, but that could be looked at in a lot of different ways. Maybe 90 percent of people are getting it done in two days, but one percent took longer, or maybe actually it's everyone who is waiting the full two weeks — I don't know — so it would be really useful to see the data.

There were a few things in that answer that got my back up a bit, I have to say. Starting out a conversation about bedbugs by saying that it's not a health emergency — no one said that people are going to immediately drop dead from bedbugs, but I've had bedbugs, actually. I used to live in a city in an apartment where I got bedbugs. Let me tell you: That felt like an emergency. That was all I was thinking about until that got resolved. I was very lucky that it got resolved very quickly. Some of the stories I have heard from people who are trying to figure out where they can sleep where they are not going to get bitten — that is an emergency. That has to be an emergency. It is for those people and it has to be for those people supporting them. I agree that people shouldn't feel ashamed about bedbugs, but when we're talking about — I think the term was “the way some people live” in their apartments, that is not helping anyone feel any less ashamed about reporting bedbugs.

Anyway, I will leave that and I look forward to the data.

I wanted to ask another question about Yukon Housing Corporation, which is: How many units are empty right now? I am curious if there are stats on how long it takes to get those units back online once they have been vacated. I assume that the ones that are empty are because of renovations that are needed. So, what is the timeline for units to come back to be

used or occupied after they have been vacated and needed renovations?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We will just move to gather some information on our wait-list and our units that are empty.

I will just clarify a few points. I try to make the point of saying, yes, I do think it's a significant issue. I think that anyone — and probably most of us in this Assembly — at one time or another slept somewhere where there were either bedbugs or we thought there might be. It is an excruciating way to spend a night or nights — thinking about that.

That is why I just wanted to say that I have been there and I think we have all been there, whether it is your own place, you are travelling, you are staying somewhere — whatever it may be. It is an extremely difficult period of time. There is a ton of anxiety with that. When I say “the way that somebody is living”, what I am really trying to get at is that I have clients who call and tell me that some of their neighbours — some people — pile a lot of material or things in their apartment — it is what is relayed to me — or somebody will go out and have access to a piece of furniture that might have been in a place where there was a chance that it was infected.

I'm not casting any inappropriate comments. I'm just saying that this is what I have had from other clients — just sort of saying: I have a neighbour. They have put a lot of stuff in their place and I think that it is a spot where we think there have been bedbugs. There could have been before. I don't even know if that is accurate. I am just saying that these are some of the things, like I said earlier. We go back and forth in the House, and a lot of times — is it hearsay? Is it that my neighbour said this and is it accurate? Sometimes questions have been formulated in that way, and I know, from being in this role, that sometimes people share information with me and I am going to believe it to be accurate — but again, it is something that has taken place.

We will get back and we will find out the time period of how long it is taking us on those calls. I know that our team with maintenance does a phenomenal job of tracking the work that they do. I do want to thank them; it is a lot of work. Right from — many things that we have dealt with before. Sometimes we get in trouble because we want to make sure that the buildings are secure, and so we have the buildings secured and we end up providing access keys to first responders, and then first responders change in those roles or the keys get misplaced in the headquarters of those first responders. We are doing our best to make sure that people are safe and that causes a challenge, and our maintenance folks are under a bunch of pressure. I have been in meetings where people are concerned, which they have the right to be and should be, around lighting in the hallways and common areas. Sometimes it could be plumbing or electrical issues in older buildings.

As we have stated before, in those two years of COVID when we had to be really cautious about our interaction and interface with people, we had a big list of work that had to be done to catch up on our repair and maintenance.

I'll just go through sort of some master statistics for you.

In the City of Whitehorse and in new housing completions — I'm going to just touch on that because I have access to it

here — in 2018, we were looking at: homeowners, 66; our rentals were 100; condos, 61 — 227 in all, through the work of CMHC. In 2019, there were 55 homeowners, 78 rentals, and 110 condos — 243 in all. In 2020, there were 80 homeowners who got access, 116 rentals, and 152 condos — 348 in all. In 2021, it was: 94 with home ownership access; rental, 57; and condos, 53 — for 204. Then, in 2022, it was: 118 in home ownership; 194 in rental; and 181 in condos — for 493, almost 500.

There has been a bit of back-and-forth, and there was a question this week as well — that our residential numbers were down. They did slump in September. We were ahead of last year in August. Month to month, we have seen strong growth, but when you go through, all in all, we're looking at almost 1,300 or 1,400 since 2018 — so really substantial numbers.

Under the rent-geared-to-income occupancy, we have 646 units. Right now, we have 39 vacant or under repair. I think that was the direct question. Under rent-geared-to-income units, under allocation, which we're just putting out — so they could be vacant but under allocation, meaning we're going through that process. We have offered it up and we're getting folks in there — there are 44, and this is as of November 16.

For employee housing, we have 164, and the rent supplement work that we're doing — that's with Da Daghay Development Corporation and through Yukon Housing Corporation. We have 78 folks, and I know that we have gone back and forth a lot about the seniors living — 20 folks there — and then assisted living under allocation, six folks. So, that is just under 1,000 — 997 individuals.

I don't know if we have an actual statistic on the time period between somebody leaving and getting somebody in there — I think it's fair to say that, if I talk to our team, part of what they would ask is: What is the work that is required after a tenant leaves, and is it much different from one tenant to the other? Also, what is our access to our own capacity to get the work done, or if we have to subcontract it to one of the companies that we work with, how readily available are they? Really, when you take into consideration our entire stock, we are looking at less than 40 units out of almost over 1,000 in all.

MLA Tredger: I have just a couple thoughts that came up. Before when we were talking about the bedbug contractors and the Premier was talking about how there are only two in Whitehorse and that capacity is a challenge there, I wonder if the department would consider having their own capacity to treat bedbugs. It's just an idea that I want to throw out there.

My last question is really more of a request for reconsideration of a policy. It's about housing for staff members in Yukon communities. We have talked before about how, in a number of Yukon communities, the policy of only being able to stay in staff housing for three years just doesn't make sense, because there are no other homes for people to move into.

I understand that there is a solution in place where people can request an extension every year or the department can request an extension for them, but that is a lot of uncertainty for the staff who are experiencing it, not knowing every year — this year, it may get extended or maybe it won't. Maybe I will

be able to stay and work this job. Maybe I should be looking for another job; I don't know.

I would suggest that a solution is found that would allow people some long-term certainty about where they are living.

That's my final comment and question of the day. I want to thank the officials for being here, all the officials listening in, helping from behind the scenes, doing the work they are doing every day. I do really appreciate it. I thank the Premier for the conversation.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am not sure. There might be some other questions from the Official Opposition.

Just to speak to that question from the NDP, it's a fine balance. Coming into government, we saw a number of folks. We heard from a lot of community members first — I think that was the big thing — saying that it's a bit unfair. We have individuals who are in subsidized housing. They work for the Yukon government. They are very well paid and there are pressures around housing.

We also heard folks say that people would be in a community long term — many of them — long term in the community but not committing to the community by, you know, when there were lots available, when there were options available, not purchasing, because the situation that they were in was pretty comfortable. Many times, I sat down with individuals and, you know, really emotional in some communities, saying, "Look, people are overhoused in some places."

I mean, I can remember a very significant conversation in Watson Lake on that topic where, you know, you have people who are piled into one place because of the housing stock, and they are looking for an opportunity to, you know, have an appropriate spot for their family.

We have been aware, and we have gone back and forth — I have been party to a lot of those conversations when I am doing community visits about, you know, making sure that employees know the proper process — they can reach into their department. The member opposite is absolutely correct — they can request an extension.

There was a question today concerning the community of Teslin. You know, I think that there are two things for us to be able to take a look at. You know, the approach that we can discuss is really: What is the capacity in the community at the time?

Some communities, like Haines Junction — you know, you might have a person who is in Haines Junction — there are lots available, there are options available, and there are houses on the market — then, you know, you have flexibility to be able to look and acquire. If it is a community where lots are under development or there are options under development but they are not available at that time, those are things that have to be taken into consideration, and you can probably give a bit more flexibility with that, but again, I won't do a program review or edit on the fly. It is important to speak with the Public Service Commission and Yukon Housing, but I will commit to having a conversation about ensuring that folks — you know, that there is a good, common-sense approach to how we look at these things.

We can look at our stock, and we certainly have a sense of when there is new stock being built. As well, working with Energy, Mines and Resources and Community Services, we have a sense of when there are lots available.

In closing, I will say that we have been prioritizing housing for essential positions, especially for health professionals and teachers. Again, we want those folks to be out looking for options, as well — if there are lots, to be looking to try to get the private sector engaged in those communities, to be able to see the demand and be able to build and continue to see options being provided by the private sector.

I hope that answers it a little bit, but we are definitely open to continuing dialogue on the topic. With that, I will hand it back to the Chair.

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

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

MLA 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 \$455,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$6,000,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures underexpenditure in the amount of \$5,545,000 agreed to

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Acting Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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 now come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Environment — continued

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I believe that I do not have a great deal of time left, so I will just take this opportunity to welcome, to my left, Deputy Minister Manon Moreau and, to my right, Assistant Deputy Minister Briar Young. They are both here to assist me this afternoon. I look forward to questions.

MLA Tredger: I thank the officials for being here with us today. I don't have too many more questions left, so I will launch into them.

I wanted to follow up on a conversation we had in the spring about wetlands of special importance. I had asked when applications would be open for wetlands of special importance, and the minister said — quote: "... the estimate is six to eight months to begin the process of defining the applications for wetlands of special importance." That was in either March or April. We are getting pretty close to six to eight months. We are right in that window right now, so I was wondering what the progress on that has been.

Ms. Clarke: Madam Acting Chair, I will just provide a bit of background as to where we are at, and hopefully, by the end of this, I will be in a position to answer next steps with respect to nomination.

A policy for the stewardship of Yukon's wetlands was released on January 10, 2023. The goal of the policy is to ensure that the benefits of Yukon's wetlands are sustained. As the member opposite will know, the Government of Yukon conducted an online public survey in October 2021 to gather feedback on the draft policy. First Nation consultation in 2022 followed the release of the March 2022 "what we heard" report from the survey. In January 2023, the Government of Yukon formed an internal working group to advance and coordinate the implementation of the wetland stewardship policy. The working group was co-chaired by the Energy, Mines and Resources Strategic Alliances branch, who manage partnerships and strategic initiatives, and Environment Fish and Wildlife branch senior habitat biologist.

This working group is composed of members of Energy, Mines and Resources Mineral Resources branch and Corporate Policy branch and Environment, as well as occasional members from the Agriculture branch and the Forest Management branch, Executive Council Office, and Highways and Public Works. The group meets monthly to advance various aspects of policy implementation, as well as ensuring a whole-of-government approach to policy implementation.

In addition to policy approval, Management Board has approved \$1.68 million in time-limited funding over two fiscal years, 2023-24 and 2024-25, for the Departments of Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources jointly implementing the wetlands policy. This includes \$840,000 for fiscal 2023-24 and \$840,000 for 2024-25, in order to support the policy's implementation.

Personnel have been approved for one two-year full-time equivalent at the Department of Environment and one two-year and one permanent full-time equivalents at the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources.

As the member opposite is aware, the wetlands policy contains 16 implementation actions with near-term, mid-term, and long-term implementation targets over the next 10 years. We are working on the nomination criteria and form. We are going to be consulting with parties on nomination criteria late this year and early in 2024. That might be a little bit later than what I indicated in the spring of 2023, but there is good work going on. It appears that there is reasonable funding for this process. It is an all-of-government approach.

MLA Tredger: I thank the minister for that answer.

I am now going to turn to *Our Clean Future*. Since there isn't an update yet, I would like to ask about some of the items, specifically the items that are under where Environment is listed as the lead.

I will start with L3, which is: "Incorporate climate change risks into Government of Yukon departmental planning process by 2022." I asked about that in the spring of 2023, and at that point, the minister said it was in progress. I'm wondering if he could tell me about the progress so far.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: All departments with *Our Clean Future* commitments, which I believe are most departments, have incorporated climate change into their department strategic plans.

Departments with adaptation actions in *Our Clean Future* actively address climate risk in their intended outcomes and related activities. In addition, the Department of Environment is leading by example, adding climate change risks to the risk registry at the branch and department-wide level, which are integrated into branch planning processes.

MLA Tredger: I would like to ask about item T10, which is: "Require all gasoline sold in Yukon for transportation to align with the percentage of ethanol by volume in leading Canadian jurisdictions beginning in 2025, aiming for around 10 percent." I know that we are a little bit away from 2025 right now, but I'm wondering if that is going to require legislative changes, which, if so, would need to start pretty soon, I imagine, to be ready for 2025. Maybe the minister can tell me about what will be required to meet that commitment and what the progress has been on it.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I wasn't entirely clear which T the member opposite was referring to. In any event, from T9 to T15, a number of those sections deal with clean fuels. Certainly, the member opposite and the whole House have heard from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — I am hearing that it was T10.

I have heard from the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources — and perhaps for myself — that not an insignificant minority of the percentages that are required could be achieved through the adoption of clean fuel standards. My colleague the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has also indicated at times that, of course, there will be challenges in the supply chain and in providing the appropriate supply here. This is all to say that this is an EMR-led action. This action is critical

to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the Yukon. There is research underway on how to enable adoption of the ambitious ethanol blending while addressing the unique temperature variations in the Yukon.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is still exploring the legislative requirements of this policy and remains committed to this action in order to reduce emissions in this sector. This is, of course, a complex area of work and research on the initiative is ongoing.

To be clear for the record, T10 requires all gasoline sold in Yukon for transportation to align with the percentage of ethanol by volume in leading Canadian jurisdictions beginning in 2025. I certainly don't disagree that we should adopt best practices and I would venture to guess that we would be aligning ourselves with British Columbia, because they have adopted a number of these best practices. It's obviously easier — from a supply chain and general supply issue — to implement in large metropolitan areas, but in any event, the Department of Environment continues to provide support to EMR on this initiative.

I will just reiterate for the House this afternoon that the reduction component to get to 30 percent with an aspirational goal of a 45-percent reduction of greenhouse gases by 2030 from 2010 levels — it's approximately what the pie chart indicates and it's still the same. I'm sure that it's transportation and heating that accounts for 75 percent of those emissions in the territory. Obviously, transportation is a sector that we are aggressively targeting, because it is certainly very much part of the solution going forward.

MLA Tredger: I appreciate that information, but in the 2021 *Our Clean Future* annual report under T10, it lists Environment as the lead. It's the second time that I have asked about an action and then been told that it's now under the leadership of Energy, Mines and Resources. I am wondering why actions keep getting transferred from Environment to Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As this is potentially the last time that Environment will be in Committee of the Whole for the Fall Sitting of this Legislature, I am just waiting for a response with respect to that question. I have some vague recollection of that question being asked in the spring, but I was just going to briefly put on the record — in a minute or two — answering a question from the Member for Kluane on wildlife collisions between Whitehorse and Haines Junction. I will be brief.

Staff from the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Environment worked together to mitigate wildlife collisions on Yukon highways. Road ecologists and biologists have been contracted to analyze collision data and recommend appropriate and effective mitigation measures. This has included actions like the removal of snow berms to facilitate animal movement off of roadways.

As I stated on Tuesday, reported wildlife collisions in 2023 resulted in the deaths of 67 wildlife, with most being ungulates.

With respect to the Whitehorse-Haines Junction corridor, there have been a total of six reported vehicle collisions with wildlife that have resulted in wildlife deaths. This includes

collisions with one elk, one moose, two deer, and two black bears.

In 2022, there was a total of 14 collisions between Whitehorse and Haines Junction. This included seven elk, three coyotes, three deer, and one black bear. The Department of Environment and the Department of Highways and Public Works will continue to work toward reducing the rate of wildlife collisions on Yukon highways in order to ensure the safety of motorists and to contribute to the conservation of wildlife species.

The Department of Environment is exploring options to ensure that, in the coming year, the public has access to wildlife mortality data, including from vehicle collisions.

This was just a brief opportunity to answer that question from Tuesday, and I am happy to proceed with the question that was raised.

The Climate Change Secretariat plays a coordinating and reporting role for the *Our Clean Future* strategy. While this action began as a joint action, the Department of Environment determined that EMR has greater expertise and better connection to the stakeholders related to this action. The Department of Environment is a partner on certain actions associated with *Our Clean Future* and the department will continue to provide the centralized leadership to support us in reaching our climate goals.

We cannot rely on just one department or agency in order to implement this expansive climate change strategy. I look forward to continuing to work across government to implement the actions that we have identified.

In the annual report, which will be released before the end of the calendar year, there ought to be specifically a recommendation or an indication or even an acknowledgement that EMR is the lead with respect to clean fuels. We certainly discussed that, but the bottom line is that the Climate Change Secretariat, which is housed within the Department of Environment, is the quarterback with respect to the aggregation of data.

MLA Tredger: I will ask next about one that I think is very squarely within Environment, which is P4 — quote: "Continue to monitor key species that will provide an indication of the impacts of climate change on Yukon ecosystems and expand monitoring to more taxonomic groups." That says it is ongoing, so I am wondering what those key species are that are being monitored and what species there are plans to expand to.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Efforts are ongoing to respond to the impacts of climate change on wild species and their habitats. Current initiatives involve monitoring species most at risk due to climate change, such as pika and polar bears, and examining the broader boreal forest food web through programs like the community ecosystem monitoring program. These initiatives aim to provide crucial insights into the effects of climate change on wildlife and their ecosystems.

To answer the Member for Whitehorse Centre's question, I will see whether there are any other animals that are included. I am seeing that lynx and hare will also be monitored.

MLA Tredger: I would also like to ask about P7, which is: “Work with Yukon First Nations to develop a tailored hunter education program by 2023 that can be adapted and delivered by Yukon First Nations for First Nations citizens.” Is that on track to be done by the end of the year? I would appreciate an update on it.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just to complete — I’m sure it won’t be a completely complete answer, but to build on the answer about animals and wildlife that are being monitored and the effects of climate change, I will add as well for the record that there is a Porcupine caribou summer ecosystem monitoring program — a collaborative research program with three areas of focus, including wildlife, vegetation, and Indigenous knowledge — that has been initiated on the Porcupine caribou summer range to understand climate-induced shifts in vegetation and species. This research is not only focused on these changes but will ultimately work toward livelihood adaptations.

The project is community-driven and is a collaboration between several academic organizations, communities, co-management boards and councils, and governments. I am advised that YG is a key partner in this matter.

With respect to the P7, the short answer is yes; this is on track to be completed by the end of the year. Some detail that I can provide to the House is as follows: YG hosts a wide range of hunter, trapper, and outdoor education programming throughout the territory aimed at supporting Yukoners to have safe wilderness experiences. I would just give a shout-out at this time to the Environment communications branch. I think that they are doing a great job on coms with respect to that, with respect to hunter education and providing public service announcements on hunting-related issues over the course of the last two and a half years. I think that they are doing a great job on that.

The action to maintain the ability to practise traditional and cultural activities on the land has been successfully completed in 2022, one year ahead of schedule. In the same year, four First Nation HEED — also known as First Nation hunting ethics and education — program courses were delivered, and an instructor was trained to teach the program. Additionally, a First Nation HEED course is currently being delivered in a school and a second course is scheduled with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, further promoting the preservation of traditional and cultural activities on the land. I am advised that we now have two First Nation HEED instructors and the courses have occurred in Whitehorse.

The House will likely know this, but the Conservation Officer Services branch does the HEED. I know that there is a very enthusiastic, competent, and dynamic conservation officer who heads that, and I applaud him for the work that he does with respect to hunter education across the territory. I know that he is busy with that. Once again, on social media, I see that he is very active with respect to First Nation and non-First Nation hunting education programs.

MLA Tredger: I will wrap up my questions there for today, so I thank the officials for coming in today and for those

listening in on the radio. Thank you to the department for the work that you’re doing all the time. I really appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just before we wrap up Committee of the Whole with respect to the Environment supplementary budget debate for this Fall Sitting, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Deputy Minister Manon Moreau for her long service at various Yukon departments but certainly with the Department of Environment as my deputy minister for the last over two and a half years.

Her support and wise guidance have certainly been very appreciated, and just recognizing that Manon will be retiring quite soon and she will be travelling, I think, to her homeland — the homeland in British Columbia — and enjoying herself, although I’m not sure how she could enjoy herself any more than being in her current position, but I guess it is entirely possible. One can imagine these things.

In any event, I would just take the opportunity to thank her for all of her — I know that she has been appreciated by her team at the Department of Environment. She started her career in Environment and she finished her career at Environment, and I know that she has been incredibly dedicated to the cause. Her support has been much appreciated, and this will be her last appearance in the Assembly. So, I would thank her, and I would thank the assistant department minister, Briar Young, for their support and thank the members opposite — the Member for Kluane and the Member for Whitehorse Centre — for their questions on this matter — on this file. I look forward to the department clearing shortly.

MLA Tredger: With that news, I think we had better add our appreciation, congratulations, and well wishes for her retirement. I have only ever heard great things about her work in the department, so we will certainly miss her.

Mr. Istchenko: I reiterate the comments from my fellow colleague here. Thank you for your time.

Acting Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 52, Department of Environment?

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

MLA Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 52, Department of Environment, 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 52, Department of Environment, 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 \$3,619,000 agreed to
On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to
Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,619,000 agreed to
Department of Environment 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. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

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 (MLA Tredger): Committee of the Whole will 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. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Health and Social Services — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome back Tiffany Boyd and Ed van Randen, who are both deputy ministers of the Department of Health and Social Services, and to welcome, I think for the first time, Melanie Wallace, who is the acting director of strategic finance for the Department of Health and Social Services, and thank them very much for being here today.

I don't have anything to add to the last question that I would have received when we were here last for the purposes of answering questions on the 202324 Supplementary No. 1 for the Department of Health and Social Services, but I am happy to take further questions, if there are any, and I will take my seat and await those.

Mr. Cathers: I had expected that the minister would begin by answering the questions that I asked her on November 1 that she didn't in her response at the time — and I would just reiterate those questions that I asked at the tail-end of the day. I asked the minister if she could provide information, either at that time or when she next rose, about wait times at the hospital, as well as for other health care procedures. Specifically, I had asked the minister to provide us with an update on what the current wait times are for cardiac care, for ophthalmology, for cataract surgery, for non-urgent MRI, for mammography, for joint replacement surgery, and for audiologist services.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: At the Department of Health and Social Services, we work very closely with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, the Yukon Medical Association, and physicians to address timely and appropriate access to the specialty services, which is what is being asked about here. We work hard to

provide those specialty services closer to home to reduce the need for out-of-territory medical travel. Also, we are mindful of the fact that having these procedures here in the territory is often less stressful. It's still probably stressful for patients but likely less stressful than if they have to travel farther or are in an unfamiliar situation. It may be that they are travelling from communities as well, so Whitehorse is a little less stressful than perhaps a big city, if they're not used to travelling. Of course, dealing with medical situations is always a stressful time for people.

We continue to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation's visiting specialist program to provide pathways to some specialist services in the Yukon. Managing hospital occupancy and ensuring that patients receive the care in the right place at the right time remains a daily priority. Cardiology services are provided by visiting specialists. Wait times and wait-lists fluctuate, based on the frequency of visits by the visiting specialist.

Whitehorse General Hospital is supported by three visiting cardiologists, who provide six visits a year, and two visiting pediatric cardiologists, who offer two visits per year. As of the summer of 2023, a total of 439 individuals have received services through the program this year. In 2022, a total of 1,531 services were supported through the program. I do believe that I provided this information when we were last here on November 1 or 2, but nonetheless, I am happy to take the opportunity to repeat those for Yukoners.

The wait time to access the visiting cardiologist is approximately six months. The ideal target would be about two months. As of June 2023, there are 329 individuals on the wait-list to access these services, and that is up slightly from the previous year. The Yukon Hospital Corporation triages referrals for cardiologist services to those with the highest needs, and they are supported first. That is also a medical assessment.

I am just trying to see the other things I was asked about. Not the MRI. Ophthalmology — let me see if I can find some information.

In 2019, with respect to the ophthalmology program, we implemented a two-year plan to successfully reduce wait times for cataract assessments. This plan was extended to support managing wait times. We are meeting our target of completing cataract assessments within four months. We are working toward meeting our target of completing cataract surgeries within six months. At this time, surgeries are being completed within 12 months.

Between 2019 and 2020, a combined total of 870 cataract surgeries were completed. During the 2021-22 fiscal year, a total of 450 cataract surgeries were completed — again, remembering that it was during COVID. During the 2022-23 fiscal year, a total of 545 cataract surgeries were completed, again being restricted by the COVID limitations. As of the summer of 2023, a total of 175 cataract surgeries have been completed so far. That was as of a number of months ago.

The next part of the question involves orthopaedics or joint replacements, which is, I think, the question. The Yukon is currently being supported by two resident orthopaedic

surgeons, with additional coverage provided by locum doctors. The first resident orthopaedic surgeon was introduced in 2017. The second resident orthopaedic surgeon was introduced in 2019. We continue to look for a third orthopaedic surgeon who might be able to support the team.

In 2022-23, a total of 104 joint replacement surgeries were completed in the territory. In that same year, 2022-23, there were 28 joint replacements completed out of territory, and this compares to 71 joint replacements completed out of territory two years before, in 2018-19.

As of the second quarter of 2023/24, there have been 46 joint replacement procedures completed, including 26 total hip and 20 total knee replacements. As of the second quarter of 2023/24, the cast clinic has supported 1,542 visits during the 2023/24 fiscal year. In 2022/23, a total of 2,480 visits to the cast clinic were supported, which was more than any year prior. The orthopaedic agreement currently allows for 100 joint replacement procedures per year. This allocation has incrementally increased since the program was introduced in 2017. In addition to scheduled orthopaedic surgeries, of course, they must account for urgent or emergency consultations and surgeries; the same team is responsible.

The current wait time to access a total knee or hip replacement is between 15 and 21 months. As of October 3, 2023, there were 257 individuals on the wait-list for a total knee or hip replacement, and we have met with the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the resident orthopaedic surgeons to discuss the wait times and access to these services and an opportunity for us to improve that by working together. There is an orthopaedic working group that helps with this process.

I am probably out of time, so I will wait there. I can speak about hearing services next.

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate that the minister provided some information. One thing that we have found in the past is that, first of all, when I first asked the minister these questions, she didn't have this information. I appreciate that she did get some of that, but some of the information is not the level of detail or as current as we would typically get when we have the opportunity to ask witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation questions.

Deputy Chair, as the minister will know, for over a decade, witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation have appeared in the Legislative Assembly during the Fall Sitting to answer questions. My question for the minister is: Will the witnesses appear here next week?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I note that the witnesses representing the Yukon Hospital Corporation often come — I think certainly all the times that we have been here — in the fall to appear as witnesses before the Legislative Assembly. I note that we are getting down with respect to the days. We are still trying to determine if that schedule will cooperate with us this year and that they can appear as witnesses.

Mr. Cathers: Considering the number of days remaining and the fact that we know, when called, that the chair and the chief executive officer of the hospital make attending the Legislative Assembly a priority when asked to be here, it

does sound like the minister's answer was no, they won't appear, but she doesn't want to say that today.

It does raise concerns considering what is going on at the hospital, what we have heard from patients as well as health professionals about the budgetary shortfall and, in fact, departments being told to cut back on some of the procedures that they are performing. It does raise the question of whether the government is trying to avoid us being able to ask questions from the witnesses and, if so, what government is trying to hide from the opposition.

The hospital just finished another year where, according to the audited financial statements, yet again, expenses were higher than revenues by millions of dollars, and the Auditor General noted and expressed concern about the fact that money originally voted for capital was used for O&M, and that was to the tune of millions of dollars.

Again, with the concerns that my colleague the Member for Porter Creek North raised earlier, we are hearing very concerning things about cutbacks to services at the hospital. It does raise the question of whether the government is trying to avoid accountability, and I would urge the minister to actually commit to a date that they will appear here in the Fall Sitting.

My next question is: When will the government provide us with a copy of the Ernst & Young report into financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am always surprised by some of the assumptions — I shouldn't be — made by the member opposite and his party. He says that the assumption is that we are not having them appear as witnesses and that I just don't want to say so. Actually, the other assumption could be that we are intending to bring them and we are working on a schedule. I don't think he should jump to those conclusions. Nonetheless, I always like to surprise him, if I can.

The member will note that there is \$17 million in the budget allocated to the Yukon hospital in the current supplementary budget we are discussing, which presumably they will not vote for, so I am not sure that they care that much about if there is a shortfall at the hospital.

I look forward to determining, with our work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, how we can best meet their financial needs and how they can best provide service for Yukoners and convey that information to us so that we can work together on those issues.

Accountability is, in fact, key. The Ernst & Young report, which was sought to deal with and investigate the issues that were allocated and noted to be in the audited financial statements this year — I made reference to — has been a very good assessment of the situation, and I look forward to releasing that document. We are in the process of determining the process by which that could happen. It is considered a Cabinet document, with respect to the Executive Council Office and how that report came to them. As a result, I spoke about this with the Hospital Corporation CEO and the board chair, who I met with yesterday. It was a good conversation. They too are pleased with the information provided in the report, and I look forward to determining how it can properly and best be released to the public.

Mr. Cathers: Deputy Chair, the government would have had to look very hard for a way to make that document a Cabinet document, because that is not what would be indicated under the tender. It does look like the minister is trying very hard to find a reason not to share that information with us.

I am going to move on to the impacts of budgetary cuts at the hospital. We have learned that hospital staff and doctors have been told that some services, including mammography exams, are being cut for budgetary reasons. We understand that they have also been warned that operating services may be reduced for this reason and that the reduction in surgical services, as a result of these cuts related to the budget, may be 30 percent. Again, that is a reduction in surgical services of 30 percent of what they would otherwise be doing.

Can the minister confirm if surgical services at the hospital are indeed going to be reduced by 30 percent?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Again, unfortunately, the member opposite has made a couple of assumptions regarding the Ernst & Young report. I don't think I will waste the time today to correct him, but I just warn him against, please, making those assumptions, because I am again happy to surprise him.

The next part of the question — I am going to return to something first with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation folks being witnesses. We have brought the Yukon Hospital Corporation chair and CEO as witnesses to the Legislative Assembly every year that we have been here, from 2017 to 2022. The Yukon Party brought the Yukon Hospital Corporation as witnesses only three times during their five years of office.

The next part of the question is about a reduction in surgical services that could be as much as 30 percent of the capacity. This is certainly one of the topics that I spoke to the chair and the CEO of the Hospital Corporation about yesterday. It has been presented as a possible option for some reduction and to align with what is a usual reduction in services, in any event, over a short period of time over what is Christmas week — or the second-last week of December. That determination is being explored and there has not yet been a final determination.

Mr. Cathers: I would remind the minister that when she was trying to compare the record of having witnesses from the hospital appear, we actually began the practice of having the witnesses appear. I do appreciate that the Liberals have carried that on every year, but again, if they fail to call the chair and CEO as witnesses next week, it would be a very notable departure from the past practice of the Legislative Assembly, including under this Liberal government. Considering everything that we are hearing at the hospital — including that the Hospital Corporation has made a public statement, as well, that was covered by CBC and perhaps others today about warning people to expect longer wait times there — when the Hospital Corporation is providing those warnings, when we are hearing from people that they have been advised that services are being cut due to budgetary constraints, and when there is this report by Ernst & Young done under a \$300,000 sole-source contract against the advice of officials, it will cause us to be very concerned about why the minister would choose not to have those witnesses appear here this fall.

As I mentioned, the Hospital Corporation is warning patients to expect longer wait times. They have issued a statement to media and have it posted on their website, and here is a quote from their website: “Service impacts and longer wait times are becoming more regular as we face new and ongoing pressures. Over the past few years, these challenges have come together to create a significant strain on Yukon’s hospitals.” The minister just told us that she met with the hospital chair and CEO. She indicated that, indeed, cuts to surgical services were being considered.

Can the minister tell us how much additional funding the hospital has requested to deal with the growing financial and health care crisis at our hospitals?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: The Yukon Hospital Corporation has released their annual report — as the folks here in the Legislative Assembly know and as Yukoners may be aware — and their audited financial statements for the 202223 fiscal year. As a result of unanticipated higher costs in areas such as the use of agency nurses and overtime, as well as dealing with an aging population and more complex health issues — not to mention a very large increase in the population of the Yukon Territory — the Yukon Hospital Corporation experienced additional financial pressures that our government is supporting the Yukon Hospital Corporation to address through the increases in the 202324 first supplementary estimates. This is the budget that we are currently debating.

The first supplementary estimates for 202324 include an increase of \$17.11 million for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. In the short term, the Yukon Hospital Corporation managed those financial pressures by cash flowing some funding provided for the mental wellness unit capital project. That is what their audited financial statements note. Funding for the mental wellness unit has not been affected by this short-term approach by the hospital, and the project remains on track and is fully funded.

Moving forward, we continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify their ongoing core and additional funding needs in accordance with the terms of the transfer payment agreement with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Each year during the development of the main estimates, the Yukon Hospital Corporation provides the Department of Health and Social Services with a forecast of the coming year’s financial needs. Similar to Insured Health Services or even Social Supports, the Yukon Hospital Corporation’s actual funding requirements are variable and will be adjusted higher or lower as the fiscal year progresses.

Each fiscal year when presented with these forecasts, the department will work with the Hospital Corporation to address core and additional funding needs with the recognition that adjustments will be made through the supplementary budget exercises each fiscal year, as is being done here today, with some funding needs often identified after the end of the prior fiscal year to be addressed in future budget exercises.

During the development of the 2022-23 main estimates, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, for instance, forecasted \$89 million in funding needs, not including the capital expenditures. In the 2022-23 main estimates, the department

budgeted \$88 million to respond to these forecasts. During the development of the second supplementary estimates for 2022-23, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted an additional funding need of \$671,000. The second supplementary estimates for 2022-23 budgeted \$671,000 to address this request. In 2022-23, there was a \$745,000 variance between the Yukon Hospital Corporation's forecasted funding needs and the funding budgeted through the main estimates and second supplementary estimates.

This variance is connected to the Yukon Hospital Corporation entering into a line of credit to ensure that pension solvency requirements were met. Then, as an example, during the development of the 2023-24 main estimates, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted \$93 million in funding needs, not including capital expenditures. In the 2023-24 main estimates, the department budgeted \$93.6 million to cover the estimate given by the hospital to respond to their forecast. During the development of the first supplementary estimates for 2023-24, the Yukon Hospital Corporation forecasted an additional funding need of \$19.3 million. The first supplementary estimates for 2023-24 include an increase of \$17.11 million.

As the current fiscal year continues, further funding needs and pressures will be assessed with the Hospital Corporation to align forecasted costs against actual costs. This is an exercise, Deputy Chair, that goes on throughout the year with respect to proper funding for the hospital, which we have provided and will continue to provide to the best of our ability, working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to have their forecasts and then their actual costs assessed and then meeting that number.

The \$17.11 million in this year's supplementary budget — the one that we are currently debating — I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support this supplementary budget so that the Hospital Corporation will have the proper funds needed to meet the needs of Yukoners. I certainly hope that we all will place our votes in support of the supplementary budget. The approach that we are getting from the opposition will, of course, be shown out in a vote, because the Hospital Corporation does need these funds and we brought them here to the Legislative Assembly for an appropriate vote so that it can be dealt with.

Mr. Cathers: To begin, the minister knows that it's the practice here as well as across the country that the Official Opposition typically votes against the government on all confidence matters, including budgetary votes. In this case, especially since we have no confidence in the Liberal government, we will, of course, be voting against the budget as a whole, because the only time that the House typically votes on the budget is in its entirety. Trying to convince Yukoners that it's anything other than that is a pretty weak talking point.

I would note that the numbers that the minister just cited about the hospital's resource needs directly conflict with what the hospital CEO told this House last November when he indicated that the hospital's O&M core needs for that fiscal year — the 2022-23 fiscal year — were \$103.5 million. The minister then went on to claim that the hospital had only asked for \$93 million and change in O&M for the current fiscal year. It

is just not believable that they would ask for \$10 million less than they told this House they needed for the previous year. This is one of many reasons why we want to ask questions of the hospital witnesses and one of many reasons why I suspect the minister doesn't want to call them here for debate.

It's an important topic because it's directly affecting Yukoners. I will, before moving on to my next topic, again strongly recommend that the government actually fix the financial crisis at Yukon Hospital Corporation, because it is already affecting Yukon patients and it is serious.

Moving on to the topic of psychiatry, the government has talked a lot about mental wellness. We are hearing concerns in this area. We have been told that all of the resident psychiatrists in the territory except one have been offered a contract. That psychiatrist feels that he is being treated unfairly. Under the new agreement with the YMA, the government specifically agreed to offer the option of contracts to doctors. This psychiatrist indicates that he has been asking for a contract for over a year, and during that time, the government also hired another psychiatrist from outside the territory under contract while indicating to him that they might not need his services through a contract model.

We have also heard concerns from other doctors about the disparity — in fact, the growing disparity — between different contracts from the minister and her department and the fee-for-service model. This has been an issue of concern that has been raised with us by a number of doctors. Ultimately, we understand that collectively what the YMA would like to see is equality and fairness in how doctors are treated, whether they are under a contract model or under a fee-for-service model.

Will the minister commit to fixing this issue that has been getting worse under her watch?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate comments from the member opposite and the opportunity to address them again for Yukoners. The Yukon Hospital Corporation's core funding — just as a reminder in the year that's being spoken about — in 2022-23 comes from a transfer payment agreement with the Department of Health and Social Services, but in that particular year, there was also revenue from outside of the Department of Health and Social Services for the Yukon Hospital Corporation of almost \$9 million, so that might be the discrepancy that is being noted by the member opposite with respect to funding for the hospital.

There were questions about psychiatric services. Referrals for psychiatric services can be made through an individual's general practitioner or nurse practitioner or by a physician through the emergency department at Whitehorse General Hospital. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services triages psychiatric care for its patients based on a clinical assessment and provides access to a psychiatrist for individuals with serious and persistent illnesses that are part of the psychiatric outreach program. The early psychosis intervention program or the Referred Care Clinic — so, recognition that individuals who are dealing with mental wellness and addictions might well need these services, and the referrals can be made when they

access services at Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services.

High-priority clients who are referred through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services and who require wraparound supports are prioritized, and every effort is made to see clients with acute psychiatric concerns within a two-week period. During the two-week wait time, intensive outreach and mental health clinician supports are provided. Private psychiatrists set their own schedules and determine how many clients to take on at a time.

Construction has begun — we are very happy to say — at the Whitehorse General Hospital on the new mental wellness unit that is in partnership with the Government of Yukon, the Hospital Corporation, and community partners, which we hope will improve services of a psychiatric and mental wellness nature for Yukoners.

Our government is committed to working with physicians, including psychiatrists and the Yukon Medical Association, to establish better services — a wider variety of services — for Yukoners. We are working with physician consultants with respect to the Whitehorse walk-in clinic. We have also opened Centre de Santé Constellation Health Centre and will be working as we go forward with respect to those kinds of services.

Our government and the Yukon Medical Association have, as I mentioned earlier, introduced an attachment and attraction program to encourage patient attachment to family physicians while supporting physicians with overhead and proper costs. *Putting People First* reported and recommended working with the Yukon Medical Association through the next contract negotiation cycle to develop alternative payment models to transition away from primary fee-for-service payment for medical services. As part of the memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Medical Association, we have negotiated fee increases. We continue to work with the Yukon Medical Association and our health system partners to ensure that physicians are supported and to explore alternative methods. There are certainly some individual physicians who choose to be paid by way of a contract to provide health care to Yukoners. We have worked with them, on an individual basis, to determine appropriate pay.

I can also indicate that we are looking forward to the time when we will publicize contract amounts and pay scales for physicians so that there is transparency with respect to working with the Yukon public and being responsible for taxpayers' dollars and how they are allocated through the health care system but also to support individual and other physicians to be aware of the situation of their colleagues.

I don't want to guess, but I understand that the member opposite might be making reference to one particular psychiatrist. Of course, I am not permitted to provide any information with respect to any negotiations that may be ongoing. I don't want to guess and so I will not, but if the member wants to ask me a specific question about a contract for that particular medical professional, I might have some information that I can provide, but I don't think that it is

appropriate for me to guess if there is a reference to a particular person.

Ms. White: The Yukon NDP has heard stories from communities about the failure of health services to connect to medical treatments and services in Whitehorse. One letter from a parent in Old Crow described how it took her more than eight months to get her baby in to see a doctor. The wait was worsened because the Old Crow Health Centre repeatedly tried to refer the baby to a Whitehorse pediatrician, but those referrals were never received. In the end, it turned out that this was due to an outdated communication infrastructure; it was an old fax machine. The fax machine in the health centre wasn't working. It turns out that it wasn't sending faxes — it did everything that made you think it was sending faxes — and it wasn't discovered until many, many months later.

I think that everyone here would say that it is a core belief that it shouldn't take eight months for a baby to see a doctor.

What is the department doing to make sure that there is adequate technology and communications in rural community health centres so that they can communicate appropriately with facilities in Whitehorse and we don't see this happen again?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. Welcome to the debate about the 202324 Supplementary No. 1 for the Department of Health and Social Services. I appreciate the opportunity to answer these questions. I will not reference the particular situation, although I know that it was brought to our attention, and ultimately, I understand it to be resolved. Certainly, it should not take eight months, or more importantly, there should not be a technological problem that interferes with patients getting care.

We have a quality assurance process to ensure patient care at the Department of Health and Social Services. We certainly expect that any of these kinds of situations will be brought to our attention and dealt with immediately. It's clearly technological support that is needed for health centres across the territory. We do have capital and maintenance budgets at the Department of Health and Social Services so these things can be addressed quickly and immediately. Please, if there are individuals who know of such things malfunctioning or inappropriate technology not supporting the health care of individuals, it would be critical for us to be aware.

We also have a digital health strategy that is being rolled out with respect to improving technology across the territory so that technology works on behalf of patient care as opposed to hindering it in some way. As we continue to the work on the Meditech Expanse, a digital health strategy is required to inform where future investments should be made and to ensure the readiness and alignment with Health and Wellness Yukon and to set a path for digital transformation in the Yukon. We have been somewhat slow in some areas to take this on directly. The digital health strategy can help with current strains and pressures that the health care system may be facing. In February and March 2023, we engaged with physicians, nurses, Health and Social Services staff, and people with lived experience on a digital health strategy for the Yukon. Key themes from engagement included: building blocks for digital health care transformation; existing systems and structures challenging

digital health transformation in the Yukon; and critical voices that we need to involve next. A digital health strategy steering committee has been established and a committee is working toward the creation of Yukon's first digital health strategy.

Lastly, what I will say about this question is that Yukon pediatricians provide a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to child health and address social determinants and child equity. This approach has resulted in parents reporting that they are able to build more trusting relationships with pediatricians and receive care that is more consistent.

This approach has also helped to reduce the number of children who need to travel for pediatric services by 93 percent since the implementation in 2017. The pediatric group provides 365 days of on-call coverage to Whitehorse General Hospital and availability Monday to Friday at a pediatric office for consults and follow-up. They provide community outreach to rural communities. Residents of Beaver Creek and Burwash Landing attend Haines Junction. They provide support for neonatal and pediatric medevacs, of which we have a specialty service with EMS. They provide school-based clinics, including the Independent Learning Centre and clinics at Kwanlin Dün Cultural Centre, and those are with the Council of Yukon First Nations.

Thank you for that opportunity to just address those few things in that question.

Ms. White: I appreciate the minister laying out how great pediatrician services are in the territory, but if you go to your local health centre and they can't send out a fax, you can't access the pediatrician, so it's kind of a moot point. I hope that there are audits done to rural health care centres to make sure that their equipment is up to date. Again, just along with that is that a digital strategy is great when we have access to reliable Internet, but having tried to do a Zoom call from Old Crow previously — or others — that makes it challenging. So, just a cautionary tale that not every community will necessarily be best equipped for digital communications. It is so important to be able to refer out in other ways.

There is a real struggle for folks who are wanting to access substance use treatment. There are two major problems, as I can relay them. The first is that people have been wait-listed, so they are unable to access it when they're ready. In some cases, they are wait-listed for months at a time, even when they're ready to go to treatment. We all know that treatment may not be a one-time deal. We all know that, when someone is ready, they are ready, and it's best to respond to that.

In some cases, trying to access beds at detox, you can call every day. There is an entire system, and I'm not sure how familiar people are with it, but you call to see if there's a bed available. If there is a bed available, you try to get the person to detox right away. If there is not a bed available, you try again the next day. In some cases, people are desperately trying to hold on until they get that access and support, which is challenging.

Then there is the challenge of — there are fantastic programs through Sarah Steele, through Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. There are great programs, but there is also not always space in those programs, and so then it leads to

another problem, which is, when Yukon government services are at capacity, people are not able to access funding to get out-of-territory services. I say this right now in terms of having tried to support people. I follow all the steps that I am told. I get referrals from doctors, family doctors, and psychiatrists. I get referrals from the people saying that they have done every program in the territory and they need to go out. The challenge becomes that you can do all the support work, but there is no clear line of where all this information is supposed to go. I don't think it is the most effective if I have to write — for example, I have to write the minister a letter with all this information attached, trying to get someone the access to that service, because, of course, we all know that there is a very time-sensitive issue with it. It is not a matter of weeks; sometimes, it is very short.

There was part of the CASA that said that funding would be made available to Yukoners to seek out-of-territory treatment services when government services are full. I will also add to that to say that, at times, the programs that we have here are very good, but they don't do complex — it is not for complex — for example, complex cases — if we are adding, for example, post-traumatic stress in there or we are dealing with trauma. There is a whole bunch of things that our programs don't necessarily address.

Lastly, also with the confidence and supply agreement, there was a commitment to increase more bed nights to be available at detox by hiring licensed practical nurses. There is a series of things here, but when we talk about support for folks when they are ready to access treatment — how many positions have been filled for the licensed practical nurses in order to expand services at detox? How many of those positions remain vacant?

I will leave it there, and then the minister can let me know if it is better to stack multiple questions or go one at a time, but I have an interest in trying to get through the questions. Whatever works best, the minister can let me know, and I will proceed accordingly.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly don't agree with much of what the Leader of the Third Party has said regarding the time sensitivity of a process for an individual who might want to attend treatment and how fleeting that can sometimes be. An individual might be ready and then not ready, which is only to say that we must get better at making sure that we can respond to their needs, as required.

The Insured Health Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services continue to work with Yukoners to ensure that they receive the medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care that they need, including if that care is out of this territory.

In February 2022, Insured Health Services implemented a directive that expanded coverage for out-of-territory residential treatment centres to support Yukoners to access more pre-approved out-of-territory medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care at approved facilities. The list was more restricted and now has been expanded since February 2022.

Yukoners who wish to seek treatment out of territory should initially, of course, work with their primary care provider, who will submit an application to Insured Health Services, which is as noted by the member opposite. I note that our team is continuing to seek ways in which to reduce the barriers that exist for that process. Treatment is being supported now in British Columbia and Alberta through Homewood Ravensview, Edgewood Treatment Centre, Last Door recovery centre, and Last Door addiction recovery services.

In order to ensure the privacy of individuals who need to travel out of territory for medical treatment, I can't, of course, provide specific numbers of clients, although I am asking for very high-level numbers from the department. It is a question I have asked recently to determine how many individuals we have provided out-of-territory treatment for. Depending on the number of individuals, we may be able to release that, if it can't identify anyone in any way. That information will come through the medical travel program for residential treatment.

The Council of Yukon First Nations, with temporary funding from the federal government, does provide support to send individuals out of the territory to access residential treatment. While I stand corrected, I think that number was recently conveyed to us to be about 300 individuals over the last number of years. Detox and sobering services are not insured health services and are not covered through Insured Health Services for out-of-territory medical travel, although again, this may be a barrier that we need to resolve.

I note that, with respect to the withdrawal management services here in Whitehorse, it's a 24/7 medically supported program that provides a safe place for people in withdrawal from substance use. Services include medical assistance for withdrawal from substances, psychoeducational programming, and referral to ongoing treatment counselling and social work supports, therapeutic groups, and other support services.

There are 14 beds available for adults and four beds available for youth. Our government has increased funding for withdrawal management to hire additional licensed practical nurses, as noted in the question. With these additional providers, the program will be able to offer increased detox-bed nights. One additional licensed practical nurse has been hired, and recruitment is underway for three additional positions, so four in total, to expand the nights available. Bed availability is variable, as they're offered on a first-come, first-served basis. I appreciate that this is somewhat frustrating for individuals who want to come, if there is no space, but it is the most effective way to continuously provide access to this kind of service for individuals to come on a "first come, first served" basis and to enter the program — and stay, we hope, as long as necessary to support their withdrawal.

During the 2022 calendar year, withdrawal management supported 953 bed requests, and there was a total of 947 bed requests for adults and six requests for youth. In 2022, a total of 1,650 bed requests were delayed admissions, and the number of bed requests does not necessarily represent unique individuals. Clients who were delayed were typically provided a bed within 72 hours if they continued to want the services, but as noted, sometimes that is too long. Youth bed requests were

never delayed. Access to those beds is, for the most part, always available.

As of November 2023, there have been 864 bed request admissions at the withdrawal management centre. In 2023, we are averaging 91 admissions per month.

When a request is delayed, staff work diligently with the individual to build a safety plan and to connect them with other supports and resources — such as the emergency shelter or the Whitehorse General Hospital or other support services in the community or otherwise — to support them through what might be a very long delay for them, even in the number of hours.

Withdrawal management staff can also refer individuals to the Referred Care Clinic and opioid treatment services. This is done to support them prior to being able to enter the detox withdrawal management services.

Ms. White: Again, I don't think that a person who is looking for treatment-like options should have to come to a politician. It is weird that I have now done this more than one time. I think that is part of the problem. Just going on and Googling "Yukon Insured Health Services", going to the website, tapping "out-of-territory treatment" — there is not a clear path. If there was an individual identified or a person or a small group of people — I don't think it should be on one person's shoulders. Again, I think vicarious trauma would probably be something you would get from that job, because you would be dealing with people in really hard states. But if there was a clear path — a clear way to find that person — I think it would be very helpful.

Again, I have gone through the process numerous times and it has never been a direct route, and I think that is a challenge. I would prefer if people didn't have to come to a politician and I could say that this is the person, the group, or the office that you want to contact — because I think that would make more sense. I hope that is something we can maybe see in the future.

There is a lot more to go on here, but I am concerned that we are just going to talk in circles, so maybe I will just try to add one more question to that: Does the department collect numbers or track trends, for example, of the number of people who are coming to try to access, for example, detox or the treatment programs and for whom, at the time, there was not the ability to enter — they have been turned away — is that information being tracked, and does it show trends? Are we collecting that kind of information?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Deputy Chair, I am certainly not trying to go in circles. I think that the member opposite has raised a number of very important points. I have committed to us reviewing ways in which we can reduce and remove barriers — of course, also remembering that we are responsible for taxpayers' dollars. That, of course, is no reason to not support someone who is in crisis, but these treatment programs outside of the territory are expensive and must be accounted for.

I completely agree that a more knowable route would be useful for individuals. We often have individuals go to the Referred Care Clinic and have their medical assessment done there with respect to what sorts of treatment and in what stage

the individual is for accepting treatment and those kinds of assistance there. Certainly, that work is ongoing.

We do collect the information regarding individuals who come through the process. I will check to see if we keep statistics with respect to how many people might apply for an out-of-territory care treatment plan and are denied — I think that is what the question was. I think that those are also important things for us to know about as we try to expand and appropriately align the care that individuals need to support their recovery in the territory or Outside.

Ms. White: Seeing that we are so close to the end of time, I asked a question today in Question Period about the software system that the Yukon government started using in December of last year. We have concerns about the ability of the software to deal with medical emergencies in rural communities at rural health centres. The software asks two questions; it asks about medication and it asks about equipment when it assigns a priority number. My understanding is that, in the territory, we go through 1 through 5 — and I am going to get it wrong right now as to which is the highest priority.

But what happened before when a nurse in a rural community would call for a medevac is that they would be dealing with EMS. They would be dealing with an emergency medical person — a human — who could ask a series of questions. Then that professional would make the decision about who would be dispatched, how they would be dispatched, and what equipment and what medication they would need to take. My understanding is that with the computer program, because it asks specifically what medications and what equipment is being used, it doesn't take into account that, in a rural setting, the nurse may not have the equipment or the medication that the patient may need.

We could talk, for example, in the instance of a heart attack. Maybe it says that you have given them aspirin and that they're using oxygen. Then the computer program doesn't take into account that all these other things are happening, so then it has a low-priority dispatch. I am hoping that, since the question was asked earlier, the minister has more answers. I would like it if the minister could tell us exactly what this system is being used for and how it's being integrated into emergency medical services in the Yukon.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think what is being referred to — please note that, of course, I asked our officials about the question earlier. I think what we think is being asked about is a medical transfer protocol suite, also known as MTPS. Prior to the MTPS system, decisions were made based on the national Canadian Triage and Acuity Scale system, which is used across the country to triage emergency clients in hospital or acute settings.

Through the use of the MTPS system, dispatchers manage all flight plans, logistics, and communication with the determined destination for arrival. So, humans work along with this system. Again, I'm not 100-percent clear that this is the answer to the questions being asked, but this is the information that I have at this time about the computer program that is being used to assist with medevacs in collaboration with dispatchers

— human people who manage all of the flight plans, logistics, and communication with the determined destination for arrival.

The new approach enables emergency responders to focus on care preparation and planning, with support from dispatchers. Many medevac services in Canada operate using a centralized, coordinated dispatch system of this nature. Paramedics and nurses still have the capacity to speak to a sending nurse or physician to discuss the client and the transport needs — and presumably the receiving physician or nurse who is receiving the client.

I certainly don't disagree that humans — emergency medical services, nurses, physicians, and others involved — in a stressful situation of an individual needing to move locations in order to have medical care and the proper medical care from a rural setting or into Whitehorse or from Whitehorse to another setting — I had the unfortunate experience of being involved with a number of medevacs here in the territory and, as a result, certainly know the stress that is being pointed out in this question. I am happy to get additional information, if not? a more detailed assessment, and our inquiries can continue. We have certainly not had time to determine that today, but the information that I have has been provided.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: 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

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, 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 5:29 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled November 16, 2023:

35-1-130

Yukon Liquor Corporation Annual report April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 (Silver)

35-1-131

Cannabis Yukon Annual report April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 (Silver)

35-1-132

Yukon University 2022-23 Year-in-Review and Yukon University Consolidated Financial Statements Year Ended March 31, 2023 (McLean)

The following legislative return was tabled November 16, 2023:

35-1-110

Response to matter outstanding from discussion related to the appearance of witnesses from the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board before Committee of the Whole on October 26, 2023 (Mostyn)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 160

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Monday, November 20, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms	Joseph Mewett
Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, November 20, 2023 — 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 National Child Day

Speaker: Today, we are here celebrating National Child Day. On November 20, 1989, 34 years ago, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNCRC, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Canada ratified the UNCRC two years later in December 1991. National Child Day recognizes a historic commitment to the world's children. All governments carry the responsibility and are obligated to uphold children's rights.

This day provides an opportunity to celebrate the powers of the youth voice and the actions of those who work to promote the realization of children's rights.

Our Legislative Assembly has had a Child and Youth Advocate Office for the past 13 years promoting the voices and rights of the young people across our territory and reminding us legislators how important it is to listen to young people.

Youth are raising their voices on the issues that matter to their generation and are calling for adults to create a better future. One way in which the Yukon youth are doing this is through the territorial youth strategy. The Child and Youth Advocate Office is supporting the youth leading the strategy and is monitoring progress through an accountability forum held during the Yukon Youth Summit each spring to assess the progress and celebrate the successes from the strategy.

Children's rights are everyone's responsibility. I urge you to take the opportunity to ask a young person what they think.

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has been removed from the Order Paper as it is outdated: Motion No. 817, standing in the name of the Member for Whitehorse West.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair is pleased to introduce: Annette King, the Child and Youth Advocate; Julia Milnes, deputy advocate; Rachel Veinott-McKeough, policy and systems analyst; McKenzie Amundson, client and service administrator; and Anya Braeuner, advocacy caseworker.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to help me welcome a few guests we have here today.

We have Ash Kayseas with the Public Service Commission, and we four guests from Queer Yukon here for today's tribute as well: Emily Brooks, Sadie Segriff, Asha Bittenbender, and Finley Parkes.

Thank you for being here.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleagues to join me in welcoming some special guests who are here with us today. These folks are here to witness the tabling of the Yukon Child Care Board annual report and to also hear a ministerial statement. I will also be delivering a tribute on National Child Day.

From the Yukon Child Care Board, we have Chair Laurie Parker, board members Kristy Kennedy and Ashley Griffis, and the board's administrative support, Sophie Partridge. From the Department of Education Early Learning and Child Care branch, we have Clara Northcott, director of Early Learning and Child Care, and finally, from the Cabinet Office, we have Paolo Gallina, who is my ministerial adviser and a former MLA to this House.

Thank you so much.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, last week, I asked my colleagues to say thank you to our outgoing chief of staff, and today, I ask you to join me in saying welcome to my new chief of staff. Bronte Renwick-Shields joins the team today and we are delighted to have her.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Transgender Day of Remembrance

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, every year on November 20, we observe the Transgender Day of Remembrance. In November 1998, a transgender woman named Rita Hester was stabbed to death in her apartment in Boston. Unfortunately, Rita's story is not unique. Her tragic death was a catalyst to establishing this day — a day where we can remember transgender people whose lives were lost to violence. It is crucial that we honour their stories and continue to tell them. We know that transgender, two-spirit and gender-nonconforming people still face a significantly higher risk of violence and abuse. Worldwide, 327 transgender and gender-diverse people were reported murdered in 2002. Transgender women of colour experience the highest rates of gender-based violence compared to any other group in our society. These numbers are showing that deadly violence against trans and gender-nonconforming people remains alarmingly high.

Everyone deserves to live a life free of violence and fear. We are working hard to ensure that the Yukon is a place where everyone should feel safe, supported, and welcomed. One of the ways to support transgender youth and the 2SLGBTQIA+

community is by including sexual orientation and gender identity — also known as SOGI — resources in Yukon schools.

SOGI resources play an important role in preventing self-harm and suicidal thoughts. Through education, we can help reduce stigma and discrimination. When all students have a better understanding of what it means to be 2SLGBTQIA+, we can reduce bullying and foster positive environments. Together, through education and collaboration, we can work toward a more equitable and inclusive society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect and where we celebrate transgender people for their achievements and contributions rather than mourning their deaths.

While we have much to celebrate here in the Yukon when it comes to inclusion and diversity, Transgender Day of Remembrance remains a solemn day and an occasion to reflect on the lives unnecessarily cut short due to hate.

I know this is a challenging day for many. Please know that you can reach out for help if you need support. The Canadian Mental Health Association Yukon division has a reach-out support line that operates daily. The Kids Help Phone has resources for youth and young adults at kidshelphone.ca. All of the contact information for support lines and other supports can be found on the Queer Yukon website.

Tonight at 5:00 p.m., Queer Yukon will be hosting a vigil at their headquarters for those seeking to gather and show their support. Thank you to the organizers for your support and heart-centred work. Our collective strength lies in embracing the values of inclusion and acceptance.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize Transgender Awareness Week as well as Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Transgender Awareness Week takes place this year from November 13 to 17. It is observed as an opportunity to celebrate the lives and contributions of two-spirited, trans, and non-binary people in our communities. Today marks Transgender Day of Remembrance in memory and in honour of those who have lost their lives to transphobic violence.

Violence against two-spirited, transgender, and non-binary individuals continues. They experience higher rates of discrimination, stigma, and violence, as well as mental health issues and other complex challenges.

Many feel vulnerable, alone, and isolated. We can change the trajectory of someone's life by simply talking with them, listening, and letting them know that they have someone standing by them willing to help and support them on their journey.

I wish for an inclusive and diverse world for our children to grow up in and feel free from discrimination, where all people can know that they are valued and feel safe to be themselves.

As the minister said earlier, there will be a candlelight vigil held tonight, hosted by Queer Yukon, and similar vigils will be taking place across Canada and around the world.

Applause

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for their words. It's a heavy and hard day, and I want to add my voice on behalf of the Yukon NDP to honour and mourn all of the trans lives that we have lost — lives lost to indifference, to ignorance, to fear, to cruelty, and to hate. I also want to keep in mind a quote from Kai Cheng Thom, a Canadian writer; she wrote — and I quote: "We need people to stop talking about how trans women get killed all the time. We need people to start telling us that they won't let us die."

So, today, that's what I want to say to the trans community: We will fight to keep you safe. We will put ourselves between you and danger, and when we make mistakes, we will make amends and do better going forward. We will listen and we will celebrate your voices. We will fight to make a world that is full of trans joy and possibility. You are wanted; you are needed; you are loved.

Applause

In recognition of National Child Day

Hon. Ms. McLean: On behalf of this Liberal government, I rise today to pay tribute to the 30th anniversary of National Child Day. This year's theme is "Every Child Every Right" and celebrates the rights of eight million children in Canada.

National Child Day was proclaimed by the Government of Canada on March 19, 1993 to acknowledge our country's commitment to uphold the rights of children. There were two historic events: the 1959 signing of the UN *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* and the adoption of the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1989.

Today, we are reminded that the growth and future of our children hinges on providing the nurturing, love, and respect that they deserve. It is an opportunity to celebrate the individuality and potential that they bring to society. On this day, we honour the importance of family and consider the profound impact that adults have on the development of the children in their care.

In the Yukon, we are fortunate to have organizations that champion the rights of children and youth. They work tirelessly and passionately to improve the lives of those they advocate for. The Yukon Child and Youth Advocate Office is committed to promoting and supporting meaningful and effective advocacy on behalf of Yukon children and youth. Their advocacy ensures that the rights, interests, voice, and well-being of children and youth are heard and respected. They value the input of children and youth and work to elevate their voices so that they are fully heard. Hearing a child or youth's voice and respectfully considering their views are important when decisions are being made to determine what is in the child or youth's best interest. Children have the right to form their own views and opinions and have the right to have those opinions heard and respected.

On this day of celebration, I would also like to acknowledge the work of Yukon First Nation governments and organizations along with many other Yukon organizations that

support children and families to achieve their hopes and dreams.

Thank you to all Yukoners who advocate for and protect the rights of children and youth. I encourage all Yukoners to take an opportunity today to learn more about children's rights by visiting National Child Day on canada.ca.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 20 as National Child Day in Canada, which celebrates the rights of children. By acknowledging the importance of children's rights and making the commitment to uphold them, we also acknowledge that children are our future and have a place in the decisions that are made that will affect their lives when they become adults.

I would like to recognize the important work of the Child and Youth Advocate Office for the work that they do and to all those individuals and organizations that help to be a voice and advocate for our young Yukoners. The Yukon Child and Youth Advocate's 2022-23 annual report shares a clear and concise message around this topic. If we are serious as a territory about building up our young people, then it starts with a fundamental commitment to their rights. Consider it the first brick.

Thank you to all those who work with and on behalf of children and young adults throughout the territory.

Salamat.

Applause

Ms. Blake: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to National Child Day. This year marks the 30th anniversary of National Child Day in Canada. The Government of Canada declared November 20 as National Child Day, coinciding with the anniversary of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

This day reminds us as adults and leaders of our obligation to uphold the 54 articles that are laid out in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* while also promoting opportunities where all children and youth can be engaged and their rights protected. This day also celebrates children and youth as active participants in their own lives, in their families, and in their communities. National Child Day reminds us that young people do have a voice and that they do have something to say, so let's listen.

Children and youth have a right to have their views and voices included and meaningfully engaged at all tables where issues are talked about and where decisions are being made, at all times. As we recognize and celebrate National Child Day, we want all children and youth to know that they are important, that their voices do matter, and that we are here to listen and learn from them.

We extend our gratitude to all youth-serving organizations across the Yukon that do the hard work of supporting Yukon's children and youth and upholding their rights and voices.

Mahsi'.

Applause

In recognition of Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government as well as the Third Party to pay tribute to Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week.

This week is a time for reflection and for action. Bullying, a hurtful and harmful behaviour, targets people's vulnerabilities and often exploits differences in race, gender, and abilities. Bullying takes place in schools and other social settings, but it also takes place beyond physical settings. Cyber bullying is also a serious problem that affects young people every day. Cyber bullying is the use of computers, smartphones, or other connected devices to embarrass, hurt, mock, threaten, or be mean to someone online. Three out of 10 Canadian youth say that they have been cyber bullied at some point in their lives.

The impact of bullying is profound. It can lead to lasting psychological effects such as anxiety, depression, and also a decline in self-esteem. Tragically, in extreme cases, it pushes young people to desperate measures. We recognize the gravity of the issue and its ripple effect on learning, on safety, and on mental wellness as well. In our commitment to promote safe schools and nurturing learning environments, we understand the urgency of addressing and preventing bullying. The safer schools action plan and continued efforts toward inclusive education are testaments to this commitment.

The harm caused by bullying demands our serious attention. We are dedicated to exploring policies to address peer-to-peer harm and ensure prompt, effective responses to any serious incidents in our schools. The Department of Education and Victim Services have produced robust guidelines to support victims, reaffirming our commitment to safe educational spaces.

To further support our youth, we advocate using resources such as the Kids Help Phone, which is a free 24/7 service that is provided to our young people.

One thing that parents and families can do is to know the warning signs. Youth who are affected by bullying all cope differently, but there are some warning signs. They may be things like being afraid to go to school or avoiding school or complaining that they feel sick; their performance might suddenly decrease; they may lose personal belongings or come home with damaged items; and, in extreme cases, they may engage in self-harm or attempt or talk about suicide.

But I remind everyone that bullying is preventable. Everyone must do their part to create schools that are safe spaces for everyone. Every student, teacher, and school staff member deserves to feel safe and valued in their school community. Together, we can make a difference and create a culture of respect and kindness.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week from November 20 to 24.

What is bullying? It is something that has been around forever, but that doesn't make it right. It is definitely a power imbalance when abuse, meanness, or harassment is shown to

someone on purpose and usually repeated. The act of being a bully is meant to hurt, frighten, exclude, or insult, and it causes pain and emotional angst leading to all sorts of problems — trouble learning at school, difficulty facing your day, and so on — and the new modern wrinkle of cyber bullying. Social media posts, texts, e-mails, and all digital means offer another platform to attack others.

We encourage you to learn about bullying and ensure that children and adults alike are aware of the implications of being a bully, that some action that one does can have detrimental effects on another person's life for a very long time.

I'm sure all of us have had an experience to share. We do know enough about this character flaw that we should be able to nip it in the bud.

It is important to be an individual. Stay the course.

If you are being bullied, remember: It's not your fault, as no one deserves to be bullied — ever. So, reach out, speak about it, report it, get support, and, most of all, don't tolerate it in your group or space. Be the strength. Be kind.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Pursuant to section 4(11) of the Yukon *Child Care Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Child Care Board 2022-23 annual report.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates Phyllis Villaver on the opening of her new restaurant in Faro.

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

THAT this House urges the Premier to make public the full report done by Ernst & Young Orenda Corporate Finance regarding the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, including any and all analyses and opinions they provided to government, by 5:00 p.m. November 20, 2023 in order to provide MLAs time to review this report and ask witnesses from Yukon Hospital Corporation questions about it.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce a payroll tax for workers who earn income from work in the Yukon but file their taxes in another jurisdiction.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to keep the solid-waste transfer stations open at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn until solutions that meet the solid-waste disposal needs of each community are found.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Child Care Act review

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, today, National Child Day, I am happy to share that our government is launching a review of the *Child Care Act*. This work begins with a public engagement process set to begin next week. The theme of this year's National Child Day is "Every Child Every Right". As we advance this work, we will keep the best interests of children at the heart of what we do.

In 2021, I committed to modernizing the act in collaboration with First Nation governments, the Child Care Board, stakeholders, and interested Yukoners in a meaningful way where all views would be considered. Today, we are delivering on that commitment. We want to hear from Yukoners about what is important to them when it comes to licensed early learning and childcare programs. An updated *Child Care Act* will reflect what's important in an early learning and childcare environment — high-quality, varied, and nurturing learning experiences that help children develop and grow.

Updating the *Child Care Act* will also help support our commitments to the truth and reconciliation calls to action and the LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan, the *Putting People First* report, and the objectives in the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and the two-spirit+ strategy and implementation plan.

The principles of quality, affordability, accessibility, and inclusivity will guide the public engagement and the review of this essential legislation. These pillars are important guideposts as we continue to expand early learning and childcare across the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to moving things forward. I encourage all Yukoners to take the opportunity to provide feedback about what's important to them when it comes to early learning and childcare. The engagement is scheduled to collect feedback from Monday, November 27, 2023 until Tuesday, January 30, 2024. Building a resilient childcare system is central to supporting strong, healthy, and vibrant Yukon communities.

I encourage everyone to consider adding their voice to this important subject. Our government relies on feedback from Yukoners to strengthen our shared future together.

Shāw nīthān. Thank you.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for this statement and the opportunity to respond. I should begin by stating that I absolutely agree that the *Child Care Act* needs to be reviewed. This has been a formal

recommendation of the Child Care Board for many years now and something that successive boards, regardless of their membership, have been pushing for.

One of the motions — if not the first motion — that I brought forward in the 35th Legislative Assembly was to review this act. At that time, there was disagreement about how and when that should happen, but my takeaway at the time during the debate in April 2021 was that all parties agreed with reviewing the act. What I did caution at the time was that I was worried that if the review of the act didn't start soon, it would drag out. Sure enough, here we are, a few weeks away from 2024, and the government is only formally announcing that they will review the act now.

I appreciate that the minister has outlined the timing of the next steps for the review — the public engagement that will run until the end of January 2024. What the minister did not indicate was what the timeline was for the development, drafting, and tabling of the act. Perhaps the minister could use her response to be clear about when we can expect to see this revised act come forward. Can she provide a commitment to a date by which the reviewed act will be tabled?

The problems and gaps with the current act are well known and well-documented. The government has already conducted a two-year review of this act and the “what we heard” document from that engagement was released in March of this year. Each and every Child Care Board report for the last number of years has included a list of issues with the act as well. I won't go into the details today about those issues, but I will simply note that I look forward to this work being completed and I hope that it advances as soon as possible, because it is long overdue.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, the *Child Care Act* came into force in 1990, which is 33 years ago. In March of this year, this government released the *Work to review the Child Care Act: what we heard* document from public consultation with partners. We would have assumed that parents and caregivers of children would have been included as partners.

The report included a summary of possible amendments. A few of these included are: simplify the childcare subsidy; establishes maximum fees; approval of an early learning framework for operators; establish a wage scale determined by the director; and establish standards for operators. There were several other possible amendments in the “what we heard” document, but what we haven't heard is what will be kept. What new questions need answering that weren't asked in the first round? What else is being considered and what will the delay be with this new consultation? When will the work on the new amendments be completed and when will the bill be tabled in the House?

There are so many issues that we still hear from Yukoners that have not been addressed. They include: more access to or more available childcare spaces; consideration of part-time spaces, after-school spaces, and summertime programs for school-age children; and consideration of evening-, overnight-, and weekend-accessible daycare. Many parents do not work a Monday-to-Friday job and struggle to find coverage when they are engaged in shift work. In communities, the struggle is real

to keep daycares open and staffed. Without daycare programs in some communities, parents find it nearly impossible to work.

We are happy with the federal funding and Yukon agreement that provides universal, affordable daycare, but we are concerned that this just delays important changes that will protect children and provide them with the best early learning and childcare experience.

Mahsi'.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the members opposite for their remarks today. I will work to bring some of those answers to some of the questions that have been posed today.

Accessible and quality childcare is essential to the well-being of Yukon families. Since implementation of universal childcare in 2021, we have an increase of over 350 early learning and childcare spaces in the territory. We are now paying one of the highest wages in the country for early learning educators. As a result, the early learning and childcare sector saw job growth and many parents were able to re-enter the workforce. High-quality, affordable childcare not only benefits children and families; it benefits the economy. We know how important affordability is to Yukon families.

Starting in 2021, parent fees for childcare services were reduced to less than \$10 per day on average. Families are saving up to \$8,400 a year for children in full-time early learning and childcare programs. In addition, licensed centres and programs received more funding to enhance their programming. Our government understands that the needs and expectations of Yukoners regarding childcare are diverse and dynamic.

That is why we are reviewing the *Child Care Act* and why we are doing so with feedback from Yukoners. This began with a review of the early feedback gathered from conversations happening since 2021 with First Nation governments, the Child Care Board, and other stakeholders. Then, on March 27, 2023, we released the report based on the feedback that outlines themes that can shape the review of the *Child Care Act* and a summary of possible amendments.

Many of the conversations that we had were really in consultation around universal childcare at that time. The report included potential amendments that could improve inclusive supports, simplify subsidy processes for families and operators, and modernize credentials and licensing required for educators.

Mr. Speaker, we work through a process called the “Cabinet Committee on Legislation”, and all of the work that we will do on this review will come back to that Cabinet committee and we will be working toward amending or re-writing this act and will work within that committee. We will be bringing that information back to Yukoners when we are able to.

I think that what we are hearing today is a commitment to do the review and make the changes that are necessary to this important piece of legislation. We hope to collect as many voices as possible to contribute to the future of childcare in the territory, including speaking with families and ensuring that their voices are absolutely heard.

You will be hearing a lot more about this next week. I really encourage Yukoners to get engaged through yukon.ca. That is an important platform and we will be releasing a news release later today. Thank you so much for allowing me this opportunity to update Yukoners on such important legislation.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Mammography services

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, last week, my colleague asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about the reduction in mammography services at the hospital due to budget constraints. In response, the minister said — quote: “It has been presented as a possible option for some reduction and to align with what is a usual reduction in services ... That determination is being explored and there has not yet been a final determination.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, we have received internal documents from the Yukon Hospital Corporation that show that this isn't just being explored; there is a reduction in medical imaging services being implemented already. The reason for these reductions is cost containment due to budget constraints.

Can the minister tell us how many fewer mammograms will be conducted due to the lack of sufficient budget at the hospital?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, our team is actively actioning a plan that we were working on previous to last week and then ramped up when we learned that there were anticipated service reductions at the Hospital Corporation. I would be very pleased to have the document that the member opposite has. The document that I have and was provided with for the purposes of a meeting last week is still marked “draft”. As a result, we are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to hopefully mitigate any of the slowdowns that are anticipated to meet the budget issues that they have.

With respect to cost-cutting measures, certainly the Yukon Hospital Corporation takes seriously their obligation to abide by a budget. But as you can see and as anyone can see, we have brought a supplementary budget, as is often the case, with respect to the Yukon Hospital Corporation because determining their budget at the beginning of the year is an exercise — an important one — to determine core funding for the transfer payment agreement. We have managed in the past number of years — and we'll continue to manage — the location of the Yukon Hospital Corporation by way of bringing additional applications through supplementary budgets — \$17.1 million this year. I hope they vote for it.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, what's clear about the budget and the supplementary budget is that they are insufficient to keep services from being cut at the hospital.

The wait-list for a mammography exam has been over a year, which means that Yukon women requiring this potentially life-saving exam have had to wait. Earlier this year, a second technologist was hired to help address the growing backlog and attempt to bring the wait-list down. Since the early fall, the hospital has been conducting up to 120 mammograms per

week, but due to these recent cost-containment measures, that number will be reduced to 75 per week in November and even lower in December. This is all because the hospital is struggling with their limited budget from the Liberal government.

My question is simple: Will the minister agree to provide additional funding to the hospital to restore full mammography services and let the hospital work to reduce the growing wait-list for this important service?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I always strive to make sure that Yukoners have accurate information with respect to the answers that they are given here in the Legislative Assembly. I can't control the information that they get in the questions.

The Government of Yukon continues to fully meet the funding needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Year over year, we have provided funding through core and additional transfer payment agreements commensurate with the total identified needs of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Through the 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24 fiscal years, we have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to respond to funding requests identified during the main and supplementary budget exercises. We recognize that we are in unprecedented times — although some don't — as we emerge from the acute stage of COVID-19, the inflationary pressures, the worldwide health human resources crisis, and the aging and increasing population — all that needs to be responded to by the Yukon Hospital Corporation. They are doing a job that is unprecedented in order to do so. We have asked for \$17.1 million in this supplementary budget to assist them.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, as I said before, it's clear that the amount provided is insufficient. According to an internal e-mail at Whitehorse General Hospital, the cost-containment measures started in November, but — quote: “... additional measures will be taken in some areas starting in December to get us to our final goal of offering services within our current budget.” The e-mail goes on to say that corporate communications and social media posts are being prepared to — quote: “... remind patients that hospital services will now experience longer wait times...”

Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely clear that these cost containment measures are only needed because of Yukon Hospital Corporation's insufficient budget. In the case of mammography, they have the equipment and they have the staff; they just don't have the financial resources. Will the minister agree to provide the resources necessary to stop this reduction in services at Whitehorse General Hospital?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I know that Yukoners are listening to the answer, although my friend across the way is not. We have worked year over year with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to provide the necessary funding — core and additional transfer payment agreements — commensurate with the total identified needs of Yukon hospitals. With respect to the current slowdown — as I have noted, that I have in draft and presumably the member opposite has something different than what I have — there are concerns — absolutely. Are we interested in a slowdown that results in care — or longer wait times — for Yukoners being delayed? Absolutely not. We hope

to fully mitigate any of the slowdowns that are considered with respect to our ongoing work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The relationship that we have built with the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the Department of Health and Social Services will allow us to all work together to support Yukoners.

Question re: Health care specialist wait times

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the cost-containment measures due to the limited budget at Yukon hospitals are preventing women from getting mammography exams that they need and are also impacting multiple medical imaging services at Whitehorse General Hospital. The cost constraints that have been imposed cap the number of X-rays that can be done per day at 35. As stated in an internal e-mail: “It is important to note that these are ‘exams’ per day and not ‘patients’ per day. If a patient has two exams required this will utilize 2 of the total appointment spots available in that day.” We have also heard from Yukoners who have been turned away already from X-rays because the daily cap was hit by mid-morning. When will the Minister of Health and Social Services admit that the only reason that these cost-containment measures are necessary is because her government hasn’t adequately funded our hospitals?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, during the 2022-23 fiscal year, we budgeted \$93.6 million for the Yukon hospital services O&M as well as \$12.2 million in capital expenditures for a combined total of \$105.84 million as part of the first supplementary budget for 2023-24. We have worked with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify additional funding needs. The 2023-24 supplementary budget before this Legislative Assembly now includes an increase of \$17.11 million. This increase responds to the growth in hospital and surgical services costs, higher costs associated with responding to the health human resources crisis and increased use of agency nurses as well as for all maintenance capital, which is intended to maintain facilities and replace equipment. This increase also includes funding for the Hospital Corporation employee pension program.

Between 2017-18 and this year’s main estimates, we increased the Yukon hospital budget by 32.64 percent. We work with them every day to make sure we are responding to the needs of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Let’s look at another example, Mr. Speaker: CT scans. According to the leaked e-mail from hospital staff, CT scans are capped at 15 per day. Another letter received from a whistle-blower tells of longer wait times for priority 2 and 3 patients, saying: “As a result targeted P2 wait times of 1-3 weeks are not being met: the current wait time is approximately 12 weeks.”

These cuts to health care services at our hospitals are the direct result of the Liberals’ chronic underfunding of Yukon hospitals. Last year, hospital expenses were \$2 million more than revenue. In the last few years, hospital expenses have been as much as \$4 million more than total revenue. This funding crisis is now causing a health care crisis.

Will the minister agree to amend the supplementary budget that is before this House right now to increase the funding for Yukon hospitals so that these cuts to vital health care services can be reversed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite certainly sound like they think they should support additional funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, but they just don’t, unfortunately.

We hope to fully mitigate the slowdowns that are being noted here with respect to these issues. We are not interested in having slowdowns or longer wait times for Yukoners — absolutely not.

We are working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to resolve the issues that are currently noted. I am not sure what documents the other members have, but the ones that I have indicate that we are working and taking steps immediately to draft responses and to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation in relation to information that came forward to us last week regarding potential options for reduced amounts of expenditures at the hospital. We are working with them to make sure that we can address them together and that we can anticipate that our work together will continue in a positive way. Unfortunately, the members opposite don’t seem to understand the way the budgeting happens for the Yukon Hospital Corporation, which is often if not always through supplementary budgets when other costs are identified. I hope that they will change their minds and vote for it.

Mr. Cathers: We do understand — the hospital needs more money. The information shared by courageous whistle-blowers at Yukon hospitals is clear. They are imposing cost containment measures to fit the budget that they have been given by the Liberal government. The hospital told staff that they are — quote: “... re-aligning the services we offer to meet the budget that we have been approved to operate within.”

Those cuts to medical imaging have already started and are planned to get even worse in December. They are affecting medical imaging, including CT scans, MRIs, X-rays, mammograms, and ultrasounds. These cuts to health care services and increases in wait times are the result of this Liberal government’s underfunding of our hospitals. Yukoners are paying the price for the Liberals’ neglect of our hospitals.

When will the Liberal government stop chronically underfunding Yukon hospitals and start providing them with the resources they need to reduce health care wait times and meet the needs of Yukoners?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I don’t think that it does Yukoners any service — it actually does them a disservice — when the opposition brings information that is not correct. Between the 2017-18 and 2023-24 main estimates, this Liberal government has increased the Yukon hospital services O&M funding from \$70.6 million to \$93.6 million, which is an increase of 32.64 percent. Between 2020-21 and 2022-23, we have provided a total of \$16.4 million in additional funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation in direct response to COVID-19-related pressures.

While the majority of the funding for the Yukon Hospital Corporation is provided through the Yukon government, there

is an additional amount of funding that is provided to them, often in the range of \$9 million. In the 2022-23 fiscal year, we provided a total of \$97 million to the Hospital Corporation, including O&M funding through a transfer payment agreement, but that did not include capital funding. During the 2023-24 fiscal year, we anticipate providing approximately \$115.2 million to the Hospital Corporation based on their forecasts.

Question re: Health care services in rural communities

Ms. Blake: This year, rural Yukoners have experienced repeated closures to their health centres. Between May and July, Pelly Crossing, Destruction Bay, Mayo, Teslin, Beaver Creek, and Ross River have had repeated closures or reduced services, sometimes for several weeks at a time. It is not acceptable for rural Yukoners to be left without access to health care services in their communities, especially for extended periods.

Health centres are a lifeline for people in medical distress and local services can mean the difference between life and death. What is this government doing to ensure that Yukoners living in rural communities have access to essential health care when health centres are repeatedly closed?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important topic, although again, unfortunately, the facts are not correct. We have not had health centres closed for weeks on end, and truly, for the most part, we have not had them closed at all. There are — absolutely — slowdowns. There have been slowdowns with respect to staff so that we might appreciate them, take care of them, and allow them to have important time away. There are also those same slowdowns with respect to having difficulty in having staff, but we know that, in order to fully staff health centres ready to serve Yukoners when and where they need it, we need to continue investing in our health care professionals and in those communities.

I can also indicate that, for the most part, there are emergency services — EMS services — that are brought in, in addition, if they have to support those health centres. On occasion, we have brought an extra ambulance and extra volunteers to work in a community. For the most part, those administrators of those health centres are still there in place. They can still have itinerant doctor visits; they can still have appointments if there is one nurse and not more than one. I can indicate that we are supporting each and every one of those health centres to the point where — the opposition comes with the idea that this is something that we support in some way. It is absolutely not. We —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, yearly between December and January, there is an increased demand for emergency care. This is the season when there are heightened risks for respiratory viruses like the flu, COVID, RSV, and pneumonia. Cold weather conditions worsen symptoms for people with asthma, heart disease, and arthritis, which also increases the demand for health services. The holiday season is also a challenging time for many people who struggle with grief and loss, mental health

and addiction issues, and increasing stress, anxiety, and depression. This is the season when it is critical that community health centres are operating and fully staffed.

What is this government doing to prevent rural health centre closures during the upcoming holiday season?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the information given there, we work every day to make sure that the health centres are properly staffed and open throughout the year. A particular season is important to acknowledge, but what I must note is that having fully staffed health centres is our goal every day.

Like the rest of Canada and around the world, Yukon is impacted by a health human resources shortage. To mitigate the impact on Yukoners, the Yukon government continues to work to recruit and retain health care providers. As a matter of fact, the nurses' recruitment and retention bonuses that were put in place last year by this government have had a positive impact on making sure that the number of community nursing vacancies has been reduced significantly. Community nursing is currently experiencing a vacancy rate of approximately 19 percent of primary health care nurses, which is definitely not something that we want to maintain, but it is an improvement of approximately 29 percent since the fall of 2022. The facts are that the vacancy rate has improved. There have been flexible schedules permitted in the communities. We have worked together to have a positive impact.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, in December of last year, this government announced the recruitment and retention bonus package to acquire and retain health care workers in the Yukon. In March, the government created a steering committee to provide — and I quote: "... bold and innovative solutions for immediate action, mid-term action and long-term action." However, rural health centres continue to face closures due to staffing shortages. This government has not managed to improve the functioning of rural health centres in the immediate or medium term.

Can the minister tell Yukoners what immediate actions this government is taking to address health care shortages across the Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think I have been saying the difficulties that exist and the actions that our government has taken to mitigate those.

We are working to support health care workers in our community settings. We are working to recruit health care workers so that Yukoners across the territory have access to health and social services. That is a priority for our government. We have fulfilled the first of our three-year commitment under CASA to allocate funding to the budget for recruitment and retention of new health care professionals. I know that we have reduced the vacancy rate of community nursing to approximately 19 percent. I know that we work — whenever there needs to be an opportunity for a health centre to have a reduction in care — to make sure that the additional resources are put there. We, on occasion, have to use agency nurses. We also have other nurses who come from different departments to make sure that they can support a community.

I have also noted that we have emergency medical services that do the same thing. I also noted that we have a recruitment and retention bonus for Yukon nurses that has continued to support Yukon communities.

Question re: Rural solid-waste transfer stations

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, Silver City, Braeburn, Keno, and Johnsons Crossing have been repeatedly let down by this government. Although there is a workable solution in Keno for now, there are still three community transfer stations slated for closure. First the minister refused to talk to the communities, and when the NDP made talks happen, the minister refused to listen. He ignored residents' concerns and insists on closing their transfer stations in the name of modernization. These rural communities were told to modernize by making multi-hour roundtrips to dump their garbage. Cutting essential government services to rural Yukon communities is not the future of our territory and is not the future that rural Yukoners expect from those who represent them.

When will this government reverse its decision to close these three community transfer stations?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to talk this afternoon about how this government is improving and investing in our communities across the territory to improve our landfills. From Haines Junction to Teslin, Mayo, Keno, and Watson Lake, communities need better landfills. We're producing way too much garbage as a society, and so we are investing in our landfills to make sure that they are better run and that they are more environmentally responsible.

The Yukon solid-waste management system was not sustainable under previous governments. Changes to solid-waste disposal systems in communities were instigated in response to a 2016 report by the Association of Yukon Communities. Specifically, this report highlighted the problem of peripheral dumping at Yukon government-operated transfer sites and the need to discourage peripheral dumping.

The closure of these specific sites is part of our efforts to modernize waste management across the territory and address climate change while ensuring that every Yukoner is within 50 to 60 kilometres of a managed transfer site.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to think that he knows what is good for these communities better than they do. Well, he doesn't.

The minister has said several times that he wants to — and I am quoting — save taxpayers' money and reduce emissions. Noble goals — but that is not what would be accomplished by these closures. This government will be asking these same taxpayers to drive hundreds of kilometres to dispose of their waste. Instead of one vehicle, dozens of vehicles will have to make the same trip.

Will the minister finally recognize that his plan is flawed, and will he go back to the drawing board with the communities to find solutions that work for them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, the decision to regionalize our landfills was made at the behest of the Association of Yukon Communities. They came to us and said: Listen, we have to do better.

There are a number of reasons why we have to do better. It is an enormous environmental liability for our communities. It is a place where — if our landfills are not supervised properly, if they are not gated, and if we don't have controls on those landfills — people are dumping noxious substances in those sites, out of sight of anybody, and getting away with it.

I have heard from the community of Dawson City that they had to get rid of PCBs and send them down to Swan Hills at enormous expense to the community of Dawson City. In Haines Junction, we are hearing of people dump-shopping — coming from Whitehorse and disposing of metals and other materiel from Whitehorse to Haines Junction. It is costing Haines Junction residents a lot of money. I just had a conversation with Haines Junction about this. We are looking at solutions for that community. We are hearing the same thing — just this week in Pelly Crossing, the dump was set on fire. Now we have an enormous expense up in that community as well. We have to do better, Mr. Speaker, to manage these landfills and start to control them so that our environment is better looked after and our communities are not left holding a bill that they shouldn't have to pay.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, even if the minister doesn't want to support rural Yukoners, he has a responsibility to do so. Residents have raised concerns about protecting wildlife. In rural Yukon, the progression of waste management started with people storing garbage at home, and then it was moving to open pits and then open burn pits and then burn barrels. Finally, after decades, a solution that worked for wildlife and for people and the environment was found, and that is transfer stations with electric fences, cattle guards, and metal bins. Now the minister is determined to force rural Yukoners to go backwards.

From long drives for residents to take garbage to other communities to installing or finding ways to protect wildlife from getting into their stored garbage, none of this makes sense. This government is moving backwards.

Why does the minister think that any of these options will save money, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, protect wildlife, or serve rural Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, there are plenty of people in the territory who bring their garbage to Whitehorse. As a matter of fact, I spoke to some people in Silver City who actually do just that every time. They move their garbage from Silver City to Whitehorse and deposit it at the Whitehorse dump. This is happening already. We're asking residents who have no gas or grocery facilities to actually bring their garbage to those places where they buy gas and buy groceries. These aren't extra trips — the same trip, making it more efficient.

As per our confidence and supply agreement commitment, we are consulting with communities to determine a path forward with respect to household waste-disposal options. We understand that the Leader of the NDP has been closely following the discussion around waste transfer stations. She was the only person who registered or attended a Zoom meeting with Braeburn residents about waste transfer stations. We have held 28 consultations on it since 2019. We held nine of those in 2023 alone. We are continuing to talk to residents in Silver City — on these transfer stations — to come up with options to make

this transition easier for them. We have not made a decision yet to close these transfer stations. We are working toward that with regional transfer stations in all the communities nearby these communities.

I will say that Silver City may be losing its transfer station, but there is still a workable and monitored landfill in Destruction Bay, not more than 60 kilometres from those people's homes.

Question re: Watson Lake continuing care services

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, on November 2, I asked the Minister of Health and Social Services about an announcement that she made in November 2022 to open two long-term care beds in the Watson Lake hospital. In response, she informed the Legislature that this project was no longer going forward because the minister had heard concerns from the community. Well, I can certainly attest to the concerns that were raised by the community. The fact that the government had decided not to proceed with this after making the announcement last November came as a surprise to everyone.

Can the minister tell us when the decision was made and why it took a question in Question Period for it to be announced publicly?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to have a further discussion with the member opposite if she has other information. The information that I have been given — and I don't have the details, but I am happy to get them — is that, through consultation with the community of Watson Lake, it was not the option that they wanted to pursue with respect to providing long-term care in their community. I also can note that the information I have — I will check on the date — is that there is currently nobody waiting on the wait-list for long-term care from Watson Lake, which doesn't mean that we don't have to plan. I am happy to have further conversations and discussions with the community, but nonetheless, the conversations that we have had to date were that this was not to be pursued.

We had money in the budget in addition to the announcement that was made with respect to having those long-term care beds and making those particular rooms located in the Watson Lake hospital a bit more home-like and a bit more comfortable for individuals to stay in so that they could receive those services. We also had money in the budget to pursue the caregivers there. That has been placed on hold, as I have noted.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, we understand that the government is now conducting a community needs assessment about long-term care in Watson Lake, so I would like to ask about this.

What are the terms of reference for the needs assessment? Who will be consulted with respect to this needs assessment? When will it be conducted, and why hasn't the minister announced any of this publicly?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite might recall — I'm not sure if she would be aware — that we were interested in doing a ministerial statement with respect to long-term care and that was not permitted by the members opposite.

What I can tell you and tell Yukoners is that the Government of Yukon is truly committed to ensuring that seniors and elders in Yukon receive the support that they need. We have an interest in doing that in their home communities. It is absolutely crucial that people feel, in their senior years, that they are receiving the care that they need and the opportunities to do so in their community.

We have been working with the Hospital Corporation to integrate two long-term care rooms in the Watson Lake Community Hospital, as was noted in the first question in relation to an announcement that was made, because we were continuing that work and we wanted to provide increased supports in the community. That work is continuing. Of course, we have had issues with the nursing capacity going forward, but we appreciate that the residents of Watson Lake were bringing forward feedback and concerns about the availability of continuing care. We will continue that conversation.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it makes me wonder if the minister even knows about a needs assessment that is being done.

It has been made clear in all of the public meetings and consultations that have been held so far about this issue that the community is interested in a long-term care facility in Watson Lake.

If the community needs assessment determines that this is what is needed and wanted by the community, will the minister commit to supporting the construction of such a facility in Watson Lake?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, there were unfortunately a lot of "ifs" in that question. As a result, I won't commit to building anything. What I will commit to doing is working with communities — all communities, including Watson Lake — to make sure that we are meeting the needs of long-term care for that community. It is on hold at the moment because we seek to best understand the local needs and values. The information that I have is that the long-term care option that was presented was not something supported by the community at the time. We continue to work to assess the opportunities to support Yukoners, including through the implementation of the *Aging in Place Action Plan* and *Putting People First*.

Watson Lake is a community that is supported by a permanent registered nurse providing home care, one AOC registered nurse, two AOC home support workers, and one Whitehorse-based home care occupational physical therapist who visits the community throughout the year.

As of September 2023, no one from the Watson Lake area is on an active wait-list for permanent placement in a long-term care home. We are working individually with Yukoners and Watson Lake residents to make sure that they are supported.

Speaker: The time for the 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

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

Motion re appearance of witnesses

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 14

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, Lesley Brown, President and Vice-Chancellor of Yukon University, and Christine Mahar, public member on the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operation of Yukon University.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 20, 2023, Lesley Brown, President and Vice-Chancellor of Yukon University, and Christine Mahar, public member on the Yukon University Board of Governors, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operation of Yukon University.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 14 agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Chair: At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I don't think I have much time, but it is a pleasure to be back here for debate on Highways and Public Works. To my right, I have Deputy Minister Catherine Harwood and, to her right, Assistant Deputy Minister Richard Gorczyca. I look forward to questions.

Mr. Hassard: I too would like to thank the officials for being here today as we once again work our way through some questions regarding Highways and Public Works.

I had a few questions this afternoon about the vendor performance review program. This program came into effect in October 2021 and we know that last year was what YG said would be a trial year and that it would be an open book, I guess, with industry about how it went. I believe that there was going to be some sort of review, but to the best of my knowledge, we haven't seen anything yet. I am wondering if the minister could provide us with an update on how things are going there.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The vendor performance review program is a mechanism used to recognize and encourage vendors who deliver good performance on contracts and provide a way to give feedback and incentives for those contractors who do not. The program evaluates and scores vendors on their performance throughout a government contract. The program also provides incentive to vendors for good performance. For example, vendors with higher scores could ultimately receive a competitive advantage during future tender evaluations, ultimately increasing their chances of securing future government contracts.

The program will help services to Yukoners by incentivizing the highest level of service from contractors during government contracts. As the member opposite indicated, implementation of the program is being phased in to ensure that both the Yukon government project managers and vendors have sufficient time to become familiar with the new process. The first phase was between October 21 and October 22, when scores were collected but not kept. The second phase, which started a year ago, collected scores from vendors but did not apply them to procurements. This allowed us to create an overall score per vendor. The final phase was implemented in October 2023.

The Yukon government can begin using the vendors' overall scores from the previous year and apply them during a procurement evaluation. We will be monitoring the effects of this program moving forward. We will be consulting with industry on any unanticipated effects, which could lead to further changes if necessary.

Highways and Public Works is actively engaging with industry with the Yukon Contractors Association and the

Yukon Chamber of Commerce's procurement committee to assist in vendors becoming more accustomed to the new program and to hear feedback about improvements.

Before launching the first phase of implementation, we spoke to industry at a Procurement Business Committee meeting in September 2021 and received input. The Procurement Support Centre has engaged with industry throughout the phases of implementation in order to provide training through the live sessions, as well as providing an online training course, available on [YGLearn](#) for government staff.

More recently, the Procurement Support Centre has been meeting with industry representatives — including on May 17, June 28, and November 2, 2023 — in order to get feedback on the program and to find solutions to any concerns that have been raised. The Procurement Support Centre will continue to meet with industry in order to provide updates on the feedback received and to discuss potential adjustments to the program. Highways and Public Works is committed to listening to industry's feedback and considering adjustments to the program that advance shared interests.

The Procurement Support Centre met with our First Nation partners on July 19 in order to provide an update on the program's progress and we will continue to meet with them as needed.

Specifically with respect to scoring, when a vendor receives their score, they can either accept, contest, or not respond. When a vendor contests their score, it will initiate the contestation process. The first step will be that the project manager and the vendor, working together, will communicate with each other to come to an agreement. If no agreement is reached, the Procurement Support Centre will review and submit a recommendation to the Deputy Minister of Highways and Public Works for a final decision.

One of the criteria that a vendor can be scored on is the fulfillment of their tendering commitments to Yukon First Nation participation.

Based on the tender type, there are up to seven key performance indicators that are assessed for each contract, which creates an overall performance score. The key performance indicators are: cost control; health and safety; quality assurance; schedule and timetable; staff and administration; Yukon First Nation participation, if that is applicable; functionality; and training for goods contracts.

That's where we are at. I have certainly been monitoring this from time to time. I am just waiting to see if there are any other updates. Just by way of an update to the general public, on November 29, 2023 of this year, at the Reverse Trade Show, between 1:00 and 1:30, there will be a session entitled "Vendor Performance Review Program", which is being presented by the Procurement Support Centre. It is certainly a work in progress, but it does appear, in my view, that progress is being made.

Just to finish my comments, the design of the vendor performance review program is based on other jurisdictions that have had similar successful initiatives, such as that from the federal government and Alberta.

Mr. Hassard: When I asked that question, I asked the minister about whether there was going to be a review happening. I guess what I am looking for is: Will there be a document or a "what we heard" or something that people will actually be able to look at, read, hold in their hands — however you want to put it?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question. I have been advised that there will very likely be a "what we have learned so far" session or sessions for the industry procurement conference. My officials were just trying to get a date of when it is, but generally speaking, they are in February or March. So, in February or March 2024 at that industry conference, there will very likely be sessions on an update on the vendor performance review program.

Mr. Hassard: Am I to understand that you have to attend one of these sessions in order to get this update, or will there be other ways to find out where the government is at or how this review is proceeding?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that HPW is meeting with vendors and I guess potential contractors on a regular basis and addressing their feedback as we go on a continuous basis with a view to continuously improve the program, which I believe is consistent with the comments that I made in my first response. For example, the most recent meetings were held two weeks ago.

I am also advised that if there are any changes to the program, they would be published on yukon.ca, and HPW also regularly holds lunch and learns and they will continue to offer those programs on a regular basis.

Mr. Hassard: I wasn't trying to make this a difficult question, so I'll try once again in case there is something that is confusing to the minister or if I am not conveying it well. Will there be an actual document that people will be able to hold in their hand or read or go through in regard to this review process?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I said previously, this is a work in progress — continuous improvement — and continuous updates are taking place on yukon.ca, but perhaps to put a metaphorical bow on this, I will take the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's specific question with respect to the generating of a point-in-time document — which will probably be moving in certain directions, in any event — and return to the House with that answer. I will consult with my officials with respect to generating such a document.

Mr. Hassard: I think it's a little bit disturbing for vendors and contractors to think that there seems to be a problem or that it would be such a challenge to provide them with something that they can sit down and look at to see whether or not this is working and how well it is working, but I will move on, Acting Chair. I'm curious if the minister can provide us with information as to how many tenders have actually provided a score since October 2022.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised that, because this is a fairly specific question and it also involves a sort of all-of-government query with respect to tenders, I will have to come back with a legislative return.

This is probably a good opportunity to briefly talk about the tendering process. Public procurements are vital to local businesses, and the Yukon government remains committed to the continuous improvement of our procurement processes. The Yukon government provides advanced notice of upcoming projects by hosting planned procurements to the Yukon Bids and Tenders website and sharing information through our five-year capital plan.

When planning the timing of our tenders, we recognize that many projects are seasonally dependent. When deciding when to post tenders, we consider factors such as project type, the location, and market availability.

The Yukon government forecasts and issues tenders as early as possible to help vendors prepare for upcoming work and to be prepared for the short building season. We also stagger closing dates to make it easier for contractors to build on several tenders and to encourage price stability.

When planning and tendering projects, we aim to tender 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. The department has engaged with the Yukon Contractors Association on the timing of tendering in recent years and the association has noticed improvement in the timing of tenders.

We have many examples of tenders that were posted early enough that contractors could prepare for the work. Some examples include critical upgrades to the domestic water system at Copper Ridge Place. This was tendered in February 2023 for construction in the summer of 2023. There were tender forecasts issued in October 2021 for solar energy systems for the Klondike and Ogilvie grader stations. This was tendered in April 2022 for construction to start in the summer of 2023.

As I said previously in this House, I had the opportunity to travel on the Dempster Highway this summer and to see both the Klondike and Ogilvie solar energy systems. We look forward to both of those energy systems displacing significant volumes of diesel by next spring.

As well, there's a standing offer arrangement for home heating fuel that was tendered in July 2023 for use during the 2023-24 winter season. There was a tender for sodium chloride that was posted in January 2023 for the 2023-24 winter season. As well, there was a tender forecast that was issued in January 2022 for the Watson Lake Housing First project. This was tendered in February 2023 for work to start in the summer of 2023. As well, there was a wildland fire air tanker services contract that was tendered in August 2022 for services in 2024 to 2029 — their fire seasons.

Industry has historically requested more advance notice regarding the timing and tendering of forecasts to ensure that they can make the most of Yukon's short building season. This year, the Yukon government right-time tendered 57 projects totalling \$104.4 million before March 31, 2023. Between April 1 and July 31, 2023, the Yukon government right-time tendered 30 projects totalling \$66.4 million. The Procurement Support Centre is certainly — and we are doing our best to do right-time tendering. With respect specifically to the question

the member asked with respect to vendor performance and those tenders and the number of tenders, as I indicated, as this involves an all-of-government analysis and has a certain degree of specificity, I will return to the House with a legislative return on that specific question.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the minister committing to provide the House with that information.

I'm wondering — it may be a little simpler if the minister could tell us if 100 percent of the contracts that have gone out since October 2022 have now generated a score and, if not all, if he could provide us with a percentage or a number of that, please.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We have the question — we will have the question on Hansard and my officials have taken note of that sort of follow-up question from the previous question and we will integrate the answer in a combined legislative return with respect to both the first part of the question and the follow-up part of that question.

Mr. Hassard: I guess maybe I will ask if the minister could also include in that legislative return how many contractors or how many vendors in the Yukon now have a score for their companies that they will be starting from.

Just to follow up on that a little bit further, Acting Chair, I'm curious: If one vendor or one contractor or one company has a score of three out of five, we'll say, and they bid on a project or a tender against someone who doesn't already have a score, how does it work? Like, what score does the contractor or the vendor that hasn't previously bid on something — hasn't previously created a score for themselves — how do they compare?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I just have some comments here generally with respect to contract management and I am endeavouring to get the specific answer to the member opposite's question. I just want to make sure that I'm providing accurate information to the House.

Yukon government strives to provide tender and contract documents that clearly outline their requirements and deliverables for contractors. When a contractor bids on a tender, their bid will include certain commitments, such as pricing, delivery of the project, and Yukon First Nation participation. The government expects that the contractor will fulfill all commitments that they make in the tendering process during contract performance.

During the tender period, contractors can ask for clarification of expectations in the tender documents. Once the tender closes, a post-tender review meeting is often held where the contractor who is eligible for the award confirms that they will meet the commitments in their tender. After the contract is awarded, the Yukon government's role during the contract performance is to actively manage the contract to verify that all deliverables and commitments are being met. This includes the schedule, the price, or Yukon First Nation participation.

To have effective contract management, there must be continuous communication between the government and the contractor. Our project managers have regular check-ins throughout a contract to track the progress of the commitments. If a contractor is not meeting their commitments, there are both

formal and informal mechanisms for engaging with the contractor. It is important to note that these mechanisms are also available to the contractor if they feel that they are not being treated appropriately.

When issues cannot be resolved through these conversations, the dispute resolution processes outlined in the contract document are triggered. Depending on the type of contract, this can include mediation or arbitration. If the Yukon government and the contractor cannot resolve the performance issues, legal action is sometimes required. The vendor performance review program gives both parties a chance to take performance into account in future procurements.

I can share that previously no score was applied if a bidder did not have a score with YG. Highways and Public Works is proposing a change and I have described it to the chambers of commerce and the Yukon Contractors Association. The change would see an average score applied instead of no score. This change has not been put into effect as yet.

There are still discussions, but it is a good question from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: A good question and hopefully a decent answer. We have the member opposite's specific questions — the various questions that he has asked. My officials are here and they are listening closely and certainly we will make best efforts to answer the detailed questions in a more fulsome manner, as I certainly have tried to do on various questions that have come forward over the course of my time in this position.

When I was introduced to the whole issue of vendor performance, approaching three years ago now — one wants to get it right, but there certainly was attractiveness because there may well have been contracts that were not based on the seven criteria that the contractor did not perhaps objectively and subjectively deliver on what they said that they would, and ultimately, it was important to generate a vendor-performance review program.

I know that the Department of Highways and Public Works is certainly doing their best to ensure that this program is delivered in a fair manner and that there is a fair appeal process. Certainly, if there are negative findings on certain major procurements or major contracts, that will have a negative downstream consequence to contractors going forward, which, of course, Yukon contractors will want to avoid with some rigour. I know that the Department of Highways and Public Works has tread reasonably carefully with this and wants to get it right.

The vendor performance review program is a mechanism used to recognize and encourage vendors to deliver good performance on contracts and provide a way to give feedback and incentives for those contractors who do not. The program is evaluating and scoring vendors on their performance throughout a government contract.

The program also provides incentive to vendors for good performance. For example, vendors with higher scores could ultimately receive a competitive advantage during future tender

evaluations, ultimately increasing their chances of securing future government contracts.

The program will improve services to Yukoners by incentivizing the highest level of service from contractors during government contracts — yes, the best value for dollar for, ultimately, Yukon citizens and the government. This is a good program that likely is long overdue and it's in progress, but having continuous communication and continuous improvement is certainly how the department is being governed on this.

Mr. Hassard: I think that it could be good program, but unfortunately, if the minister is not able to provide us with any information on how it's going to work or how it is working or isn't working, it's really challenging to try to convince people that it is a good program.

As we rapidly run out of time here, I am wondering if the minister, between this session and the last session — on October 19, the minister committed to providing several legislative returns. I am wondering if he could commit to having those legislative returns back to the Legislature before it rises on November 23. If not, could he provide us with a date for when he actually will provide the Legislature with those returns?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Sorry, just so I understand the member opposite's question — the member opposite is asking about what I had committed to respond to when we were most recently in Committee of the Whole on October 19. The answer is yes; I have now received those proposed legislative returns — with my office — prepared by the department. Those legislative returns will be tabled with the Legislature prior to the end of the Fall Sitting.

Mr. Hassard: I think I heard the minister say that he would commit to having them before the House rises on November 23 for the questions regarding the discussions that we had on October 19. I'm wondering if he could provide us with a date for when he would provide the legislative returns for the questions that we have unfortunately been unable to get answers to today.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I just had an opportunity to speak with my officials with respect to the specific questions about vendor performance that have been asked by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin in today's abbreviated Committee of the Whole session. Yes, I have spoken to my deputy minister and have been advised that we will be responding to the member opposite in writing within a month. So, I can give you a specific date, I suppose — is December 20 a weekday? A Christmas present for the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin.

I know that this is unhelpful in the spirit of cooperation, but my final comments might be — because I know that some of my colleagues take pretty detailed statistics about the responsiveness of prior legislatures — whether it be the 33rd, the 34th, or maybe even the 32nd. But I have it on reasonably good authority that there was, I believe, one legislative return that was provided by the Yukon Party government in the 33rd —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Acting Chair: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In any event, the industry standard now in the 34th and 35th has been to provide a fair bit of information by way of legislative return to the members opposite.

In any event, that's the information that I have.

The legislative returns that were committed to on October 19 will be provided to the Legislative Assembly in advance of or before the final sitting day, which is November 23, and the answers specifically with respect to vendor performance will be provided on or before December 20, 2023 to the member opposite.

I will leave it at that in the spirit of cooperation.

Perhaps it was that the Yukon Party, between 2011 and 2016, communicated in different ways, but I don't know. I wasn't there, but I doubt that was the case.

Those are my comments today. Once again, with respect to vendor performance, the Highways and Public Works procurement branch continues to have active conversations with all vendors with respect to rolling out this program.

We will be in a position to provide additional information at both the reverse trade show and in the information that I will be providing to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin in the very near future.

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

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin that the Chair report progress.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Acting Chair: I declare the motion carried. Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 14 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon University.

In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

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

Appearance of witnesses

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 14 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from Yukon University.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses. I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

Member for Mountainview, I believe you will introduce the witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Ms. McLean: The witnesses appearing before Committee of the Whole today are Dr. Lesley Brown, president and vice-chancellor of Yukon University, and Christine Mahar,

public member of the Yukon University Board of Governors. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly today.

Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks?

Ms. Mahar: Thank you, Madam Chair, Hon. Minister McLean, and Members of the Legislative Assembly for the opportunity to speak with you today.

I would like to acknowledge that we are present on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

I am here as a member of the Yukon University Board of Governors and chair of our governance committee. I'm pleased to appear before you today with our president and vice-chancellor, Dr. Lesley Brown.

Madam Chair, it has been two years since we appeared before you as witnesses to provide an update on Yukon University. At the time of our last visit, we were just finalizing our strategic plan. A few months after our visit, in January 2022, we launched our strategic plan and it has become our guiding framework for all we do and all that we aspire to become. We named this document *Becoming* because it's a word that captures our state of transformation as we step into our new identity as a university — in fact, as you know, Canada's newest university and Canada's only university north of 60, something we remain extremely proud of.

Our vision is to become a thriving learning and research community leading Canada's north. To put this vision into action, we have also launched a new academic plan that is a road map for the future of our primary business of educating students. This plan, just released in June, outlines our priorities and aspirations for a new program in degree development. It also lays out our commitments to incorporating new and innovative approaches to teaching, including opportunities for learning that uphold, respect, and amplify Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being.

Embedded within these aspirations is our pride and our identity as an institution that serves the needs of the territory. This means that we will continue to work with communities to provide access to relevant learning opportunities. It also means a continued and unwavering commitment to our offerings in skilled trade programs alongside our plans and intentions to build new degree programs that are responsive to the needs of this territory.

In this regard, we are committed to doing our part to help alleviate the crucial need for health care providers in the Yukon. Among other outcomes, this includes Yukon University's aspiration to provide a bachelor of science in nursing program here at home because we also understand the need to have a culturally informed workforce for this territory.

The framing priority within our strategic plan is to take our place in advancing reconciliation. This priority is echoed in our academic plan where we commit to amplify Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being. Our intention is for these operating priorities to influence all teaching and learning in Yukon University. These strong and bold commitments appear in both of the key planning documents because we understand that education is the pathway to reconciliation and, as such, we

have embraced the invitation to make right our collective failings of the past.

Finally, the goals and proposed actions for how Yukon University will work to advance reconciliation are identified in our soon-to-be finalized reconciliation framework, a document that has considered the input and voice of Yukon First Nation people and has been shaped by the leadership of Tosh Southwick, Robyn Bradasch, and now Nadia Joe of Yukon U. There have been great strides made to finalizing this framework over the past year, and we fully anticipate celebrating its launch in the new year.

We have also made significant strides in planning our new science building, which we refer to as the “Polaris Project”. Polaris, meaning “north star”, is a building that will mark the future of Canada’s newest university because, through its design and intention, this building will cultivate an interplay between Yukon First Nation culture, traditional knowledge and ways of knowing, and western approaches to learning. This new building will meet zero-carbon targets and will also allow Yukon University to modernize drastically outdated science labs and classrooms and allow students to learn in industry-standard facilities. More than this, it will allow Yukon University to grow and expand existing programs.

At an exciting juncture, the design is 75-percent complete and we are moving the project toward a construction commencement date of the spring of 2024.

As a long-time resident, I have always known that the college, and now the university, was actively involved in research. Whether it was through news stories or snippets on the radio that would catch my ear, I knew that impressive research was being done here in the territory, but it wasn’t until I became a member of the board of governors —

Chair: Order, please.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I would like to take the opportunity to welcome the witnesses. It sounds like Ms. Mahar has additional remarks, so I will just cede the floor back to her to complete her remarks.

Ms. Mahar: Thank you. I am nearly complete.

First, though, it’s important to note that the way universities demonstrate their impact on research is by reporting the amount of research funding from federal funding agencies that the university secures in a given year; however, securing research funding is a highly competitive process, often pitting faculty institutions against each other on the national stage.

This past year, Yukon University secured \$6.7 million in research funding, with \$4.8 million of that coming from federal funding agencies. To provide context and comparison, this amount of funding exceeds — in fact, in some cases, it doubles — that of benchmark institutions in BC and Alberta.

Friends and fellow Yukoners, I share this with you for your information and update because I want you to know that Yukon University is punching well above its weight and I think we should all be really proud of that.

Lastly, I am confident that Yukon University is on a strong path — the path we always hoped for. President Brown joined Yukon University in 2021 and, over the past two years, has

positioned the institution for an exciting future. She has built a solid leadership team who individually and collectively carry a passion for the potential of Yukon University that is refreshing and infectious. There are many great aspirations ahead and the board of governors is looking forward to the future of Yukon University with pride and great optimism.

Fellow Yukoners, this is our university. It is an institution with a solid and proud history serving the needs for education in this territory. Going forward, I am confident that Yukon U will continue to walk together with Yukon First Nations toward an even more promising future for this place that we call home.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I thank the witnesses for the opening remarks. As mentioned, it has been a couple of years, I think, since the university has been here, so I am just going to jump right into the questions that I have.

The first one that I wanted to start out with is with respect to enrolment in the university. The document that was tabled last week, which was the 2022-23 year in review — I will direct the witnesses to page 17 of that document with respect to enrolment and the fall numbers.

In the fall of 2021, there were 981 full time and part time — combined — in the total credit programming. In the fall of 2022, that number had slipped to 842, and then, in a CBC article that I found online dated October 25 of this year, it was reported that the total number of credit students for the fall of 2023 was 734.

I am just wondering if the witnesses can offer any insight into why those numbers are dropping and whether or not they are concerned with those enrolment numbers falling like they are.

Ms. Brown: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question.

I would like to start by recognizing that our numbers are always in flux. As an institution that offers apprenticeship programs, sometimes programs start a little bit later than others. At time of the October 25 article that I think you are referring to, I don’t think our numbers had been fully finalized.

The numbers that I’m looking at, at this point in time for 2023, are indicating that there are 1,166 credit students enrolled at Yukon University. Those are the solid and final numbers.

Mr. Kent: Can the witnesses tell us if they expect those numbers to go up further as we go into the winter program? The president indicated that some programs start later on in the year. Is that 1,166 expected to rise as we move through the year?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair. The numbers that I reported are numbers from 2022-23. As I said, our numbers continue to flux throughout the semester. Right now, our numbers are tracking on par with last year. I am also very happy to report that our enrolments are tracking toward our pre-COVID levels.

Mr. Kent: I thank the president for clarifying that. So, that was for the 2022-23 academic year, but the fall totals that are in the document suggest that, in the fall of 2021, it was 981; in the fall of 2022, it was 842; and then, as I mentioned, those fall numbers reported in that CBC article were 734. I am just trying to make sure that we are talking about the same things

here. So, the 1,166 — is that for the 2022-23 academic year? And then the 734 — is that for the fall of 2023?

Ms. Brown: That is correct.

Mr. Kent: Again, those fall numbers over the past few years have seen a downward trend from the 981 in the fall of 2021 to 734 in the fall of this year. Do the witnesses believe that it is a problem attracting new students or is it retaining existing ones or is it a combination of both of those?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. I think that the issue is actually a recovery from COVID. COVID was a high-water mark for enrolment for Yukon University and, in fact, for many universities in Canada — post-secondary institutions in Canada — and so we are recovering from the effect of COVID when many people chose to go back to school.

Mr. Kent: In that same CBC article dated October 25 of this year, the article was focused on — Yukon University had applied to join Universities Canada. Can the witnesses just explain if there are any student enrolment numbers that need to be met — any thresholds that need to be met — in order for us to qualify for Universities Canada and perhaps even give us an update on the status of the application to join Universities Canada?

Ms. Brown: Thank you very much for the question. With respect to the enrolment requirements for Universities Canada, it would be up to Universities Canada to make a statement on that. My understanding is that Universities Canada recognizes that there are institutions across the country of varying sizes serving both large and small regions in Canada.

With respect to our application, our application has been submitted, as indicated in the article, and we continue to work alongside Universities Canada to steward that process.

Mr. Kent: In the article — and I believe it was a professor of higher education at the University of Toronto — Mr. Glen Jones said: “Universities Canada has become the kind of national club. It’s the club that you want to become a member of, partly so that you have recognition from your peers and partly because I think it also provides some broader international recognition.”

I guess one of the questions that I have is: How much has been spent so far preparing the application for Universities Canada? Is there an ongoing fee or set of fees to remain a member of Universities Canada?

Ms. Brown: I don’t think it is appropriate for me to provide comment on Glen Jones’ comments regarding our application to Universities Canada, but specifically on your question about how much has been spent in preparation of the ongoing application, I would say that the contributions would be noted as time and in-kind effort on the part of my leadership team. There is a membership fee associated with membership in Universities Canada, just as there is a membership fee associated with membership in Colleges and Institutes Canada. I do have a sense of what it might be off the top of my head, but I don’t want to say and misquote. So, if it’s appropriate, I would like to bring that information back with the specific number and I might be able to get it for you in a few minutes.

Mr. Kent: I would appreciate that. In order to become a member of Universities Canada, the witnesses off the top

mentioned the variety of programming, including trades and other types of programming, offered at the university currently, which sort of sets it apart from other universities. But there are no plans to decrease that side of programming in order to make the application to Universities Canada more appealing to them, is there?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. The answer is that there is no plan at all to change the profile of programming at Yukon University to make an application to Universities Canada. In fact, Yukon University is an institution, like other institutions in Canada, that offers a breadth of programs, including certificates, diplomas, degrees, and skilled trades training. A couple of examples that I can draw upon that are also members of Universities Canada are Vancouver Island University, University of the Fraser Valley, as well as Thompson Rivers University.

Mr. Kent: At the bottom of page 17 in the year-in-review document, it talks about international student enrolment. I will just read it quickly into the record. It says that, in 2021-22, “... a total of 168 international students were enrolled. This was down 6% from 179 in 2020-21. In Fall 2022, a total of 105 international students were enrolled, down 15% from 124 in Fall 2021.”

I am just curious if there has been any analysis done on why these numbers are dropping, as we have seen over the past number of years. If the witnesses have the fall of 2023 numbers, I would appreciate that.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. With respect to year-over-year enrolment rates for international students, I don’t have an explanation for your interpretation that the numbers are dropping; however, I can tell you the 2023 current numbers of international students. We are currently sitting at 114 international students, which I believe is higher than the number last year. This number reflects a board of governors target that has been set at 15 percent of our student demographic.

Mr. Kent: So, 114 is up nine places from the 105 in the fall of 2022. Just to be clear, these aren’t my interpretations; these are just the numbers that are in last year’s year-in-review.

Just a couple of recent announcements from the federal government — I am just wondering if the university is tracking them. I believe that federal ministers had, at one point over the past number of weeks, talked about a cap on the number of international students allowed into the country. Are the witnesses monitoring this, and have there been any internal discussions or discussions with the Government of Yukon or Government of Canada about this potential cap?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. Yes, this is something that we are monitoring quite closely and we are very aware of. At this point in time, Yukon University is working alongside Colleges and Institutes Canada to ensure that we are best represented as an institution of choice for international students.

Mr. Kent: One of the other things that I think is affecting international students is the cap on the number of hours per week they can work outside of their studies. It is my understanding that the cap has been removed recently so that

international students can work more than the 20 hours per week, but that is coming to an end at the end of this year, so it will be back to the 20 hours per week. Does this affect any of the international students at Yukon University, and have the witnesses heard from those students about any concerns they have with this?

Ms. Brown: May I ask for a clarification of the question?

Mr. Kent: In a recent news article — and I apologize; I don't have it here with me — there was a program in place where the hours per week that an international student could work was set at 20 hours. That was removed and they were able to work full time, but that exemption is coming to an end at the end of the calendar year. I am just curious if the witnesses have heard from any of the students who attend the university here who have concerns about that. If not, I am certainly happy to forward the media articles to the minister, who can send them on to the witnesses.

Ms. Brown: My question for clarification is around the reference to “concerns”. What I would like to know is: Are the concerns regarding access to employment, or are the concerns regarding the impact of the opportunity to work 20 hours a week on the availability of study time?

Mr. Kent: I think that it would probably be a little bit of both. Some of the students I saw interviewed from southern jurisdictions were concerned that, given the inflationary pressures that we see in the country right now, they were using that full-time employment combined with their studies to either pay down their tuition or there was rent or housing costs that, of course, are seeing inflationary pressures as well.

I was curious if any of the international students who are attending Yukon University have raised that with the witnesses or any other senior staff.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the clarification. We have not had any direct conversations with students regarding this issue. The cap regarding the number of hours was raised a number of years ago, if I am correct. Anecdotal observation at the time was that students were pleased about the opportunity to work longer hours.

Mr. Kent: I guess that is sort of what I am taking from the media that I read on this, as well — is that the affected students who I saw from southern jurisdictions are unhappy with the cap going back to 20 hours from where it has been for the past number of years. That is why I am curious if there are any concerns from local international students as well.

I am going to move on now. Just a quick question: I did see a student engagement report dated December 2021. I just wanted to make sure that was the most recent student engagement report and when the next student engagement survey will be conducted, if that is indeed the most recent one.

Ms. Brown: Madam Chair, thank you for the question; I am very happy to answer that. This is something that we are currently looking at. Student engagement is a really important measure of an institution's vibrancy, of an institution's value, and it is also something that students often look at when they are selecting an institution for their choice of post-secondary education.

Yukon University is in a state of transition and it is also in a growth state. One of the things that we are realizing is that we now need to conduct a survey that will allow us to compare our data on the national stage — conduct a study that will ensure that the data we are gather are valid, both internally and externally. At this point in time, we are considering how we can do that. There is a student engagement study that is the standard and that is available; it is called CUSC. We are currently considering if Yukon University will contribute in that study. I imagine that the next student engagement report will be coming out in the next year or so.

Mr. Kent: Is the plan then, once the preferred model is chosen, to go to a regular interval? Will it be annual or once every two years or once every three years? What will the frequency be once the appropriate model is chosen?

Ms. Brown: At a minimum, it would be once every two years. This is such an important measure for us to be monitoring and so I expect that it will be reported at a minimum of every two years.

Mr. Kent: Just turning over to staff and employees then at the university, can the witnesses give us an idea of how many employees, full time and part time, are working for the university now and how many vacancies there are for positions at the university?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. Currently, Yukon University employs approximately 190 staff and 95 faculty in both term and permanent positions. Comparative data — the data that I have just provided are from November 2023. Comparative data: July 2023, we had 91 faculty and 205 staff; September 1, 2022, we had 100 faculty and 209 staff. If you were to approximate or average across the years, you would say that we have about 96 faculty and approximately 205 staff.

The reason for the fluctuations is that our retirement numbers are up slightly this year, and we have, just like many businesses and institutions across the territory post-COVID — the first two years of employment is the period at which we see the highest turnover.

Mr. Kent: Just a quick follow-up and perhaps the witness didn't catch it in my earlier question, but I'm just curious about the vacancies. Are there positions that are vacant right now that should be filled? Sorry, just one other quick clarification too: Are the witnesses able to give us a breakdown of the Ayamdigut campus versus those campuses in rural Yukon as far as the staffing numbers?

Ms. Brown: With respect to the vacancies that are available right now and that should be filled, I am sorry; I can't give that information to you off the top of my head, but it is available on our HR page, I'm sure. I can also say that my leadership team is now complete and finalized. With respect to vacancies in community campuses versus our Ayamdigut campus, I'm sorry, but I can't provide that information offhand. I would be happy to follow up.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, yes, that would be great if the witnesses could follow up with those community numbers. I was just looking at the staff directory at yukon.ca, and Haines Junction and Watson Lake look like they are fully staffed. Other campuses don't have staff. I'm not sure about Ross River

— if there is anyone working at the campus there. Again, that's just going on the staff directory. I will visit the HR page, as referenced by the witness, and take a look at that. I'm not sure if the witnesses have any comments on those community campus numbers, but there was a commitment to get those numbers back to us, so I would look forward to getting those.

I do want to just take a bit of time to go through the 2022-23 audited financial statements. I have a few questions about that. I'll direct the witnesses to page 6, which is the Yukon University consolidated statement of operations for the year ended March 31. It looked like, in 2022, the surplus was \$4.571 million or so. Then in 2023, the annual surplus is \$7.209 million. I'm just wondering if there is an accumulated surplus or where the excess of revenues over expenses, as stated here — does that go into an accumulated surplus or is it paying down an accumulated debt? I'm just curious about those profit numbers for the past couple of years.

Ms. Mahar: Madam Chair, the main reason for the excess revenue over expenses is that this year primarily was a year in the accrued pension benefit assets. What happened in previous years was that we have had a deficit, but with the increased interest rate, that is now turning around, so we have less expended for this year over last.

Mr. Kent: I will direct the witnesses to page 24 of the audited financial statements. It is note 16, which is about expenditures by object. A couple of things sort of jumped off the page for me — where there have been significant year-over-year increases. I am hoping that the witnesses can provide an explanation. I will just go through them one by one.

The first is contract services in 2023. I will use approximations. It was approximately \$5.8 million, which was up from about \$4.7 million in 2022. I am curious if there is an explanation for why these contract services have jumped so significantly year over year.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. Unfortunately, we don't have an answer to that at this point in time but possibly could get that to you before the end of the session.

Mr. Kent: Does the Yukon University maintain a contract registry — a public registry — that individuals could look at with respect to the contracts that are let?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question. Unfortunately, we are unsure about the certainty of that question.

Mr. Kent: Hopefully, the witnesses will commit to getting back — if there is a contract registry or if there is one being contemplated for development.

I wanted to move down to the next line, which is for rental of facilities and equipment. In 2022, it was approximately \$3.5 million and then, in 2023, up to \$5.1 million. I am looking for an explanation of that increase, which is significant year over year.

Ms. Brown: We are just confirming that, but we expect that it might be due to some driver education training that we are doing currently.

Mr. Kent: I will look forward to that clarification — when it comes — on whether or not that is what constitutes the increase in that line.

I did want to jump down now to the materials and supplies. This went from approximately \$1.6 million in 2022 to \$2.7 million in 2023. I am just looking for an explanation of the increase in that line item.

Ms. Brown: I am very pleased to share that our research intensity has increased over the past year. It is anticipated that those costs are associated with purchases of research equipment.

Mr. Kent: Again, I would appreciate any sort of a breakdown that the witnesses are able to provide with respect to the individual items that have led to that increase in that line item.

The final one that I wanted to ask about is travel. In 2022, it was \$484,000 or so — \$485,000. Then it jumped to \$1.339 million in 2023. I am just looking for an explanation and whether or not the university maintains a quarterly or annual list of travel for staff and whether it is in-territory or out-of-territory and how much was spent. I note that ministerial travel is made public on the Yukon government's website, as well as for any supporting staff who travels with them. I think it's done at the end of each quarter. I am just wondering if there is something similar that the university does for their travel line items.

Ms. Brown: Madam Chair, thank you for the question. The reason for the increase in expenditures on travel reflects the reality of coming out of COVID. Many of the meetings and conferences that faculty and staff attend — particularly faculty — would have been primarily held, prior to 2023, in a virtual format. In 2023, I think that the travel pathways and conferences have opened up and so we are seeing an increase in expenditure on travel.

With respect to in-territory versus out-of-territory travel, we don't keep a registry on that, but we do make decisions based on guiding principles regarding the prudent expenditure of funding. We also recognize that, as the only post-secondary in the territory, all of our conference travel is outside of the territory.

Mr. Kent: Would the witnesses be able to — I guess that I could go back and look, but if they do have it, off the top of their heads, are there any numbers for pre-COVID? So, 2019 I guess would be the most recent pre-COVID year for travel so that we can sort of compare apples to apples. If the witnesses have it, that would be great, or if they can provide it, that would be helpful in comparing the 2023 numbers to those from 2019.

Ms. Brown: We are happy to provide that.

Mr. Kent: I apologize if the witness answered this in the previous response, but I am just curious about some sort of a travel registry or some sort of a public website where individuals can view the travel. I will use the ministerial travel as the reference point. If ministers travel and if they have support staff, those numbers are made public at the end of every quarter depending on the travel, so I am just curious if that is something that the university would consider, just given the amount of expenditure in this line item.

Ms. Brown: The expenditures on travel are available on our Public Accounts. It is not something that we have recorded

— destinations, et cetera, are not recorded, nor publicly available.

Mr. Kent: This was a question that I wanted to ask when I was talking about some of the staffing issues previously. We talked about a student engagement survey. I searched online and I was unable to find one, but is there an employee engagement survey for Yukon University similar to the one that the Yukon government does with their staff? Or is it done through the Public Service Commission of Yukon? Is Yukon University included in that employee engagement?

Ms. Brown: If I may, can I provide some answers to some questions that were asked previously and I now have some further information? Thank you.

With respect to travel, our 2019-20 numbers are indicating — this is pre-COVID-19 — \$1.3 million on expenditure of travel, which, I believe, is on par with our 2023 numbers.

The second question that I was unable to provide an answer to was the cost of the Universities Canada membership. We are unable to find the actual amount of the cost, but it's set annually and it's on par with other national post-secondary institutions like CICan.

To answer the original question, the answer is no. There is not an employee engagement survey yet. In fact, this is something that we are preparing to do and we are hoping to launch something in the new year.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to seeing that when it is available.

I did want to talk a little bit about the accountability framework. In the *Yukon University Act* — which was passed in this Legislature I think four years ago — section 55 of the act talks about accountability and performance measures, and 55(1) says: “The Minister must, in consultation with each Yukon First Nation and the board, establish accountability and performance measures by which to assess (a) the university’s performance in carrying out its purposes; and (b) the effectiveness of the strategies developed by the university to carry out its purposes.” Then 55(2) says: “Before modifying the accountability and performance measures established under subsection (1), the Minister must consult with each Yukon First Nation and the board.” So, of course, recognizing that there is a role for the minister here, I’m just curious if the board of governors at the university has talked about developing this accountability framework.

I can’t find where anything has been consulted on or done. Perhaps it’s done directly with First Nations, but looking at engageyukon.ca, there is nothing with respect to this. I’m just curious if there is a status update that the witnesses can provide with respect to the accountability framework.

Ms. Mahar: The board of governors have approved an accountability framework that has been provided to the government. Of course, our portions are just part of a territory-wide framework. We are waiting to hear back.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that. I will follow up with the minister and the government on that particular commitment.

In the opening remarks, the witnesses mentioned the Polaris building, the new science building at the university. When we go back to March of 2019, that is when the

Government of Canada made the initial announcement about the \$26 million toward a new science building. At the time, it was suggested that the building would be open in 2023. Obviously, that hasn’t happened. Then, a year ago in December, a design was announced. A local architecture firm has been paid, I believe, \$2.3 million for their work designing Polaris.

I was just looking at the Polaris webpage before I came in here today, and there are milestones on that page that I don’t believe are accurate, but I will leave it to the witnesses to explain. It says: March to May 2023, a tender for construction; spring 2023, construction starts with completion anticipated for the fall of 2025. I don’t believe that it has been tendered or that construction has started. I stand to be corrected on that, but hopefully, the witnesses can explain whether or not the construction has started on the Polaris building.

Ms. Mahar: I’m sorry; the website is outdated and we will work on that right away. No, construction has not started. We are about 75 percent through the design and, over the course of the winter, hope to have — we will have all of the tender documents ready and out and we are hoping for a spring construction start.

Mr. Kent: Can the witness can let us know: Is there a revised completion date? Is there a revised budget? Obviously, going back in the budget of 2019, it was estimated at \$36 million. A year ago, that cost was up to \$41 million. I’m just curious, given the delays, if there is a revised completion timeline and a revised budget for the building.

Ms. Mahar: Yeah, we are dealing with a difficult market at present, obviously. Yes, the costs have gone up — inflation, et cetera. We’re also a little hesitant about noting any final completion date until such time as the tender documents are ready and out. As we work through the final design piece and the tender documents, we will have a better estimate.

Mr. Kent: The Government of Canada, as I mentioned, announced \$26 million toward that new science building back in 2019. Is the university confident that the money is still secure from the Government of Canada? Obviously, as of last year, there was a \$15-million funding gap. I’m curious where that additional funding is coming from, keeping in mind that obviously that \$41 million will probably be going up here as well. I’m just curious about the funding gap and whether or not the Government of Canada commitment is secure or if that money has already been transferred to the university.

Ms. Mahar: Yes, the \$26 million federal funding is still secure, but we appreciate that time is moving along, so there is an urgency of getting this out to tender and beginning construction this spring.

In addition, we’ve also secured a further \$5.3 million to support the building of the zero-carbon building that will be accessible and inclusive and have the Rick Hansen accessibility certification.

We are continuing to work with all partners — whether that be the business community, First Nation governments, or others. As we know, in case there are further inflated costs, we are trying to find new partnerships right now.

Mr. Kent: So, \$26 million from the Government of Canada and then a \$5.3-million funding contribution based on, I believe the witness said, the low carbon aspects of the building. That still leaves us about \$10 million short on last year's price. Obviously, there's a concern with that funding gap. The witnesses mentioned that they are hoping to start construction in the spring, but will they start construction with that funding gap still in place, or is there a commitment to close that funding gap completely before the construction begins?

Ms. Mahar: Just one clarification: That \$5.3 million is still conditional. They are still reviewing the application. We are very definitely looking at having the sources of the funding for the entire estimate of building costs ready prior to tender. Yes, we are continuing negotiating with all of our partners.

Mr. Kent: We will obviously look forward to any future announcements where that funding gap has been closed.

I just wanted to jump quickly with respect to one final piece on the Polaris building. From reviewing the board of governor minutes from February 17 earlier this year, there was talk about adding new training facilities to the Polaris building for the nursing program. Has that changed the design, or does the current design also incorporate any changes to the building to support a nursing program?

I guess the other question is: Would it be for the existing practical nurse diploma program or for a new bachelor of science in nursing program that I read about earlier today in that CBC article from October 25? I am just curious if this has been incorporated into the design and what type of program it is. Is it the existing program or is it this new program that was referenced in that CBC story from October 25?

Ms. Brown: The current design of the Polaris building does not include a second floor or space for a nursing program. The current design of the Polaris building is for foundational science programs and the capacity to move into more specialized degree-oriented science programs. These programs, of course, will serve any nursing programs because many science courses are foundational to nursing programs, be it the LPN or our future aspirations for a bachelor of nursing program.

Mr. Kent: Just for clarification: The existing design will be able to incorporate either the LPN program or a future bachelor of nursing program? I just wanted to be clear on that.

Ms. Brown: I am not sure that's what I said. My intention was to convey the reality that the existing design is for science courses and also to convey the reality that programs in nursing, both the LPN and a bachelor of science in nursing, which is our future aspiration, would need to have access to high-fidelity science laboratories and science teaching classrooms.

Mr. Kent: If we were to pursue a bachelor of science nursing program, there would need to be additional facilities constructed to support that, whether in existing buildings or a new facility on campus?

Ms. Brown: It would be ideal. It would be perfect to be able to have access to new facilities to teach future nurses in state-of-the-art nursing laboratories. That is not going to be the case. What we are looking at is ensuring that we can provide a

high-quality program within the existing space and space constraints that currently exist in Yukon University, and feasibility studies and assessments have informed us that this is possible.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that clarification.

I did want to just jump quickly to not fundraising for the Polaris building but a fundraising campaign that is mentioned in the year in review that was tabled last week, and it is the "Together, for the North" campaign. It has a stated aim to raise \$4 million to enhance student experiences and was kicked off with a \$1-million donation from Northern Vision Development. I am just curious how much more, beyond that initial donation from NVD, has been raised so far, and what is the timeline for this campaign? Is this fundraising separate from the Polaris building fundraising that is still being looked at?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for recognizing the \$1-million donation from NVD which Yukon University was so pleased to receive. That donation inspired a further donation from Whitehorse Motors of \$250,000 just last week. These funds will be directed to the support of mental health for students in the trades. This funding campaign, "Together, for the North", is directed specifically for student experiences and will serve for enhancing the core services that we provide our students, particularly in the areas of wraparound supports for our students as they navigate through their academic journey.

The "Together, for the North" campaign is based on philanthropic donations, which is different than the recruitment for funding that we are currently doing for the Polaris building.

Mr. Kent: Obviously, that acknowledgement of Northern Vision Development and then the witness' acknowledging the donation last week from Whitehorse Motors of \$250,000 is fantastic.

Can the witness confirm that is the amount that has been raised so far: \$1.25 million? Over what time horizon is that money committed to? I am not sure if it is just a one-time cheque written or if it is over a number of years, so I am looking for that time horizon. Then, with respect to reaching that \$4-million goal — is there a time frame that has been set up to reach the \$4 million that is envisioned for this fund and this campaign?

Ms. Brown: Both of those donations are donations that will be realized over five years. The campaign itself does not have a definitive end date. We're very hopeful, of course, that we can reach our target sooner rather than later. If I were to suggest a timeline, I would say probably close to three years.

Mr. Kent: I'm going to make the assumption that some of the money has been spent already with respect to this campaign. If it hasn't, the witnesses can certainly correct me if I'm wrong. I'm just curious what kind of student experiences have been funded with money raised in this campaign so far.

Ms. Brown: Yes, we have begun to expense some of the funds that we have received from Northern Vision Development. Those expenditures were related to the recruitment and appointment of a new research chair within our program in Indigenous governance.

This research chair is Dr. Rebecca Major, who is an Indigenous scholar coming to us from the University of

Windsor. Dr. Major is a leading mind in northern governance and the benefit that she will bring to our students is unparalleled.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that answer from the witnesses. We will look to hearing about future announcements associated with this campaign as well.

I just have a few more topics that I want to talk about before I turn the floor over to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King.

The first one is student housing. Obviously, the housing market has been challenging in many places across the country but also here in the Yukon over the past number of years. I'm just curious if there are any plans to expand student housing beyond what is already there. Perhaps the witnesses can give us a sense of how many units are available at the Ayamdigut Campus and then how many, if any, are available off campus and in the community campuses as well.

Ms. Brown: With respect to beds available in student housing at the Ayamdigut Campus, we currently have capacity for 136 beds. Of those 136, it's important to note that 108 are available to students. The difference is because many of our students come to us as members of a family, so we also provide family housing.

Those 136 beds are broken down into 60 single dorm-style units, 40 beds in two-bedroom apartments, and 36 beds in three-bedroom apartments. The total number of beds is 136. Our current occupancy is at 90.7 percent.

With respect to the availability of housing at our community campuses, this is a barrier at the present moment. We currently do not have any housing available in any of our community campuses, and this is a barrier that is preventing us from expansion, particularly in what we regard to be a hub community campus and that's in Dawson.

Mr. Kent: Are there any plans to address those shortages of student housing in communities? We will talk about Dawson City, which is what the witness mentioned. Are there plans to try to address any of those shortages that they have in Dawson?

Ms. Brown: Our capacity to address some of those shortages right now is looking at creative solutions. Right now, for example, in Dawson, we are working with the Klondike travel firm — I'm sorry; I don't know the name. It is the company that works with the availability of hotel rooms, and so our students in Dawson — and particularly in SOVA — are residing in hotel rooms off-season, but we are working with local partners to explore potential solutions for the future to have some permanent, safe, long-term housing for students.

Mr. Kent: Are there any plans to expand — perhaps the witness answered this and I just missed it — housing opportunities here in the Whitehorse area? Are there any plans to build additional student residences either on campus or off campus?

Just a little bit of a pivot on the housing question is with respect to staff housing, particularly in the communities. Is there staff housing available to Yukon University staff who are working in the communities? We have heard — whether it is from the Yukon government or some companies in the private

sector — that the housing market has led to challenges in filling available job vacancies. I am just wondering if the university is seeing that as well.

So, just to sum it up: Are there any plans to expand student housing in Whitehorse and then staff housing in the communities — whether there is some available and if it is having an adverse effect on filling job vacancies outside of Whitehorse?

Ms. Brown: With respect to student housing at Ayamdigut, right now, we are at the point of recognizing that the availability of student housing is a pinch point. We are looking at our data and will be tracking our data to make an informed decision regarding future plans and aspirations about building or making available more student housing options on the Ayamdigut Campus. This decision needs to be considered very closely and in alignment with our future plans for growth and enrolment and the enrolment profile of the students that we are hoping to recruit to the Ayamdigut Campus. All this to say — early days but definitely something that is a big priority for us at this point in time.

The second part of the question was around the availability of staff housing in our communities. We currently do not have any staff housing for community staff, but I understand that the majority of our staff in the communities are local.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that.

Just two more topics — the first one is with respect to the varsity sports program. I believe that the last time the witnesses were here, there was some initial work being done on that. I think that the study was just released this year by the Government of Yukon and suggests that introducing varsity sports to Yukon University will cost \$17 million to \$24 million over 10 years — I just want to make sure that I have those numbers correct — and just any thoughts from the witnesses on whether or not this program is going to be pursued, or is it paused and on hold for now?

Just one other quick question about recreational infrastructure that a constituent brought to me was with respect to the climbing wall. Since the witnesses last appeared, it sounded like — the media reports at the time suggested that there was \$70,000 to \$80,000, I believe, spent on building a climbing wall for students and then dismantling it. I'm just curious if the witnesses can provide some clarity on why that project was installed and then uninstalled. What has happened to that infrastructure since? Has it been sold or will it be reinstalled in a different venue in the Whitehorse area?

Ms. Brown: With respect to varsity sports, the numbers that were provided are correct. The estimated cost is coming in at about \$17 million to \$24.5 million — \$17 million for a three-sport program and \$24.5 million for a five-sport program. With respect to our aspirations to provide varsity sports, it's definitely something that is on our horizon as we look to the future, recognizing how important the sporting experience is or how participating directly or indirectly in sporting events is to enhancing the student experience. It's just not something that will be a priority in the coming year for us, but it will always be on our horizon.

The second part of the question was about the climbing wall and the expenditures associated with a structure that was put up and then taken down. You're absolutely correct. The reason that the structure was removed was because of the lack of appropriate consultation regarding the placement of the climbing wall and the recognition that the choice of location would have been disruptive to our plans to offer things like varsity sports or convocation, and so the climbing wall was removed. We still have it in storage and are currently considering the next steps for that structure.

Mr. Kent: If the witnesses are able to provide some sort of a timeline for what they will decide with respect to that asset, it would be helpful.

The final topic that I wanted to talk about is with respect to the research at the university. I believe that Ms. Mahar mentioned off the top that, of the \$6.7-million budget for research this year, \$4.8 million came from the feds, so I'm just curious about the gap there. How has that been filled? What sort of combination of funding has filled that gap from what the federal government provided to the total amount?

When I was on the university website preparing for today, I noticed that the research projects are listed by what is being done, who the lead is, and whether it's open or closed, so I'm just curious if there is any consideration being given to also attaching a budget amount to the open projects and the closed ones as well — just to get a sense of how much money is being spent on each research project.

After that, I'll thank the witnesses and cede the floor to my colleague from Takhini-Kopper King. We appreciate the witnesses' time here today and responding to the questions I have had.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question and thank you for bringing up research. It's such a crucial contribution that a university makes for the betterment of the common good. It's something that I am incredibly proud to speak about. I am very happy to again underscore what board member Mahar shared and that is that Yukon University, given its size, is truly punching above its weight on the national stage.

This past year, we secured \$4.7 million in tri-agency funding, the federal funding agencies — and then in a total of just over \$6.7 million. The gap between the \$4.7 million and the \$6.7 million is contributed often by third-party sources. Many of our researchers are conducting applied research, which is research in partnership with industry to provide solutions to problems. Some of that funding would come, of course, from Yukon government as part of support for some of our research chair positions.

With respect to the second part of the question, which was about providing a budget associated with open and closed projects, that's not something that is typically done, but I don't see any reason why we wouldn't do that. In fact, it would emphasize how much and how well Yukon University is doing on the national stage. Thank you for the suggestion.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for his fantastic questions as I furiously scratched out things that I had planned to ask about, but that's always the hazard.

Welcome, of course, to the witnesses. It's delightful to have you both here and challenging, as always, as I direct my comments to the Chair and my back toward you both.

Just in talking about research right now, I think that there is a real opportunity and I would love to hear from the president. For example, Alison Perrin presented to the Senate Committee on Climate Change, and other researchers and staff of Yukon University have really been taking their knowledge and their skills far. I would love to give the witnesses an opportunity to celebrate some of those achievements, because often I think here at home that we don't actually know that they are happening and sometimes it is not until much later.

So, if we could just start by maybe focusing on some of those achievements and then I will move on.

Ms. Brown: Madam Chair, thank you very much for that invitation. I will speak of a couple of great achievements.

Yukon University, as I have just mentioned, recently recruited one of Canada's premier Indigenous scholars in the area of northern governance — Dr. Rebecca Major — who chose to come here, who chose to be part of our Indigenous governance program, and who is choosing to stand in front of our students to make them more informed for tomorrow.

The second thing I would like to recognize is the work of Dr. Sara McPhee-Knowles. Dr. McPhee-Knowles is an assistant professor at Yukon University and she, with some colleagues, has secured a very prominent and very competitive research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. She secured the largest SSHRC grant from a faculty member outside of the Yukon University Research Centre.

I would also like to speak about the work of Dr. Michael Ross, who is in Yukon University Research Centre. Dr. Ross is part of a research program out of partnership with the University of Victoria that secured one of Canada's most prominent research grants and that is the Canada First Research Excellence Fund. There were just a small number of these grants — I believe about 11 — that were awarded throughout Canada, and a researcher at Yukon University is working with a team that secured one of those grants. These are incredible points of pride and points that we should all be celebrating.

Thank you for that invitation.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, I thank the president for that. It is a perfect example of things that I didn't know. I am just going through the list of research topics, for example, that have been done by university faculty and, in some cases, I would guess, students. It does cover a wide spectrum of things and I see, in some cases, they are very much directed to — for example, there is the hazard mapping of Yukon government buildings. My point is that there are things that are definitely very relevant. Whether to Yukon government or we talk about mine remediation or energy research, it is a very interesting and exciting time at the university. If there were, for example, teachers in the high school stream who were interested in trying to access to tour — one of the things we talked about often, in here and in other circumstances, is the idea of making Yukon University — well, Yukon College, now university — be that

institution in the territory as an opportunity for local kids to study in a university setting close to home.

If there was an interest from high school teachers to do tours or see more, how could they access — I have to say that seeing the mine remediation and seeing the plants growing in the different tubes and things — how does one go about setting up that kind of tour?

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the question and also for the interest.

At this point in time, we are working to amplify our recruitment efforts for Yukon University. I would suggest that it's probably up to us to be reaching out to high schools in and around the region and offering tours as part of our entire strategy of recruitment to ensure that potential students understand that Yukon University is a viable option for their post-secondary aspiration.

But to answer your question directly, I would suggest that the point of contact would be our university registrar.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I will make that suggestion when I go into high school classes.

One thing that is really of interest to me is the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining in that purpose-built building. It's impressive when you go into the shop and you have big pieces of equipment. I was noticing online the different courses that are available, some that aren't currently accepting applications and some, for example, that are driven by interest. I was curious as to the number of students who we see going through programs in that building — the programs that are running currently and ones that we hope will have more uptake in the future. I'm interested to know the status of the northern mining innovation centre.

Ms. Brown: The direct answer is that the Centre for Northern Innovation in Mining is thriving. With respect to the enrolments and the programs offered, I can share some quick statistics.

I will start with our environmental monitoring certificate program. This is the sixth cohort of this program this year. We have nine students — all Yukon First Nation students. Last year, in June 2023, we graduated five First Nation students from that program.

We also have a housing maintainer program, which contributed to four homes in the Champagne and Aishihik First Nation, as well as the Takhini subdivision. I believe that there are nine if not 13 students enrolled in that program.

The earth science program, in the fall of 2023, has 10 majors currently enrolled. We have a record number of heavy equipment technicians enrolled this fall.

A new program that we are offering and which has created much enthusiasm is our commercial driver training simulator program. Currently in Dawson, we have nine students enrolled. Two students are also enrolled in class 1 instruction, and we have seven firefighters working on a class 3 restricted licence.

Of course, the training simulator is mobile, so it is currently in Dawson, moving on to Teslin where we have four commercial driving students enrolled. In Whitehorse, we have two government employees trained on our commercial driver training simulator.

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

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 Pelly-Nisutlin rises

Acting Chair (Mr. Hassard): Member for Takhini-Kopper King, please continue.

Ms. White: I appreciate you stepping into that role to assist, Acting Chair.

I thank the witness for that answer. One thing I have always said in this House that I think is really important is that we can't move too far away from the trades programs or the programs that are real life and really have those practicalities in the north, especially in the territory. As a tradesperson myself, it paid me a lot better than politics ever did, until I had already been elected for I think almost nine years. Just in case anyone is listening, cooking really can pay.

The one thing that I thought was really, really interesting is the relationship that has been happening with the community campuses, and one example would be the water and wastewater training that I think was delivered in the community of Old Crow. Maybe I will ask specifically about that but giving the witnesses more opportunity to expand from that, if they can share with us other examples of where community campuses have made a request for specialized training. The witnesses just used the example of driver training, but are there other examples of it going to community campuses.

Ms. Brown: Specifically, I can share some updates from Dawson, where we have just completed the level 2 carpentry apprenticeship program. That was in the spring of 2023 when six students were registered in that program. That campus is also offering a mix of class 3 air brakes driver training. I will go next to Mayo, where we have campus staff preparing to deliver a job readiness for employment learning in culinary program for six to eight students in January of 2024. As well, that culinary program is also being prepared to be delivered in Old Crow for six to eight students. Culinary skills is also being offered in Pelly. In Ross River, we have courses in small engine maintenance, driver training, class 5 and 7 air brakes, and class 3 and 1 introduction to water treatment and bulk water delivery for six to eight students. Finally, Watson Lake is delivering a job readiness program for a breadth of skills in trades, mining, office administration, and environmental monitoring for six students.

Ms. White: That list the witness just shared is an accomplishment, and I think, more than that, it actually in lots of those cases will be changing things not just for the person taking the classes but for the community. I know that this spring, when the Carmacks arena had its grand opening, the culinary program had been there doing a training program and the culinary students catered the event. There was so much and it was really fantastic to see young and older people taking on that new role and spreading their wings. Anytime that we are able to go out into a community and support the community with a program that they are asking for, I hope that we continue to do that, just for that benefit.

I am curious — we have a big conversation — well, in the territory especially when we talk about a shortage of teachers, educational assistants, and learning assistance teachers. I was hoping that the witnesses could give me an update on kind of recent statistics for the number of graduates that they put through the YNTEP, the Yukon Native Teacher Education Program, and if there have ever been thoughts about — I know that in other jurisdictions, other provinces, there is specific schooling for educational assistants that then prepares someone for that role. When they go into it, they have more skills than a person off the street, but I'm just looking for statistics and thoughts about an educational assistant program.

Ms. Brown: The area of developing teachers is something that is a priority for Yukon University as we look to the future. In fact, it is a priority that is articulated in our new academic plan. With respect to the YNTEP program, we have two opportunities to earn that degree. That degree is currently offered in partnership with the University of Regina and we have two streams. The one stream is a four-year stream and the other stream is an after-degree stream — so a student may have a different type of degree and would like to finish with a teaching degree.

With respect to graduation rates, I can say that in 2022-23, we had 10 students graduate in the after-degree stream, and in the four-year stream in 2022-23, we had another two students graduate.

I started by saying that our future aspirations are to help build and develop new teachers for the territory. This is something, as I have said, that is articulated in our academic plan. With respect to educational assistants, that is something that I will take back and discuss with Provost Shelagh Rowles.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. One thing that we have heard as a refrain is that Canada — and the world as a whole — is facing a health care worker crisis. I know that there is talk about a nursing program in the future, but if the witnesses could share with me what is available now as far as health care, whether it is the nursing home attendant program that I know previously existed — I'm not sure if it still does — but if they can let me know the plans around health care courses.

Ms. Brown: I would like to start by saying that Yukon University recognizes the opportunity to help contribute to a solution for the health care crisis in the territory and our contribution in that regard would be in education.

At the present moment in time, we do offer programs of direct relevance to health care. We offer a health care assistant program and we also offer a practical nursing program. I can give some enrolment numbers. With respect to our practical nursing program, enrolment for 2023-24 is 29 full time and two part time, and in 2022-23, we had a total of 32 full time. We have aspirations of broadening that program because, for us, it is a high-demand program. In addition, we also have aspirations of providing access to a program that would allow existing licensed practical nurses to bridge toward a RN program offered at another institution and that's something that we are currently working on.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. I'm sure that "hybrid" is not the right terminology for that kind of course

where the degree certification may come from an outside institution, but are there other programs where the university is partnered up? So, again, the University of Regina does the teachers. Are there other hybrid programs or similar models that we are looking at for courses that aren't currently offered?

Ms. Brown: Yes, having partner degrees has been a strategy for Yukon University — formerly the Yukon College — and as we look to the future, we are looking to offer those degrees as Yukon University degrees. Some examples specifically are the teacher education program that we have already spoken about, the social work program that we are currently exploring, and, as well, there is an environmental science program.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that. A number of years ago, the student union actually worked quite hard to be able to get city bus passes for students. In that relationship, what they were also able to do is to extend the operating hours of the city buses to make sure that the city buses went up to the school campus at the end of classes so that people were still able to get home. Is it possible for the witnesses to let me know if that is an ongoing relationship with the City of Whitehorse? Are students still able to get city transit passes? Are they able to share a bit about what is currently happening with the student union and the university?

Ms. Brown: I can say that we still have a bus program with the city. Unfortunately, I don't have any information on further discussions with the city yet.

Ms. White: May this lead to further discussions.

One of the things that had been mentioned earlier in the conversation with my colleague was the crunch around housing. The witness did talk about the work that is happening in Dawson City for SOVA students — trying to make sure that students wanting to go the art school there had that opportunity.

A number of years ago, as an example, international students were really running into a lot of barriers — not fully understanding that housing did not come with their school application. Is there a specific person within the university who helps students bridge their search for housing? Have there been conversations with the Yukon government in developing student housing — I am going to suggest, actually, at the Whitehorse campus, at the Dawson City one for sure, and even in other communities as required?

Ms. Brown: We make great efforts to ensure that international students recognize the need for housing and we work with international students to do the best that we can to provide housing, be that on campus or off campus, and help them access housing off campus. We don't have a specific position that is actually dedicated to that role, but we do have student-life coordinators who are functioning in a helpful role for international students.

With respect to further housing and conversations with Yukon government, we have not explored that with the Yukon government at this point in time. We do need to look at our internal resources to make sure that we are currently using and making the best use of the available space that we currently have.

Ms. White: I do thank the witness for that, which can bring us up to the university endowment lands. There has been a commitment from the Yukon government to create the McIntyre Creek park and that will, I imagine, affect the university, as it should, I imagine, about the endowment lands. Where is the university in terms of — there have been lots of discussions. We spoke a little bit about the Polaris building today. I went through the planning process of that — probably 10 or seven or eight years ago — and it was a great process. I am looking forward to the groundbreaking of that.

Are there any updates on the university endowment lands or plans there? Are there future plans for housing? What kind of future look does the university hold right now?

Ms. Brown: The university is in very early stages of entering into an MOU with YG about the endowment lands.

Ms. White: I thank the witness for that.

At this point, I would really like to just give the witnesses an opportunity to maybe again celebrate things that they are proud of or excited about. I would highlight things like the Kinnickinnick Kaff, which has really seen students being able to host in a culinary way — and in a way that you don't get in very many restaurants — and to even start plating or presentation. Whether we want to talk about the research or any of those things, I will give the witnesses that opportunity and then thank them for their time, and I don't have any further questions.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for the invitation. You have invited a president to brag about the university. I recognize that we are close on time, so I'll keep my remarks short. However, if given free reign, they wouldn't be.

In the interest of time, I would just like to recognize the exceptional staff and faculty who approach every day with a sense of enthusiasm and possibility and belief in the institution and tremendous pride in their role in educating students and particularly educating students for the north.

Ms. White: Sorry, Madam Chair, I had said that was going to be my last. There is actually one further comment, and just to the witness, we have until 5:30, so you have plenty of time.

I did just want to note that there has been a change at the university in the use of the flagpoles, knowing that all of the Yukon First Nation flags are hung. On the Transgender Day of Remembrance, I would note that the transgender flag was flown today for the first time. I think that it is a really important thing. Continuing education is political in its very nature. At the time when it becomes something that everyone can afford and everyone can access, maybe then it won't be viewed in that way, but it is a privilege that unfortunately many in many circumstances do not have access to.

I do think that the university has an important role to play in leadership when we talk about, today, acknowledging the Transgender Day of Remembrance and things that are happening globally. I congratulate the faculty and staff and whoever drove that. It is really important that places like our higher education establishments are free and open to all.

Ms. Brown: Thank you for that recognition. You are absolutely correct. Yukon University for the first time raised

the transgender flag today, November 20, the Transgender Day of Remembrance. We raised that flag as a demonstration of the resilience of transgender people and in observance of the over 390 transgender people who have lost their lives due to acts of violence against transgender people.

We strive to ensure that Yukon University is a place of belonging for everybody, and today was a very emotional day for some and a day filled of pride for some as well, so thank you for the recognition.

Chair: Are there any further questions for the witnesses?

Hon. Ms. McLean: On behalf of the Committee of the Whole, I would like to thank Dr. Lesley Brown, President and Vice-Chancellor of Yukon University, and Christine Mahar, public member of the Yukon University Board of Governors, for appearing as witnesses today. Thank you very much for your time and for your thoughtful answers. I also thank the members from the Official Opposition and the New Democratic Party for their questions here today.

Witnesses excused

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountainview 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. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 14 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operations of Yukon University.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance 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 5:15 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 20, 2023:

35-1-133

Yukon Child Care Board Annual Report 2022-2023
(McLean)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 161

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Tuesday, November 21, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

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

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Brad Cathers	Lake Laberge	Patti McLeod	Watson Lake
Yvonne Clarke	Porter Creek Centre	Geraldine Van Bibber	Porter Creek North
Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Tuesday, November 21, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion has not been placed on today's Notice Paper as it is outdated: Motion No. 854, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, we have a bunch of guests here today because it is the 51st Geoscience Forum and we are doing a tribute today for the Leckie Award winners, the Prospector of the Year Award winners, and the Chamber of Mines award winners. Please welcome, from the Yukon Chamber of Mines: President Lorelee Johnstone; Stuart Murray and Mike Burke, who are directors; we have Brianne Warner, who is the executive director; and Angelique Bjork, office manager.

From the First Nations Chamber of Commerce, we have Whitehorse city councillor and the executive director, Mellisa Murray; we have Tori Beemer, the operations officer. From Small's Expediting, we have Shawn Hamilton, the vice-president. From Energy, Mines and Resources, we have Todd Powell, Debbie Mallette, and Alissa Sampson. From the Yukon Prospectors Association, we have President Grant Allan and VP Carl Schulze. We have this year's Prospector of the Year, who is actually a former page of this Assembly, Ryan Burke. For the winners of the Leckie Award, we have, from Snowline Gold Corporation, Scott Berdahl and the VP of exploration, Thomas Branson — if we could welcome everybody here, please.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, just because he deserves a worthy announcement as well, Stuart Murray, who is the president of Small's Expediting.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of Yukon Geoscience Forum award recipients

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I certainly have a tribute.

I rise to pay tribute to the award winners from the 51st Yukon Geoscience Forum, which will wrap up tomorrow. The Robert E. Leckie Award recognizes exemplary performance in environmental stewardship in the mining industry. Bob Leckie, a Mayo mine inspector, is remembered for encouraging progressive land use practices in mining and fostering cooperation between industry and government.

Last night, I had the honour of awarding the Leckie Award for excellence in environmental stewardship to Snowline Gold. The company conducts thoughtful planning before they begin drilling, and photos taken several months after reclamation show that the sites of their drill pads are hard to distinguish from the surrounding environment. This is a great example of progressive reclamation.

Snowline is working with Yukon Seed & Restoration, a Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation environmental restoration company. Snowline's camp at their Rogue property is powered by a 27-kilowatt solar installation built in partnership, again, with Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation. This array allows them to operate off grid without relying as much on diesel-generated power.

Scott and his company have done a great job of setting an example of how to conduct mineral exploration in a way that is environmentally responsible while keeping open lines of communication with affected First Nations.

I would also like to acknowledge the other winners from the Geoscience Forum. The Prospector of the Year Award went to Ryan Burke. Ryan's boots-on-the-ground prospecting work has resulted in the brand new discovery of the Catch property southeast of Carmacks, which is now being explored by Cascadia Minerals. Thank you, Ryan, for your shout-out to the Yukon mineral exploration program last night. Ryan is another example of homegrown Yukon talent. He gained some of his early training as an assistant to our own Geological Survey, and his skills are leading to successful new discoveries.

Albert Drapeau received the First Nations in mining award for his valuable role as executive director to the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce.

Tara Christie received the member award for her work as the founder and president of Every Student, Every Day. The Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society has been supporting student engagement with schools for over a decade, raising close to \$2 million and funding 200-plus projects.

Dawn Moses and Victor Sembsmoen received the community award as co-founders of the Haldane Services branch of Small's Expediting Ltd., in partnership with the Na-Cho Nyäk Dun Development Corporation.

On behalf of the Yukon government, thank you to all of the nominees and award winners for their fine work.

Thank you to all of the Yukon miners who continue to respect and care for our land, environment, and communities.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the award winners from this year's Geoscience banquet. Reviewing the

list of winners, it was certainly an evening that marked the next generation of the Yukon mining industry.

Snowline Gold Corporation won the Leckie Award for all of the reasons that the minister just mentioned, and on top of being one of the most exciting projects that we have seen in the Yukon in some time, they are trailblazers in the industry. One example is the solar array that they installed last year that will displace 12,500 litres of diesel annually, and CEO Scott Berdahl is the son of long-time Yukon prospector Ron Berdahl.

A huge congratulations to Scott and the Snowline team.

Ryan Burke is the prospector of the year. His dad, Mike, is well-known in the mining circles and spent years treasure-hunting with the Yukon Geological Survey. This is a year of awards for Ryan as he won the Next Gen Prospect Challenge and now this honour last night. In presenting this award, Carl Schulze said that he was the youngest ever recipient, which was later being debated at their table. I'm not sure if that ever got settled, but I can confirm what the minister mentioned: that Ryan is definitely the first former page in the Yukon Legislative Assembly to win that award, as he worked in this House in December 2011 when a number of current MLAs were just beginning their political career.

Tara Christie is the CEO of Banyen Gold Corp. She has been active in the Yukon mining industry for her entire life, as her parents, Jim and Dagmar Christie, were long-time placer miners in the Klondike. Her list of accomplishments is too long to mention here, but this award is for her philanthropic work as the president of the Victoria Gold Yukon Student Encouragement Society's Every Student, Every Day. This initiative, started by John McConnell, has raised \$1.85 million since its inception in 2012 to help young Yukoners stay in school.

The First Nations in Mining Award goes to Albert Drapeau, who had served as executive director of the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce since 2016, only recently giving up that position. Albert continues to be a strong advocate for the relationship between First Nation businesses and the mining sector and has continued to build and maintain this relationship through the years.

Finally, congratulations to Dawn Moses and Victor Sembsmoen of Haldane Services, which is a branch of Small's Expediting Services Ltd. Dawn and Victor have been instrumental to mining and exploration, outfitting, and other sectors in the Mayo area and throughout the territory. They offer transportation services to mining clients, and I understand that they have been committed to standby evacuation assistance to mining operations as well as coordinating emergency transport during this year's evacuation of Mayo.

Congratulations to all of the winners for the well-deserved recognition. We wish you all the best in the years to come.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate this year's Yukon Geoscience award winners. The Yukon Chamber of Mines, the Yukon Prospectors Association, and the Yukon government environmental stewardship award were all awarded last night at the wrap-up

banquet at this year's Geoscience Week. I was delighted to learn about these deserving award winners.

The impact that each award winner has had on the Yukon and on their industry is easy to see. I thank my colleagues for drilling down to the bedrock of their collective achievements. Congratulations to Albert Drapeau, Dawn Moses, Victor Sembsmoen, Tara Christie, Ryan Burke, and Snowline Gold Corporation. Your contributions to your industry and to the territory are worthy of celebration.

Applause

In recognition of National Addictions Awareness Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to mark the commencement of National Addictions Awareness Week. November 19 to 25 is dedicated to deepening our understanding of substance use and addiction issues in the Yukon and across Canada. This year, under the theme of "Inspiration, Innovation and Inclusion", we acknowledge that substance use is a complex challenge with far-reaching implications. In Canada, the impacts of substance use highlighted by the opioid crisis and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in significant costs and challenges, especially affecting the mental health and well-being of young lives and contributing to broader societal inequities.

As the Minister of Health and Social Services, I reaffirm our commitment to tackling these challenges head-on. With the *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* as our road map, our innovative approach to substance use health combines evidence, best practices, and traditional knowledge, ensuring that our actions and initiatives are both compassionate and effective.

During National Addictions Awareness Week and beyond, we are committed to ongoing engagement with communities, sharing resources and fostering conversations about substance use health. We invite all Yukoners to participate in these activities not just this week but as part of a continual effort to learn, share, and support each other in addressing the issues.

Numerous initiatives are being organized across our communities this week with many benefiting from the support and the collaboration of Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services. A notable example is a series of events being hosted by the Kwanlin Dün First Nation this week. These activities are designed to bring together citizens and families for a week of connection, learning, and shared experiences. I encourage KDFN citizens and all Yukoners to look out for the schedule of these events and participate actively.

In Carmacks, the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation has planned a series of events from November 20 to 24 at the Heritage Hall in the Carmacks rec complex. They are hosting a sobriety walk on November 24, which is an excellent opportunity for community members to demonstrate their support for sobriety and wellness.

In Old Crow, the Vuntut Gwitchin Government has coordinated a spiritual healing week to build community and spiritual strength and support a path forward together. To those

who are struggling: Know that you are not alone. There are resources available, and in collaboration with our partners, we are committed to providing the support that you need. To our health care providers, community leaders, and all those who work on the front lines of this issue: Your efforts are invaluable and we thank you for your dedication.

As we observe National Addictions Awareness Week, let us embrace the principles of inspiration, innovation, and inclusion and work together toward a future where every Yukoner has the opportunity to live a healthy life and realize their dreams.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize November 19 to 25 as National Addictions Awareness Week in Canada. This week is an opportunity for people to learn more about addictions and for governments and organizations to think about what else they can do to improve prevention, treatment, and recovery.

For those suffering from addictions in our communities, education in our schools and for the public is one part of prevention. Sadly, we continue to see an increase in the impacts of substance use, including increased illegal drug use and products laced with deadly substances like fentanyl being sold on the black market and, with that, the number of overdose deaths related to opioids and toxic drugs.

We would like to thank all those working to provide education, support, and treatment services to help people fight addictions. We also encourage those battling addictions to seek help. The Yukon Party Official Opposition supports the goal of helping people to break free of addictions and live healthy lives.

Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the NDP to pay tribute to National Addictions Awareness Week. This year's theme is "Inspiration, Innovation and Inclusion".

As leaders, it is so important that we remain open to learning more about harm reduction, treatment, and recovery options as well as the systemic and underlying causes of addictions so that we can engage in meaningful discussions and explore solutions.

As we take time to honour National Addictions Awareness Week, I think about the many people whose lives have been cut short far too soon. They are our children, our elders, our friends, and our neighbours. I think about the many family members and communities left behind and the void that continues to be felt in these communities and spaces — communities that are declaring states of emergencies because they are desperate for help and support.

Perhaps most importantly, I think of those who, today, are struggling — those who are using substances and trying so hard to keep themselves and their community members safe and people who are holding on and hoping to get into treatment because they are ready. I think of people in treatment right now who are facing the prospect of coming home and are fearful of using substances again without real support and aftercare.

As we work to improve this system, it is essential that we listen to those with lived and living experiences of substance use.

Mahsi'.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the health status report update for 2022, which is tabled pursuant to section 6(1) of the *Health Act*.

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

Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates winners of the first-ever Screen Media Awards:

(1) Colin MacKenzie, the Focus Award recipient, recognized as a member for significant contributions to the sector; and

(2) members of the Fiction Film Collective, Naomi Mark, Marty O'Brien, Mackenzie Smith, and Daniel Little, recipient of the Viewfinder Award recognizing exceptional talent and innovative approaches that represent the growth and evolution of the Yukon screen industry.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Psychiatric services

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, this Liberal government talks a good line about supporting mental health, but unfortunately, like in many other areas of health care under their watch, Yukon patients are paying the price for the Liberals' neglect. In the agreement that the government signed with the Yukon Medical Association, they made a commitment to offer doctors and specialists the option of working under a contract instead of fee-for-service.

That is supposed to include giving resident psychiatrists the option of signing a contract. Instead, one local psychiatrist tells us that he has been trying for over a year to move to a contract model. Now he's so frustrated with the Minister of Health and Social Services' lack of action that he has announced that he will be closing his clinic.

Can the minister explain why she is failing to live up to the commitment that her government made, leaving patients paying the price?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, we certainly work closely with the Yukon Medical Association to recognize that physicians have questions about entering into contracts with the Yukon government. Contracts with physicians adhere to Government of Yukon award processes using either an expression of interest or a direct award. If it is appropriate in the circumstances, I can indicate that Yukon government has policies and procurement policies with respect to how those policies apply to all contracts, but it works closely with the Yukon Medical Association to make sure that there is an opportunity for an expression of interest or direct opportunities for physicians to apply for work through contract positions. The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to exploring contract opportunities with physicians interested in a contract or a blended model to support service delivery. This work supports the quadruple aim: to improve patient experience, to improve staff experience, to reduce the costs of health care, and to improve the health of the population. We work closely to make sure that these opportunities are available.

Mr. Cathers: That wasn't even close to an answer to my question.

Mr. Speaker, this local psychiatrist has now made a decision to close his practice. We've been contacted by multiple people who are upset about losing their psychiatrist. The government has signed contracts with other psychiatrists but not with Dr. Elwell. They have also failed to provide a good reason for not entering into a contract, which is supposed to be an option that he can choose, according to the government's agreement with the Yukon Medical Association.

We have heard that other resident psychiatrists in the territory have contracts and that he is the only one who doesn't. This doctor has contacted the Minister of Health and Social Services directly multiple times. Despite this, there has been a lack of action by this Liberal government.

Can the minister tell Yukoners who are worried about the upcoming loss of their psychiatrist why they have failed to act?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member opposite is asking about a private contract between a business owner and the Yukon government here on the Legislative Assembly floor. I can speak generally about the work that we've been doing to make sure that all Yukon health care providers who are interested in working in a contractual situation with the Yukon government are taken seriously — and our commitment to transparency and equity while we work to balance the needs of the health care of Yukoners — and the fiscal responsibilities that we have are worked on in a one-on-one way, if that is the approach that has been taken.

Yukon has a blended model of fee-for-service and contract physicians, and both models play an important role in the delivery of primary and specialist care.

Physicians who do not currently have a contract with the government continue to be compensated using a fee-for-service model. The department is working directly with the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Hospital Corporation to evolve compensation and program development. A joint selection committee consisting of representatives from the Department of Health and Social Services, the Yukon Medical

Association, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation are jointly working to develop the approach as we go forward.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, under this Liberal government, our health care system is beginning to crumble. Hospital services have been cut due to lack of funding. The Liberals eliminated the doctor recruitment position and are only paying half the costs for a YMA recruiter focused on locum coverage. Thousands of Yukoners don't have a doctor and not one single person is focused on recruiting more doctors to move here. There's a shortage of psychiatrists, and we have heard from Yukoners upset that one long-time resident psychiatrist is now closing his practice. This is due to the minister's failure to live up to a commitment made in the agreement with the YMA.

The Premier finally stepped in to take the shelter file off the minister's desk due to her lack of action. Will he now step in and fix this problem before Yukon patients lose their psychiatrist?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I understand that some Yukoners accessing psychiatric services have been informed by their provider — and perhaps this is what the member is talking about — that they may intend to close their practice in the near future.

All physicians practising in the Yukon follow the Canadian Medical Association's code of ethics and professionalism, as well as the Yukon Medical Council's standards of practice, which requires a physician who decides to leave or to close a practice to provide a minimum of 90 days' notice. Those standards of practice also require that any physician who closes their practice must provide the Yukon Medical Council with information on how the transfer of the patients in their care will be managed and how patient records will be transferred and accessible to patients.

Physicians are also responsible for arranging necessary follow-ups for any outstanding investigations, test results, and reports that might ensure continuity of care to the extent possible.

A physician closing their practice must undertake reasonable efforts to arrange alternative care for their patients. Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services accepts referrals of psychiatry patients and can offer further services.

I'm not in receipt of the letter that is being referred to in the question. We will continue to work with doctors — that we want to provide service to Yukoners.

Question re: Health care services

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are starting to become concerned — very concerned at the state of our health care system under the direction of this government. Over the past year, we have seen the issues pile up. There have been service reductions and closures at health care centres throughout rural Yukon; there have been problems with EMS and medevac. The government is driving away volunteers. In Dawson, it has become so bad that people who want to help are trying to start their own ambulance service to fill the gaps. In Watson Lake, the municipal fire department had to step in to fill gaps.

All that we have seen in response to this has been indifference and inaction from this minister. How bad does it need to get before we start to see some real action from this government?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I guess I will take this opportunity to talk about the importance of our transformation of Yukon's health care system, which Yukoners are proud to have been involved in. With respect to the opportunities as we move forward with the implementation of *Putting People First*, I can indicate the importance of making sure that the care that is provided to Yukoners is patient-centred and is a collaboration between health care providers — wraparound services. A great relationship between the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and Yukon Health Services is critical as we go forward.

The system that has been inherited by Yukoners and ignored by previous governments is no longer the route that Yukoners want to take. They want modern conveniences — care provided by a collaboration of health care providers across the Yukon Territory, and that is exactly what they will get.

Mr. Dixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, here is how one long-time Yukon doctor and former president of the YMA describes the current state of the health care system under this Liberal government — quote: “Health care in Yukon ... on the down slide and crashing...” The system is crashing, Mr. Speaker.

There are thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor. We are seeing operating rooms closed or reduced, surgery times are rising, medical imaging such as CT scans, mammograms, and x-rays are being reduced, and according to documents from the hospital itself, wait times will grow even longer for these services. Everyone but the Liberals recognizes that they are chronically underfunding Yukon hospitals. Despite all of this, the minister continues to insist that there is nothing wrong with what she is doing, that the hospitals have all of the money that they need, and none of this is their fault. Well, Mr. Speaker, Yukoners don't agree and they want to see change.

Will the Premier finally step in and take some action to address the shortfalls of this failing minister?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the supplementary budget that is currently before the Legislative Assembly has in it \$17.1 million for the Yukon Hospital Corporation. The members across the way spend a lot of time talking about how they want to support the Yukon Hospital Corporation financially, yet they refuse to support it in a way that is appropriate and supportive of the Yukon supplementary budget and the main budget for this year.

In 2023-24, we budgeted \$512.3 million to the Department of Health and Social Services through O&M. This is an increase of \$6.9 million. It includes a significant increase in the hospital budget. It includes a \$17.1-million increase in this first supplementary budget.

The members opposite talk a good story about how they support Yukoners through their health care system, but they just don't do it financially.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, that is cold comfort to the thousands of Yukoners who don't have a family doctor, the many Yukoners who are sitting on wait-lists for scans or

surgeries, or any of the others who feel let down by this Yukon government. Thousands of Yukoners are without a family doctor and, in response to this, the Yukon government cut the funding for a physician recruiter and now all they can do is try to keep up with locums to fill in.

The minister has failed multiple times now to open a walk-in clinic. We consistently hear from Yukon doctors that they are burning out and are talking about leaving the profession altogether. Earlier today, we heard about a local psychiatrist who is closing his clinic and leaving the territory. The list goes on and on. It's time for a change.

We have seen the Premier step in before to take files off the desks of failing ministers. It is clear that, on this file, the government is failing. So, will the Premier finally step in, exercise some leadership, and take some real action to stop the crash of our health care system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am continually disappointed that the members opposite provide inaccurate information to Yukoners. I think that is an irresponsibility. I don't think it's what they should be doing. I think that if they have issues, they should appropriately bring them forward, but they do so with inaccurate information, which does not assist Yukoners in any way.

A healthy and strong community of primary health care providers is critical to ensuring that Yukoners have access to excellent primary health care services.

We negotiated a memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Medical Association last year to increase Yukoners' access to primary health care services and to foster a strong physician community through a series of innovative initiatives. We will continue that work.

We are working to proceed with the opening of a walk-in clinic that has been designed with Yukon physicians. We are working to increase services for inpatients at the Yukon Hospital Corporation through the hospitalist program. We are working to support our nurses by way of recruitment and retention bonuses.

We have worked tirelessly to make sure that the issues that are currently affecting Yukoners are addressed by our health care system.

Question re: Support for substance use emergency

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, there are many people across the Yukon who are struggling with substance use. When someone is ready to seek or accept help for substance use, it is critical that they are able to access that help immediately. Delays in receiving assistance can mean relapses or worse. We have the Sarah Steele Building. Unfortunately, we know that this facility cannot take everyone who is ready for treatment. We know that if a client's request for a bed is delayed, they receive support within 72 hours and staff help them develop a safety plan, but this is a temporary measure and it is not treatment.

How many people are being wait-listed for access to treatment in the Yukon? How long are they waiting, on

average? And how is this government going to deal with this problem?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the substance use health emergency declaration back in 2022 by this government was a recognition and a call to action to all Yukoners to help address this incredibly important issue. I can also indicate that the work that has come forward as a result of that declaration has been second to none — both at the Department of Health and Social Services as well as with individuals who have worked tirelessly in their own communities to make sure that substance use issues are being addressed in a way that meets people where they are.

Insured Health Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services continue to work with Yukoners to ensure that they can receive the medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care that they need, including care out-of-territory.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, during my visits to Yukon communities, I hear stories from people who are struggling with substance use. They are people who want help and are ready to seek treatment. The problem is that too many people who reach out for help are told that beds are full in Yukon facilities.

Part of the CASA is that all Yukoners have access to funding to seek out-of-territory treatment, but people are being told that funding is already exhausted. There is no support available. That leaves them on their own, feeling abandoned and left to their own resources to cope with a problem that they have already admitted to be beyond their ability to manage.

How is this government going to meet its CASA commitments to Yukoners who want substance use treatment out-of-territory when Yukon services are at capacity?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, Insured Health Services provides pre-approved coverage for eligible plan beneficiaries to attend out-of-territory facilities when the service is not available locally.

In February 2022, Insured Health Services implemented a directive that expanded coverage for out-of-territory residential treatment centres to support Yukoners to access pre-approved out-of-territory, medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care at approved facilities. Yukoners who wish to seek treatment out-of-territory should work with their primary health care provider, who will submit an application to Insured Health Services.

There is also an opportunity for those service applications to be fast-tracked, and many of them have. Treatment is being supported in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta through Homewood Ravensview, the Edgewood Treatment Centre, Last Door recovery centre, and the Last Door addiction recovery services.

The Council of Yukon First Nations, with temporary funding from the federal government, provides support to send individuals out-of-territory to access residential treatment services as well.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, this summer, the government told us about plans to hire up to six more licensed practical nurses to increase the number of bed nights available for

withdrawal management at Sarah Steele. Hiring additional nurses would make more beds available by allowing admission of more clients with high medical needs. This is a desperately needed measure to expand services at the Sarah Steele Building.

How many of these nursing positions are still vacant, and when will those positions be filled so that withdrawal management services can be expanded?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it is the case that additional licensed practical nurses have been hired for the program that is available here in the territory. I can also indicate that there are still some vacancies with respect to hiring those individuals and our work continues as we continue to do so.

I can also indicate that service is provided for individuals to attend treatment outside of the territory, and we work incredibly closely with service providers, medical service providers, the Council of Yukon First Nations, as well as the Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services staff who work with individuals who qualify and need treatment outside of the territory. Our staff work closely with the clients to support referrals for out-of-territory treatment and to help support return-to-territory treatment plans. Detox and sobering services are not insured health services and are not covered through Insured Health Services for out-of-territory medical travel, but we have made adjustments to the plan to make sure that individuals who need help and come forward for help are given help.

Question re: Whitehorse airport improvement costs

Mr. Istchenko: Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, the Yukon government awarded a \$160-million contract to Flatiron Construction for a major reconstruction of the runway at the Whitehorse airport. We have heard that some issues with both the project itself and other projects at the airport have caused some delays and challenges that would increase the cost of the project.

Can the minister confirm that this project is on budget?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The answer to the question is yes, but I will take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker. The Government of Yukon is making crucial investments to Yukon's infrastructure to provide Yukoners with safe and reliable aviation infrastructure for years to come. A number of improvements to the airside of the Erik Nielson Whitehorse International Airport are needed to replace aging infrastructure and to keep the airport up to current standards. This work will support current and future airport operations.

Improvements completed to date include upgrades to the parallel runway, the taxiways, the apron panels, and developing airport land for institutional and commercial use. As the member opposite indicated, the \$160.7-million contract to reconstruct the main runway was awarded to Flatiron Constructors Canada Ltd. on May 19, 2023. The proposed work is scheduled for 2023, 2024, and 2025 — for those construction seasons — and we anticipate that it will be completed by 2026. While this is a large project, we do expect there to be minimal disruptions overall for the travelling public. There is more to

come. This is absolutely exciting work for aviation infrastructure in the Yukon.

Mr. Istchenko: Previously, we asked about the negotiations for change orders on the Nisutlin Bay bridge project and the minister informed us that they are currently in confidential negotiations about change orders for that project.

Can the minister tell us if there are any change orders for the airport project, and if so, is the government currently in negotiations?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: No.

Question re: Yukon University Polaris project funding

Ms. Van Bibber: Yesterday, officials from Yukon University confirmed that there is at least a \$15million funding gap in the budget for the new Polaris science building at the Ayamdigut Campus in Whitehorse.

Can the Minister of Education tell us if the Yukon government will be stepping in to fill that funding gap, and if so, when will that money be made available to the university?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. The Government of Yukon is very proud of its collaboration to establish Yukon University as Canada's first university north of 60. We certainly have worked closely with the university to establish it and to ensure that, as we transition, it is set up for success. We heard some really good information from the president and a member of the Yukon University Board of Governors yesterday.

In terms of the Polaris building, it certainly is an important aspect. We know, of course, that the Government of Canada — and we worked hard to establish those funds for the Polaris building — \$26 million. The president talked yesterday about those dollars and the work that they are doing to ensure that they remain secured. We continue to work closely with the Yukon University on the funding gap that they spoke about yesterday.

Ms. Van Bibber: According to the officials from the Yukon University who appeared yesterday, the project is planned to be tendered in the spring of next year. They confirmed that the project can only begin if they find at least an additional \$15 million in capital, but it would seem that without this funding capital in place, this project will not be going ahead next year.

If the minister is unable to commit to fund this project, can she tell us what the new timeline is for the Polaris project at Yukon University?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, Yukon University is an important project that we worked very hard to establish as a hybrid university in the north. We have certainly worked closely to ensure that the Government of Yukon continues to allocate the appropriate funding for the O&M and to support transition. We continue to support the university in advancing strategic initiatives and joint agreements. The management committee meets on a regular basis to work through various issues. I know that the Department of Highways and Public Works and the Department of Education meet on a regular basis to discuss the next steps — also

including, of course, Health and Social Services — on the science building, also known as the Polaris building. Those discussions are continuing to happen.

Again, this is very important to the future of the Yukon and where we are going. I was happy to hear the witnesses talk yesterday about all the good work that is happening at the university.

Question re: Diesel generators

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, for several years now, we have been critical of the Liberals' decision to rely on rented diesel generators to keep the lights on. The Liberals' position has consistently been that they refuse to invest in permanent thermal backup because it would represent — in their words — an investment in fossil fuel generation. In fact, when the decision was first made to rely on rented diesels, the Premier said — quote: "We believe it's a good investment."

But now we see that their actions aren't matching their words. When they appeared in the Legislature last week, the Yukon Energy Corporation confirmed that they are currently spending \$49 million on permanent thermal backup generation capacity.

Can the minister confirm that the \$49 million that they are spending on permanent diesels is far more than they are spending on renewables this year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the first thing to note is that when we are talking about backup, the ability to make sure that the lights are on if there is a power outage — we are working on permanent diesels — you know, Yukon Energy has the liquefied natural gas plant. That is when it will be permanent, because that is always for backup. When we have been replacing those, we have been buying them, of course, and investing in them. Yes, when you invest in those diesels, you spend a lot of money building a plant because that has to play out over time.

When you contrast that against — when we buy renewable energy through our independent power producer policy and energy purchase agreements, you don't spend that money up front; you spend it over time. So, it's an incorrect comparison.

Look, overall, the Yukon Party does not believe in renewables. Their perspective is — they have criticized, spoken against, and voted against almost everything to do with renewable energy in the Yukon. We will continue to seek pathways to invest in a renewable energy future. I just sat down at the Geoscience Forum talking about the future of critical minerals in this territory and I think that it's completely tied to renewable energy.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, previously, the minister said that the expenditure on diesel generators in Whitehorse, Faro, and Dawson was only meant to be for replacements and that they didn't represent new generation capacity. Despite that assertion from the Liberals, it has become clear that this is not the case. In fact, in Dawson City, the Yukon Energy Corporation is planning to significantly expand the diesel generation capacity. According to the Yukon Energy Corporation's own website, they are planning for up to 15.5

megawatts of diesel generation in Dawson, which is substantially higher than the current generation.

How can the minister continue to refuse to consider permanent thermal generation in Whitehorse when they are actively planning for it in Dawson City?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't refuse — and I ask Yukon Energy Corporation to advise me. I encourage the Yukon Party to listen to Yukon Energy. Each time that they've come in here and acted as witnesses and stated the difference in cost between rental diesels and a diesel plant for capacity, they have stated to us that it's cheaper with rented diesels, but the Yukon Party doesn't listen to that.

I know that they are not going to listen to me, but I think what they ought to do is listen to Yukon Energy. I think they ought to listen to Yukoners. Yukoners want us to invest in renewable energy for the future of the territory.

The Yukon Party has voted against the *Clean Energy Act*. They've spoken against Better Buildings, the Atlin hydro project, pump storage, microgeneration, electric vehicles, and the independent power producer policy. All of those are part of where we want to go as a territory.

Over 90 percent of the electricity on our grid is renewable. Only 10 percent is about diesels, but every question from these folks is about diesels. Let's hear from them about where they want to go with renewables. That's where we should go as a territory.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, for the minister, the microgeneration program is one that we actually launched during our time in government, so to say that we are against it is disingenuous and inaccurate.

Here is a quote from the YEC website answering the question: Why do we still need diesel in Dawson City? "Diesel ensures Yukoners have reliable electricity service during winter peaks, emergencies and whenever renewable resources aren't available. The local diesel engines also help us keep the lights on in Dawson City during maintenance outages taking place elsewhere in the system, and in case of trouble on the transmission line that connects the community to hydro power on the grid. Finally, additional diesel generation will help to provide firm back-up power as more wind and solar projects are added in and around Dawson."

This is exactly what we have been saying — that wind and solar projects are great but are not dependable energy sources at all times. So, I will ask again: Why is it okay to add additional permanent diesel generation in Dawson City but not elsewhere in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, our energy system is under a lot of transition right now and it is going to change more over time. Across all of the network, we need system-wide change and upgrades. We will always need thermal backup for our system in case there are blackouts, and we will have at times, as we build out the system — and I know that the Yukon Party believes that the future is: Just build a diesel plant and then, as the Yukon grows, just fuel the Yukon with diesel.

Do you know what? Our oil companies across the world are not here in the Yukon. We would rather have local energy, and diesel is not local energy. Yes, we need it for backup; yes,

we need it when the lights are out — because we need to make sure that our system is reliable — and yes, we will continue to need to invest in our system as we are doing right now. But the future for the Yukon is renewables, not diesel.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

Notice of opposition private members' business

Ms. White: 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, November 22, 2023. They are Motion No. 856, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King, and Motion No. 683, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.2(3), I would like to identify the items standing in the name of the Official Opposition to be called on Wednesday, November 22, 2023. They are Motion for the Production of Papers No. 12, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge, and Motion No. 471, standing in the name of the Member for Copperbelt North.

Speaker: We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 846

Clerk: Motion No. 846, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

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 Nathan Cross and Leonard Wall to the Yukon Human Rights Commission for a term of three years, effective immediately; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 17(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does revoke the appointments of Samantha Dawson and Keely Bass, effective immediately.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Human Rights Commission consists of five members. Recently, two of the members resigned, which left two vacancies on the commission. As always, these vacancies are advertised and applications were received. The all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees reviewed all the applications and recommended that Nathan Cross and Leonard Wall be appointed to the commission.

These new applicants bring a variety of skills and experience to the panel and I look forward to them being appointed and bringing their expertise to work on the commission. Nathan Cross has experience across many sectors, both public and private here in the Yukon and in other areas across Canada as well as internationally. He brings strong leadership principles to the commission. Leonard Wall has a

wealth of experience working in many roles across Canada as well as overseas with the Canadian Armed Forces. Leonard Wall has previous board and committee experience, both as a member and as a chair. He will bring his knowledge and expertise to the commission.

I thank Nathan Cross and Leonard Wall for taking on this important work and I look forward to them joining the Yukon Human Rights Commission.

I will note briefly, with respect to the revocations that are included in this motion, that Samantha Dawson and Keely Bass have both submitted their resignation as members of the Yukon Human Rights Commission, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them both for their hard work over their terms.

I also would like to thank all those who put their names forward to serve in this role. I thank the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their recommendations and I urge all members of this House to support this motion and the appointments of Nathan Cross and Leonard Wall to the Yukon Human Rights Commission, as well as the revocations of the past members.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition will be supporting this. Myself along with the Member for Porter Creek North are the two appointees to the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees, and we certainly support the new appointments as described by the minister.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, we would like to thank Samantha Dawson and Keely Bass for their service to this board, and we look forward to having both Nathan Cross and Leonard Wall on that board as well.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yeas, nil nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 846 agreed to

Motion No. 847

Clerk: Motion No. 847, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice:

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(2) of the *Human Rights Act*, does reappoint Roxane Larouche to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators for a term of three years, effective December 13, 2023; and

THAT the Yukon Legislative Assembly, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, does revoke the appointment of Marius Curteanu to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators, effective December 13, 2023.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators is currently made up of seven members. The current term of two members will expire on December 13, 2023. These positions were advertised and all applications were reviewed by the all-party Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees.

One of the two members whose terms are expiring did reapply and was considered by the standing committee. The committee recommended that Roxane Larouche be reappointed as a member of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators. Roxane has served two terms on the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators and has gained valuable experience and expertise. I would like to thank Roxane Larouche for reapplying and I am sure that she will continue to contribute to this board in a positive way.

Marius Curteanu was appointed to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators on December 14, 2020. This motion seeks to revoke his appointment, pursuant to subsection 22(3) of the *Human Rights Act*, as of December 13, 2023. I would like to thank Marius Curteanu for his dedication to the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators over his two terms as a member.

Should this motion be passed, the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators membership will be six active members, each bringing a variety of skills and experience to this panel.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of this panel for their hard work and dedication to Yukoners. Thank you also to the Standing Committee on Appointments to Major Government Boards and Committees for their deliberations and their recommendations.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, as I stated before, the Member for Porter Creek North and I sit on that relevant committee, and we agree with the appointments as outlined by the minister, so we will be supporting this motion.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP will also be supporting this motion.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 16 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion No. 847 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

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

Motion re appearance of witnesses

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 15

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I move:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, Al Lucier, Chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, Chief Executive Officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the operations of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes:

THAT from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 21, 2023, Al Lucier, Chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, Chief Executive Officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, appear as witnesses before Committee of the Whole to answer questions related to the operations of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am going to add some comments here today, and maybe others will as well.

First of all, several days ago, on November 16, here in the Assembly, there was a Committee of the Whole debate with Health and Social Services. At that time, the Member for Lake Laberge referenced several times, on pages 4489, 4490, and 4491, the importance of having witnesses here for the Yukon Hospital Corporation and suggested that they were not going to come. He said several times that he felt that the answer was no from the minister, that they would not appear. He speculated several times about them not coming.

He also referenced the fact that, over the past decade, we have had the Hospital Corporation come in every year. Actually, under us, as a Liberal government, we have had the Hospital Corporation appear seven times — once every year over the seven years we have been in. Under the Yukon Party, in their time sitting here, under their five years under the 33rd Legislative Assembly, they had the Hospital Corporation come in three times.

Under the two previous terms under Premier Fentie, over let's say nine years, they had the Hospital Corporation come in twice. So, I think that our record stands showing that we have brought in witnesses regularly, and the opposition has done it some of the time; that's fine. But there are a couple of other things that I will just point out. The first one is that, over our time in this Assembly, we have brought witnesses in 33 times. It has been very regular with the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board, the Yukon Development Corporation, Yukon Energy Corporation, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. We have also brought in the Yukon University several times. Then we brought in others.

In the spring of last year, April 5, 2022, we sought to bring in the Yukon University. The members voted against. On April 7, we sought to bring in the Yukon Development Corporation and the Yukon Energy Corporation. The members voted against. But that same year, they said: Hey, we need the Yukon Energy Corporation to come in as witnesses. I said:

Okay. But I'll tell you, it is a little bit frustrating to hear at the first instance that they vote against having witnesses come in and then say: Make sure to bring witnesses in.

Also, by the way, several times now, we are given motions or use motions that have been used over time here where we bring those witnesses in here on their valuable time, from 3:30 to 5:30, and several times now we have run out of questions from the opposition members. So, I ask the members opposite — if at the same time that they are insisting that we bring in witnesses — to make sure that we are using those witnesses' time well — and apologies to the NDP, because this is really about the Yukon Party.

I think that this is important to have these witnesses in here. This is a very important use of our time and very important for Yukoners. I am standing up today because I am a little bit concerned with how the Yukon Party has referenced witnesses coming in here and I just want to state for the record that we have been very consistent with bringing witnesses in.

Committee of the Whole Motion No. 15 agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 3, Department of Education, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Education — *continued*

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I would like to ask my colleagues to please help me welcome back our officials from the Department of Education: Deputy Minister Mary Cameron and the director of finance, Andrea McIntyre.

I know that I have some time left on the clock, but I am just going to cede the floor to the members opposite.

Ms. White: I will also echo the “welcome back” of the officials from the Department of Education.

Last debate, we had started talking about TOCs. We were talking about the example of Holy Family, on average in a day, being short-staffed by anywhere from 15 to 25 percent and talking a bit about ideas in other jurisdictions, such as supply teachers.

The last question that I had for the minister was: Have the minister and her officials looked into supply teachers or a way to fill those gaps for the teacher-on-call shortage? I am really looking for what solutions have been offered up by the

Department of Education when it comes to the shortage of teachers on call.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will just start by talking about some of the current numbers of teachers on call. It's quite fluid. There are a lot of changes on a day-to-day basis, but as of November 19, there were 227 registered teachers on call in the Yukon. There were 179 from Whitehorse and 48 rural. We have in the queue right now — working on screening and hiring 41 others. That's 33 in Whitehorse and eight rural, so the numbers are quite good.

There are 23 teachers on call — 15 from Whitehorse and eight rural — who have moved from teacher-on-call positions to temporary positions, supporting schools, since the start of the 2023-24 school year. Of course, we are continuing all efforts to recruit teachers on call and recognize that demand for coverage continues to be a challenge in some schools. We are working directly with those schools.

We continue to evolve our recruitment efforts to attract candidates for teacher-on-call roles and to support staff in accepting assignments as they are available. That's a really big part of it — really working with the teachers on call to help ensure that they are comfortable in taking the role and are supported in that.

An information session was held at Employment Central on October 26 and we are in the process of hiring a TOC and assistant education outdoor guide, so that was very successful. We intend to hold information sessions on an ongoing basis in Whitehorse as well as in the communities in the coming weeks through Employment Central, with Dawson City being the first on November 23, so later this week.

We are intending to attend the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations career fair on November 30. We are planning and will be participating in an open house at Selkirk Elementary School. This was a pilot to generate the interest and provide information to community members on what the role is for teachers on call.

We have certainly used all other social media platforms and are working to increase visibility in universities, on YuWin, Employment Central, and other recruiting sites. We have sent targeted communication to former TOC retirees, candidates from the Apply to Education registry, and applicants from the educational assistants competitions.

I definitely gained some good insights from the Association of Yukon School Councils, Boards and Committees in terms of just hearing directly from school councils about different issues that they are facing. They have some really good ideas, and we have certainly followed up on those and we welcome more of that dialogue.

We recognize the renegotiation. If I recall, some of the areas that the member brought forward in our last Education debate were areas that we certainly will be looking at, as the renegotiation of our collective agreement is coming up. It's coming to an end in June 2024. I think that there is certainly a joint opportunity to collaborate with the YAEP through the negotiation process on some of those other ideas and opportunities for teachers on call.

Ms. White: I am more interested in the solutions that are being investigated. I know that there was the meeting with TOCs, department staff, and a representative from the union a number of weeks back. Some interesting things came out and I learned some things about that.

Can the minister explain to me how TOCs are paid in the territory? Is it a daily rate or is it hours worked? How does that work in the territory?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The teachers on call are currently paid on a daily rate.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The reason why I am asking is that it matters for EI. For example, for EI purposes, a full day is considered to be five hours on a paystub of a TOC in the Yukon, but there are very few days where a TOC will only work five hours for a full day. Often, it's six hours or more because they are not getting breaks; they are covering things like recess or lunch, and so I'm wondering if there is an interest or a willingness to look into the day rate, the calculation of hours, so that it correctly reflects for EI.

Hon. Ms. McLean: As I have stated a couple of times during various debates, we are moving into a bargaining year with the YAEP and these items may be part of the renegotiation, so it is not appropriate for us to go down certain paths in this debate. I have heard many of the issues that have been raised during this debate and other debates about different ideas and some of the issues that folks are struggling with and I definitely have taken note of all of that and will be working toward hopefully resolving some of those issues.

Ms. White: Thank you, Chair, and I acknowledge the minister's response, but I disagree. This is affecting teachers right now and it is affecting our ability to maintain teachers on call, so I am going to continue with the questions and she can repeat to me that it's inappropriate to talk about due to outgoing negotiations, but I will still do that.

There was a TOC who reached out and talked about their time in working as a TOC in British Columbia where they said that their pay was based on their experience and education and how that made sense. In British Columbia, they took on more challenging classes and felt valued. Then they said that, in Yukon, there is a flat rate and it's not even comparable to British Columbia. In BC, they make close to \$400 a day, had benefits, and were part of a union. Here, they make \$268 a day and are now part of a teachers association. The point was that the pay didn't reflect the experience, so I guess I will ask the minister if that is something that she and her department are looking into.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, I'm happy to hear different ideas, especially from other jurisdictions and some of what could be solutions to some of the issues. We have a current collective agreement, and we are coming to the end of this collective agreement in 2024 and will be moving into the renegotiation of our collective agreement at that time. I certainly take note of the issues that we have faced over these last few years, especially coming out of COVID-19 and all of the challenges that we have faced. We have learned a lot, of course, during that time and even more about how important teachers on call are in managing and navigating disruptions in

school or illness. We certainly will take all of what we have learned and bring it forward as we move into that next year of renegotiation.

Ms. White: Madam Chair, do the teachers, as they get onboarded in the territory, have to take non-violent crisis intervention training?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We have spent a lot of time working on the safer schools action plan and ensuring that teachers, administrators, and staff are trained in the policies and procedures in all of our schools. We have trained all Yukon administrators, teachers, and staff on new policies and procedures for preventing harm to students as part of our student protection policy. We will continue to offer regular training sessions on non-violent crisis intervention, which is a standard for managing students' behaviour in a positive manner. These training sessions are made available every month and teachers need to sign up, but it is mandatory.

Ms. White: Is that same training available for teachers on call?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We certainly provide access to that training. At this point in time, it's not mandatory, but in looking forward in terms of ensuring that teachers are equipped and supported, these are important considerations. The superintendents and the assistant deputy minister of schools and all of the work that we've done in reimagining inclusive and special education — also known as RISE — are all working toward ensuring that folks that are working within our schools in all positions are supported.

Ms. White: Knowing that courses could be possibly available for teachers on call, one would think that when we're talking about things that both make classrooms and teaching staff safer, I would hope that it would be mandatory.

The next suggestion I would have is that teachers on call not would only have access to it but would be paid for their time. Is that something that the minister would entertain?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. We certainly do have provisions to pay teachers on call outside of teaching time. Again, it's another item that may be part of the renegotiation of the collective agreement. I will note that, in terms of support for educational assistants and teachers on call, in January and February 2023, we provided specific training to educational assistants and will continue to offer this training during the 2023-24 school year. We will, of course, work with our partners to develop a training and implementation plan for both educational assistants and teachers on call.

The Department of Education provides \$475,000 in annual funding to the Yukon Association of Education Professionals for training and activities as well related to professional growth, curriculum implementation, and other priorities.

Ms. White: Just for clarification, when the minister talks about educational assistants, is she talking about staff with contracts — whether they have a term contract or are permanent staff — when she talks about educational assistants having access to training, is she talking about employees at the Department of Education?

Hon. Ms. McLean: They both have access to that training.

Ms. White: Then, again, just for additional clarification — so, currently, TOCs who are not working have access to the training, and is that training paid for?

Hon. Ms. McLean: If they are part of our registered TOCs and they have been onboarded, then they have access.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that clarification. So, understanding that those TOCs have been onboarded and they have access to that training, are they paid when they attend those training classes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are currently, again, following the current collective agreement, and there are some times — particularly during onboarding with teachers on call — and we work closely with the union around this — we have currently in our collective agreement where TOCs may not be compensated for their time during some of the orientations. But we do have policy and provision to pay for training outside of that which we can apply to other training opportunities.

Ms. White: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for that answer. For TOC hours, is it the Department of Education that calculates the hours that are worked by TOCs, or is it some other body? When a TOC goes to work at a school, who collects the hours and who calculates their pay?

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is a responsibility of the administrators of the school. This may be something that's delegated to a vice-principal or someone else at the school, but it has to be delegated, and it is certainly time-sheet driven and it is the responsibility of the administrators to log in to the system and ensure that the hours are recorded to be paid within the Yukon government pay system.

Ms. White: I'm just going to ask a few more clarifying questions on that. My understanding at that meeting that was held with the Yukon Association of Education Professionals and some of the department staff is that TOCs had highlighted concerns about not being paid on time. As an example, a friend of mine worked as support staff for an outdoor education program in September and still, weeks ago, had yet to be paid for it. I brought it up at the meeting and was told that it's actually not the Department of Education who does the calculation, so I'm just looking for clarification. If a school submits the hours and those hours get submitted to the Department of Education, is it someone within Yukon government who writes the cheque or does that calculation to pay the individual?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I will say, of course, that both the Public Service Commission and the Department of Education are working to improve documentation processes to ensure that employees are onboarded quickly and hours worked are submitted prior to pay cut-off dates so that folks can be compensated.

I would really encourage anyone who may have issues to be in touch right away with their administrator to work out a solution to make sure that somebody is aware that there is an issue here — if someone hasn't been compensated.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I do think, unfortunately, that this wasn't a solo event. As we know, the questions were asked earlier in the Sitting about teachers on call

not being paid on time. It's important that we respect those who work so hard for us.

I am sure I could ask many more questions, but I know we only have 15 minutes to go. I am going to hand the floor over to my colleague and thank the minister and her officials for their time.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate the opportunity to ask a couple of questions. I didn't think I had any, but there are a couple of issues that have arisen.

The first one is with respect to the *Education Act* — part 3 of the *Education Act*. Section 20 is entitled "Student Records". I will read into the record the particular clause that I am referring to: "The parents of a student, a student who is 16 years of age or older, or both the parents and the student, may examine and copy the record of the student."

We have heard some concerns from one family in particular that they are being denied access to the records. I am curious if the minister has heard of this situation or any situations where that has been denied and if she will work with the department to rectify this so that the parents can access the student's records.

Hon. Ms. McLean: We certainly do not want to prevent families from accessing records when we are able to provide them. We will work with all individuals who have requested records to provide as much information as we are able to provide. It depends, of course, on the circumstances. If there are issues around privacy through the ATIPP act — or there may be other active investigations that are ongoing that may prevent us from providing the full records — we will work on an individual case-by-case basis as I think what I'm trying to say. We will work collaboratively with that individual or the family to work toward ensuring that we are providing as much information as we are able to provide.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to circle back on this. Division 3 of the *Education Act* is entitled, "Parent Rights and Responsibilities", and section 20 — I will just read section 20(1): "Every school administration shall establish and maintain a student record for each student enrolled in its school in accordance with the guidelines established by the Minister." The specific clause that I was referring to is: "The parents of a student, a student who is 16 years of age or older, or both the parents and the student, may examine and copy the record of the student."

To me, that's pretty straightforward. I am not sure what — if the minister could just elaborate on what specific circumstances would prevent that clause of the act.

My understanding is that the parents of a younger student or an elementary school-aged student are requesting to examine and copy the records of that particular student, so I thought it was spelled out quite clearly in the act that they have the right to do so. I'm just curious if the minister can elaborate on her previous comments with respect to a case-by-case basis or special circumstances where that wouldn't occur.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, in terms of us working, of course, within the *Education Act*, the ATIPP and privacy act — these are all responsibilities that we have within the Department of Education. There may be extenuating circumstances or other

information that may be contained in records that cause privacy concerns for others. It is very difficult to speak directly to a situation and not having all of the information. It is very difficult for me — I'm not able to, of course, speak to individual matters on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I really encourage the member to ensure that the individuals whom he may be speaking about are working directly with the Department of Education on this and through other support systems. I would encourage that.

Mr. Kent: Perhaps what I will do is just provide some additional information to the minister via letter and that will give her the information that she requires to gain a better understanding of the personal situation that I'm referring to.

Just one other topic that I wanted to follow up on was a question that my colleague the Member for Porter Creek North raised in Question Period earlier today and that is with respect to the Polaris building at Yukon University. Of course, that is the name that has been chosen for the science building. It was a number of years ago — maybe four years ago — that the federal government committed \$26 million to this building. Estimates last year for it were \$41 million.

Witnesses from the university told us yesterday that they have a pending application, I think, for \$5 million that hasn't been approved yet. The witnesses also said yesterday that they were planning on going forward with construction in the spring of 2024, but that was dependent on them having the full amount of funding available. They weren't able to give an updated cost estimate, but based on last year's — and if this other funding application doesn't go through — \$15 million-plus would be the gap. I am curious if the university has approached the minister about closing that gap, and if so, how much have they asked for? What dollar amount have they asked for to close the funding gap on the Polaris building at Yukon University?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yukon government certainly is in support of Yukon University. This has been an important aspect of the transition. The science building, also known as the Polaris building, is an important project. It is being managed by Yukon University and, as I stated today in Question Period, we continue to work closely with officials from the university through the departments of Highways and Public Works, Health and Social Services, and Education, and we continue to work collaboratively toward a resolution to the funding gap.

Mr. Kent: So, there has been no official request for an exact amount of funding from the university to the Yukon government to close that funding gap that exists for the Polaris building?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are working closely with Yukon University. There is still work to be done, I think, on finalizing some of those estimates and I believe that is what the witnesses talked about yesterday. It is and it remains an important project for the Yukon University in their strategic plan of becoming — we will continue to work with them to continue to work toward solutions around the funding gap that has been identified. Again, Yukon University is managing this project.

Mr. Kent: What we will do is watch, obviously, the upcoming budget in the spring to see if there are any resources there.

I just wanted to take the time to thank the officials. I think they have been here a few times during this Sitting to provide support to the minister. At this point, that concludes my questions in general debate and I move to expedite clearance of this vote.

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

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

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

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

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

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,570,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,570,000 agreed to

Department of Education agreed to

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, I move that you report progress.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountainview that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 15 adopted earlier today, Committee of the Whole will receive witnesses from Yukon Hospital Corporation. In order to allow the witnesses to take their places in the Chamber, the Committee will now recess and reconvene at 3:30 p.m.

Recess

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

Appearance of witnesses

Chair: Pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 15 adopted on this day, Committee of the Whole will now receive witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I would ask all members to remember to refer their remarks through the Chair when addressing the witnesses, and I would also ask the witnesses to refer their answers through the Chair when they are responding to the members of the Committee.

The time allotted for opening remarks is five minutes and I will warn you when you have 30 seconds remaining in your time.

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

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 Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Member for Riverdale South, I believe that you will introduce the witnesses.

Witnesses introduced

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Acting Chair, one of the key factors in the transformation of the Yukon's health care system is the relationship between the government and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. I am very pleased to welcome today as witnesses before the Legislative Assembly Al Lucier, who is the Chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Jason Bilsky.

Acting Chair: Would the witnesses like to make brief opening remarks?

Mr. Lucier: Madam Acting Chair, thank you for the privilege to speak to you today. The programs and services provided by our hospitals are not faceless entities. Each one is provided by our diverse team of skilled and dedicated employees, the medical team of physicians, and our many volunteers.

On behalf of Yukon hospitals, I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing support and collaboration of the many partners that help us bring quality care to Yukoners. Without the Government of Yukon, Yukon First Nations, other community agencies, and the many donors to the Yukon Hospital Foundation, we would not be able to achieve our purpose.

In last year's address to the Legislature, I spoke about the challenges that health care faced as we emerged from COVID-19. I spoke about unprecedented times in our history of providing services and operating hospitals. I wish I were here today to provide comfort that all of that is behind us. Unfortunately, the picture I paint today has a number of cracks.

The pressures being experienced in our hospitals can be expressed in three specific areas: increased volumes and complexities of patients, the critical and chronic shortage of health care human resources, and the unrelenting inflationary pressures on consumables and services needed to provide care.

Increased volumes and complexity of patients — the volumes of patients are increasing across the Yukon hospital system due to the increase in population and aging citizens. This means that while the hospital still does a very good job of dealing with urgent needs, the increased volume can grow wait times for others. The system is also experiencing higher acuity of its patients. This has implications across the system as more complex patients need more services.

Health human resources shortage — this is not a Yukon-centric issue. This issue is being felt across the country. We are experiencing the most acute shortages in our nursing ranks. Simply put, we are not able to staff our funded positions. Our services and programs are delivered by people, so in the absence of our regular staff, Yukon hospitals utilize agency nurses. While critical to our operations, these nurses come at a premium cost. This affects our staff and puts pressure on our budget and likewise the services that we provide as we work within our means. We are engaged in several efforts to recruit and grow our own nursing resources, but these initiatives take time to mature and deliver results.

The inflationary pressures — supplies like treatment medications, contracted services like radiology or lab services, and other costs such as insurance premiums and wages just simply cost more. Yukon hospitals work very closely with our partners to do our very best to forecast costs and build those into our yearly budgets. However, when costs outpace budgeted expenditures, it places operational pressures on the services that we provide. These pressures are all interlinked and impact our ability to provide care to Yukoners.

I want the members of this Legislature to understand that I don't believe that these issues being faced by our hospitals are partisan in nature, nor do I believe that there is any quick fix to these issues. I do want to remind Yukoners that amid the concerns and pressures, there are areas worth celebrating. This fall, we saw the start of construction on the mental wellness unit on the Whitehorse General Hospital campus. This year also saw the replacement of Yukon's only CT imaging equipment. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that 2023 brought the 30th anniversary of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Also celebrating this anniversary were the First Nation health programs. Yukon continues to be recognized as a vanguard across Canada in this area. Our dedicated staff and partners continue to provide a guiding light into the continued efforts of truth and reconciliation, decolonization, and indigenization in our hospitals.

In closing, I want to leave you with the belief that, through concerted efforts of improved collaboration, better understanding of patient needs, improved integration of service, and a greater willingness to explore creativity and innovation in the system, we can overcome our current pressures and celebrate more successes.

Thank you, and we look forward to your questions.

Mr. Cathers: Madam Acting Chair, I want to begin by thanking Mr. Lucier and Mr. Bilsky for appearing here today as witnesses, as well as acknowledge and thank Myra Iles, a member of the board, for appearing in the gallery.

I would like to begin by thanking all of them for the work that they do and asking them to pass on my thanks to the Yukon Hospital Corporation board and to the management team, employees, and medical staff for the work that every one of them does to provide high-quality health care and services to Yukoners. Our health care system depends on the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the people who work in our hospitals, so the work that they do is vitally important to Yukoners.

As well, I note that, in addition to the remarks that the chair made, in the year –in-review message signed by both the chair and CEO, it includes the quote: “Now, we find ourselves encountering unique and incomparable pressures to anything we’ve faced before.”

To do the vitally important work of the Hospital Corporation, the Hospital Corporation needs money, so my first question is about the financial challenges that the hospital is facing. The audited financial statements for the last fiscal year show expenses \$2 million higher than revenues. For two of the last three years that we have audited financial statements, hospital expenses exceeded revenues by millions of dollars. In one of those three years, expenses were \$4 million higher than revenue. Clearly, this places an enormous strain on our hospital system.

For the 2023 fiscal year, the Auditor General of Canada’s letter accompanying the audited financial statements expresses concern about the fact that over \$7 million in funding voted for capital was used for O&M. I am sure there was a reason for that and that hospital management felt it necessary at the time. Would the witnesses please explain why the decision was made to use capital funding to cover O&M last fiscal year?

Mr. Lucier: Last year, we did the same as every year. We go about looking across the services that are provided at the hospital, the costs associated to those, the expectation for the growth of the costs of those things. These all become forecasts which we build into the budget. The budget is brought before the board; the board approves the budget.

As I mentioned in my opening comments, there was no way to simply budget some of the expenditures that we experienced last year — the cost in heating oil, the cost in chemo drugs, the reliance and utilization of agency nurses — while we maintained a number in just about every case that was above our previous year in delivery of services, the number of people we saw in the ED and the number of people we saw on medical units. With these increases and with the flow, as I mentioned in my opening comments, there wasn’t a possibility that we could accurately forecast the budgeted expenditures. As a result, where we had funds that were within the capital envelope, we utilized those to ensure that we could maintain services to Yukoners that were needed and that we made those very transparent to the government at the time.

In the forthcoming budget, we were able to show an increase of those costs that would be represented in the budget and, most recently, a remedy to the situation occurring last year by fulfilling the topping up of that money taken from the capital so that those projects can continue to advance as planned.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. Last November when I raised concerns about the adequacy of funding from the Yukon government, I asked the witnesses what the annual operational budget was for that fiscal year. The CEO replied — quote: “YG’s annual O&M budget for the fiscal 2022-23 is \$103.5 million.” That quote is found in Hansard on page 2846.

Could the witnesses please tell us what the hospital O&M budget submitted to the Yukon government was for the current fiscal year?

Mr. Bilsky: YG’s annual O&M budget for the fiscal 2023-24 is a balanced budget of \$115.2 million. This includes all of our hospitals, which are in Whitehorse, Watson Lake, and Dawson City. What I can tell you is that 85 percent of this revenue is sourced from government funding. The remaining 15 percent relates to patient-related revenues, interest, contracts, and other revenue. YG’s core funding includes a four-percent core increase. There are other one-time funding increases as well as a \$6.4-million increase in fiscal 2023-24, which was delivered to us recently in September through Management Board. That is to reset the core funding to acknowledge some of the deficit issues that we were facing as far as run rates going into this current year.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. On top of the needs that Yukon hospitals anticipated for the current fiscal year, we understand that you are dealing with an increase in demand for services beyond what was expected.

In October, both of the witnesses here today did an interview with CBC. At the time, the CEO spoke of — quote: “...significant pressures that we’re seeing at the hospital...” and indicated that this was “...due to a number of factors.” He also stated that these were — quote: “... causing increased demand for services that we provide and are far exceeding what we anticipated.”

Could the witnesses please talk about significant cost pressures this fiscal year and what notable factors are responsible for those cost pressures?

Mr. Lucier: Most significant, as mentioned in the opening comments, is our reliance on agency nurses. That’s not a straight-across number for every area. You have to realize that nurses come with specialities that are required in various areas, but by and large, that is the largest fiscal pressure that we’re experiencing.

That is not just to address the increase in volume; that is to deliver the services that the Yukon Hospital Corporation does, whether that’s on the medical unit, whether that’s in the emergency department, whether that’s in our ORs — that’s the number one issue.

There are other pressures, though, that exist. As I mentioned, medication — and this is for treatment medication, so the increase in chemotherapy drugs, for example, has increased. With modern medicine, the utilization of chemotherapy is not simply a treatment for cancer any longer, so we are seeing an increased utilization of a drug in treatments that is going up.

In my opening comments, I used areas such as insurance — last year, over our insurance premiums, we saw a 13percent increase in the cost of those insurance premiums. This year, we saw a 14percent increase in our insurance premiums — not controllable and not even budgetable at those kinds of double-digit numbers — 27 percent in insurance premiums in the last two years.

Those are just some examples and I’m sure that the CEO can provide greater detail on those.

Mr. Bilsky: Thank you for those questions and that comment. To put this in context, I’m just going to reiterate a little bit of what Mr. Lucier commented on in his opening.

Hospital and health systems in Canada are under extreme pressures at the moment. That's a fact.

As the chair had mentioned, the pressures are from inflationary costs, human resources, and increasing complexities of care. This, coupled with a growing and disproportionate amount of aging demographics in our territory, is causing demands that I don't think that we could have projected. I think it's difficult to project any one of these in isolation and impossible to forecast all of these in combination.

Suffice it to say that the demands and pressures are growing significantly and possibly exponentially. This means that the environment is extremely dynamic at this point in time, and efforts to maintain safe and excellent hospital care within the balance of the resources and constraints afforded to us is a constant effort on our part. It is an environment of unlimited needs and limited resources.

To address these needs and limited resources that we have, we continuously work with government on a number of fronts, taking a collaborative system-wide approach to health delivery that we have never taken before. This includes how we and our health care partners can be better aligned and integrated to serve the health needs of Yukoners. This means identifying and addressing priorities to be able to provide safe and excellent hospital care to all Yukoners, recognizing that hospitals must live within fiscal constraints while still meeting significant growth pressures.

I must also mention that we are not only talking about money here. It is as much about workforce preservation and as much about protecting the ability to provide urgent care when it's absolutely needed. That means prioritization in some respects.

To be more specific on some of the pressures that we are seeing in year — pressures on nursing and employee costs, approximately a 60percent increase year over year on the premium that we are paying because of agency nurses. These premiums are two to three times the cost of permanent staff. Volumes and pressures in surgical services — our run rate right now is approximately an 18percent increase year over year. Increase in volume and complexity of testing and outpatient services, primarily medical imaging but also including areas such as lab — 10percent to 11percent increases year over year. Then, when we talk about increases in chemotherapy — 16percent volume increases and 33percent increases in cost. Lastly, freight, utilities, supplies, food — ranging from 20percent to 30percent increases in all of those areas. That is what we are seeing.

Now I go back to my original statement. It is an extremely dynamic environment, and I will say that, at the beginning of this year, we were forecasting and forwarded a balanced budget, thanks to the Yukon government. But as the year progresses, yes, we are seeing expenses greater than that budget and it is because of all of the pressures and demands that I am speaking about. Thankfully, though, I would say that we are working very closely with government, and on a personal note, I think that we are working more closely with government than I have ever seen in the past under the direction of our chair and

the direction of the minister. I have to say that, in my experience — and I have been through many and this is not to discredit previous deputy ministers — the relationship I have with the current Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Tiffany Boyd, is probably the best that I have seen. It has to be the best, because we are in such a dynamic and pressured environment that we have to be very responsive and reactive. That's what we strive to do — provide safe, quality care.

Mr. Cathers: The CEO spoke of “unlimited needs and limited resources” and the need to live within financial constraints. I am sure that the witnesses are aware that we have asked a number of questions recently about services at Whitehorse General Hospital being cut to fit the budget. This includes cuts to medical imaging services and individual caps on the number of mammograms, X-rays, and a list of other procedures.

My question is: How big is that particular part of the funding challenge? Could the witnesses please tell us how much money would allow you to resume providing all of those medical imaging services at full capacity?

Mr. Bilsky: I think that it is important to put this in context — put the comments that were made in this House in context — and possibly clarify several of the items.

I believe that the comments that were brought forward in the House came from an internal e-mail within our system — manager to staff. The purpose of that e-mail was certainly to help support our environment in living within the means that we have, but I do think that to use the word “cut” isn't exactly the appropriate context that we should put that in.

As an example, I would say that the majority, if not all, of the modalities that were spoken about are at least a level that was prior to that e-mail going out, if not increasing a level. The reason that this direction was given to individuals within that department is to ensure that, as we see increasing demands, we continue to live within the means that we have. By no means was it a cutting exercise. It was more to set the expectation as we go forward that we probably will not be able to meet all of the demands, and unfortunately, that does, in some circumstances, mean increasing wait-lists, but the volumes of services that we are providing in all of those modalities — the majority, I would say, are at least as high if not higher — that we are projecting to be higher than they were in the previous year.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that the witnesses do have to work with the government and, at times, this can place them in an awkward situation regarding this.

However, again, when we heard that areas such as mammography specifically were able to provide 120 per week and have been reduced to 75, we can debate how to characterize that, but from my perspective, that is a reduction in services.

Again, the e-mail that went out in early November set specific caps. We understand that in the area of X-ray, for example, in some cases, those caps have been reached by mid-morning. My question was about the scope of the funding problem within that particular area — medical imaging. How much additional money would allow the hospital to resume providing those medical imaging services at full capacity?

Mr. Bilsky: I think it's important that I clarify some of the facts before I actually answer the question, because it does put the question in context — mammography in particular. The numbers that were spoken about — I don't think they are quite correct. Historically, we were able to provide 10 procedures per day and approximately 200 per month. That put us in that range of approximately 2,400 per year that we were providing. That's with the limitation of the staff that we had, but also keep in mind that it is heavily weighted to the fees and the radiologists that read outside of the territory.

What we had performed was — we saw the increasing demand over time. In the months of August, September, and October, we performed what I would call a "blitz". We actually performed 20 per day. That is augmenting the internal resources we have, thankfully, with a cross-trained CT/X-ray technician. We were able to increase the number temporarily and that was to begin to manage the wait-list. Then, subsequent to this, our expectation is that mammography will drop down to between 12 and 15 procedures per day, which is still higher than the average of 10 previous to that. As far as I am concerned, that means that there is an increase in the level of services that we are able to provide.

When we speak about the commentary about reaching a cap mid-day, to put that in context, certainly we are talking about the target number of procedures that we do per modality. That, again, is not just about money — although it is making sure that we live within our means. It's about preserving our workforce and making sure that we meet the needs of the population.

When I speak about preserving the workforce, it's as much to make sure that — thankfully, our people are so dedicated to what they do that they will go to any means to provide the service that is needed — and sometimes to their own detriment, meaning working too much and too much overtime. It is about making sure we preserve our workforce and protect the ability for us to provide urgent services when needed.

The second part of that is about making sure that we prioritize those services. I think it's not quite correct to say that we had reached a cap, so mid-morning, we stop providing. That is not what happens. What happens is — we certainly triage and make sure we are meeting the most urgent demands during the day. If at any point in the day we start to see that we are reaching the limits of the capacity that we're designed to provide, we will start triaging and making sure that the most appropriate procedures are done. That could be for reasons like the person is out of town; it may be for reasons that it is more urgent than others or that they are preparing for another procedure or it is required for another procedure. There is a multitude of different reasons. For those reasons, we may be asking others to say, Hey, another day, because of the fact that we need to triage others into place. It's not a hard cap, and I think that was presented.

Lastly, to answer the question about the amount of money it would take — I think that was the question — the amount of resources it would take — certainly, there are constraints, and those could be physical or they could be human resource constraints, and all of these things are financially driven, for the

most part. Some of them are just not available. If we have been trying to recruit for very difficult — to fill positions for some time in certain areas and it's just not available, so we use other tactics. We grow our own; we cross-train; we look for innovative ways to make sure that we retain our people.

Having said that, the solution there — I couldn't tell you the exact, but I can tell you that it is a dynamic environment, similar to my previous comment, and it is something we have to work with consistently and very often with government to make sure that we are addressing and balancing the needs.

Mr. Cathers: Again, I do appreciate the information. I would also note that, much as the chair and CEO noted in their year-in-review message about "unique and incomparable pressures", we are hearing a lot of concern from patients and health care providers about the impact of these changes. Regardless of whatever terminology is used regarding it, if the services are not being provided at the volume that they were and if again, as I noted, we have heard about the X-ray cap being hit by mid-morning, it is having an impact.

I am going to move on to the next area that we've heard about regarding cost-cutting measures. We have learned from doctors that cost-cutting measures being considered at the hospitals include cuts to the operating room and surgical services of up to 30 percent. The minister confirmed this last week, stating — and I quote from Hansard: "The next part of the question is about a reduction in surgical services that could be as much as 30 percent of the capacity. This is certainly one of the topics that I spoke to the chair and the CEO of the Hospital Corporation about yesterday. It has been presented as a possible option for some reduction..."

One long-time local doctor told us that an operating room has already been shut down due to a lack of funding from the Yukon government. Could the witnesses please confirm the status of this? Have surgical services already been reduced? Are surgical services going to be reduced for budgetary reasons?

Mr. Lucier: I think it's really important to understand that there's a difference between volume and the number of procedures, because while they're linked, they're not the same. I look at surgical procedures, and in the time that I've sat in this chair — about two and a half years — the number that I know that we have the capacity for is about 3,200 per year. Now, those aren't all hip replacements, but they are procedures that take place inside of an operating room. In the two and half years that I have sat in this position, we have never delivered 3,200 procedures. We have always delivered far more than that.

The volume that is the pressure on the system is about the needs of the population. As the population grows, as the population ages, and as the acuity of that population increases, that demand and flow increases. The number of procedures we do has continued to increase, and what our job is to do is to balance that need between that never-ending flow and the need to provide health care to those in a prioritized or triaged manner at the capacity that we can.

When we talk about — and we know — we know that this territory is growing. We know that it might be the fastest-growing jurisdiction in maybe all of North America, all of the

G7; I have seen all sorts of different numbers. That input on the flow, on the volume, is going to increase, and I think that the hospital has done a really good job — continues to do a really good job — in meeting that demand and providing those services.

For the purposes of understanding of the complexity of it, I think that understanding those two dynamics and trying to find the balance in the delivery of health services is important, and I will turn it over to Mr. Bilsky to give you the specifics of it.

Mr. Bilsky: Yes, just to expand it a little bit — we are entrusted with public resources to meet the needs of Yukoners. As Mr. Lucier was alluding to, having sustainable surgical services is critical to our environment. There would be some who would say that your surgical department is the heartbeat of your hospital. I think that all people — all areas — would say that they are the heartbeat, but it is a critical part of our system.

As Mr. Lucier said, sometimes the needs are far in excess of the available resources that we have — resources meaning people, time, and money. Just to put a fine point on it, demands on surgical services have grown substantially over the past three to five years. Year-over-year volumes as of today were trending toward 18 percent higher this year over last year.

To ensure that we meet the needs of emergency and urgent care and preserve the staff and workforce by not overwhelming them, sometimes it may mean managing the elective and non-urgent cases. It doesn't mean that they won't get done; it means that there is a potential that people have to wait slightly longer or longer than what is expected but, again, managing that within the resources that we have within the system. At this point, we are working very, very closely with government to see how we can maintain the level of services within the surgical services department. To that point, right now, the plan would be to maintain the level of procedures that we were able to perform last year. As I mentioned earlier, it is a very dynamic environment, and we have to be responsive to that.

What I can also tell you is that we will ensure that emergent and urgent care is taken care of, so all of those surgeries that fit that criteria will continue to be done no matter what period that we are in. Also, we are continuing to work on areas of cataracts and meeting targets that we have set in collaboration with government to ensure that we are managing those wait times and wait-lists — and similarly with orthopaedic joint replacements. We have a certain target that we want to meet and keep on the table so that we can, again, manage those wait-lists.

Again, just in closing on that question, what I can say is that it is a dynamic environment, and we continue to work with government to create solutions for that.

Mr. Cathers: I am pleased to hear the witnesses indicate that they are working with government on trying to find solutions, but again, I did ask the specific question about whether an operating room has already been shut down. That is something that one long-time local doctor told me by an e-mail that he sent me, and I am just asking if the witnesses could confirm if that is correct or indicate that it is not correct.

Mr. Bilsky: At this point, what we have planned is an extended slowdown during the Christmas season — the holiday

season — and that means running at reduced capacity from December 18 until January 5, and then again, beginning in January, we are hoping that we can bring to bear some solutions that will maintain services at that point in time.

Mr. Cathers: Okay, thank you. I appreciate that answer. We know that there have been cuts to medical imaging. Again, I know that the witnesses would characterize that in a different term and that the reduction in surgical services are being considered through what the CEO characterized as an “extended slowdown”.

Could the witnesses please tell us in what other areas cuts or caps or measures to align with the budget — however they may choose to phrase it — have been implemented within the hospital so far and what other areas there may be service reductions being contemplated to align with the budget?

Mr. Lucier: At the most recent board meeting, which was at the end of October, the administration — Mr. Bilsky and our CFO — brought a host of options to try to contain — I wouldn't say “cut costs” — but to contain costs, and they included a number of different areas for consideration, not all of them service-oriented — so, in procurement — ensuring that, in the procurement, negotiations were undertaken with suppliers to achieve the best possible prices. A number — I think there were six different areas that were presented where efforts were being made by the administration. Only, I believe, in two of them was there some suggestion that there would be an alignment of services to the budget constraint that we were experiencing, and those two were imaging — and that is a broad scale of modality in services — as well as some alignment in our surgical services.

I will turn it over to Mr. Bilsky for additional comments.

Mr. Bilsky: Just to add a little bit more to what Mr. Lucier was saying, the other areas that we are paying attention to is we have agency nursing costs and other contract costs that are rising exponentially. Just to put that in context for you, last year, just over \$8 million in costs; we expect that to be closer to \$13 million for this year in agency costs and at rising proportion and at rising cost. So, it's very important for us to address that, and we have many, many initiatives and tactics underway to try to address that for reducing our dependency on agencies. To be clear: We will never eliminate agency usage, because there is a useful part of that, but we do have to contain that component.

Another area that we are paying very close attention to is in procurement. We are party to a number of buying agents. Contract and vendor management is really important to us. Ensuring that we are getting the best value for every contract that we have is very important to us.

Another area that we are paying close attention to is being very judicious on any hiring, mostly directed toward front lines, at this point in time. As with any organization, I think our organization is very — 65 percent of our total cost base is made up of salaries and wages, so being careful about how and where we apply that. As I have said, it's mostly about if we are adding or if we are looking at replacing — it's about patient care. I would probably leave that as a summary of where we are focusing cost-containment efforts.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information. If I heard the witness correctly, the agency nursing costs are up to \$13 million from \$8 million I believe was the indication. My apologies if I misheard that; please correct me if I did. Comparing that growth to the already significant growth in compensation and benefits, looking at the hospital's consolidated statement of operations for the year ending March 31, 2023, that line item — "Compensation and benefits" on page 6 of the statement — shows an increase of close to \$5 million between 2022 and 2023. It seems that the agency nursing cost increase has equalled what the total compensation and benefits increase was for the previous year.

Could the witnesses indicate: Do they have a sense at this point in time of how much higher the cost of compensation and benefits will be for the current fiscal year? I realize that at this point it would be an estimate, since we are partway through the year, but are they able to share that information?

Mr. Bilsky: I don't have that exact, I would say, year-end expectancy for salaries and wages. I can probably comment on a few things that will impact that greatly, which is probably a reason why it would be very hazardous to guess at this moment. The first thing I would say is that we are in active negotiations with both unions at this point in time. Our union environment is 92 percent of our total employee base, so in active negotiations at this point, and obviously, I can't comment on what that might look like as far as the result of that.

Second of all, to put agency cost in context, I would say that we have an increasing reliance on agency. It is trending toward about 30 percent to 40 percent right now. It is about 30 percent of total cost. That is not 30 percent of the total FTEs; it is 30 percent of the total cost, because it is disproportionately high in terms of the amount that it is using. It is going to, again, disproportionately increase the salary and benefits that we have seen year over year.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you. I appreciate the answer.

Moving back to the cost-containment question, I appreciate the answer that was provided about the areas that were considered. Could the witnesses indicate, with the recent cost-containment measures implemented in the medical imaging department, what impact that is expected to have on the wait times for those procedures?

Mr. Bilsky: The first thing that I would probably want to put into context and clarify with that question is that I would say that, if we are talking about containment of costs and preservation of our workforce and living within the system or design, that is a component of potentially increasing wait times, but I would probably — not probably — I would say that the increasing demand for services is what is actually causing any increase in wait times that we might expect year over year.

So, it varies by modality, and I can give you some examples of each modality. An example would be in mammography — diagnostic — we are meeting that target. It is a seven-day target, and we are meeting it within four days. Unfortunately, that does mean that the non-urgent modalities, such as routine screening, instead of being at target of 24 months, we are trending toward potentially 35 months.

Similarly, with MRI, we categorize things as P1, P2, P3 — it just means urgent, semi-urgent, non-urgent. We would look at, you know, a target of seven days for urgent. Right now, we are at one day, so we are meeting the urgent needs, but when it comes to semi-urgent — a target of 30 days — we are at 40 days currently, and for non-urgent, we are at — 90 days is target, and 140 days is where we are at right now.

I don't have a projection of where this will go based on, as I said, increasing demand for the services, but I can say that it will trend upward over time. You know, having said that, it is incumbent upon our organization and government to continuously look at what's needed here and address those needs.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you; I appreciate that information. Some of it is concerning, of course, but I do appreciate the answer.

In the area of ultrasound, as well, we understand that was part of the cost-containment measures. Are the witnesses able to provide any information about the expected impact of that on wait times for non-urgent ultrasound?

Mr. Bilsky: That is one area that I don't have. With none of them, actually, do I have the accurate expected wait-time increase. It's one area that I don't have the current — as of today — but it's something that I can undertake to provide, if necessary.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you; I appreciate that information.

I understand that, with some of the areas, the witnesses mentioned the pressure on staff, as well, and the need to recognize those limitations, as well as the financial ones, but that then does raise the question in some of those areas — I will focus on medical imaging in particular at this point — for those areas where, either due to budget constraints, staffing constraints, or both, they have implemented the cost-containment measures. Are the witnesses able to provide us with any information about the scope of the current financial problem and how much additional funding would allow those services to be increased to the level that they were at per day earlier this year?

Mr. Bilsky: To summarize, our financial results for the six months ending September 30, 2023 is a deficit of \$2.9 million. We are trending at this point — and it depends on how successful we are — toward somewhere between \$4.5 million and \$6 million by year-end. As we said, we can categorize in those five themes the pressures that we are facing after six months: pressure on employee costs; volumes and pressure increases on surgical services; increased volume complexity of testing; and escalating costs and inflationary costs in chemotherapy. In each and every one of those cases, we are continuing to work with government to address the needs and ensure that we can adjust services to fulfill safe and excellent hospital care.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you; I appreciate that answer.

Would the CEO please be able to tell us about his involvement in the work on the health human resources strategy? What information are you able to share with us at this point in time about this initiative? Particularly, what steps are

being taken to ensure that it reflects the current and emerging needs of Yukon hospitals?

Mr. Bilsky: That is a very important question and a very important issue across Canada, especially here in our environment.

Our hospitals are committed to maintaining a safe and quality environment with minimal service disruptions in an environment where we know that health human resources constraints are extreme at the moment. At this point, I would really like to acknowledge our entire team's dedication and commitment to delivering safe and excellent patient care throughout these times. We have an exceptional team that works within the hospital system, and every day, I am amazed at their ability to provide the care that they do. I can't say enough about that team.

We know that, heading into COVID, there were pre-existing challenges with national nursing shortages in particular but health human resources overall, and I would be remiss not to mention that health human resources includes so many other disciplines — technologists, administrative people — it includes a full gamut of people working in health human resources but especially in certain specialty areas.

The impact of COVID and the pandemic has further exacerbated the damage to these workforces, and there are just not enough new people entering our labour workforce to close that gap. I think it was recognized early on that implementing a broad health human resource strategy for this organization and health system overall was extremely important. We have been working with our partners, such as Health and Social Services, Yukon University, YRNA, YMA, the Yukon government's departments of Economic Development and Community Services and also union partners and the YMC. What is unique about the strategy, I will say, is that it involves the broad spectrum of people involved in human resources in the territory. From my personal opinion, I have not seen this type of collaboration happen before.

Without getting into details of what is included — because I think this strategy will be finalized soon and commented on as a joint effort by all — some things that I can tell you that are ongoing at the moment from the Yukon Hospital Corporation's perspective only but that would align with this — we would be supporting continued education of LPNs through LPN student placements and new permanent YHC positions that allow staff to both instruct in the LPN program at Yukon University and work at YHC. We have implemented strategies to recruit new specialty staff nurses to YHC, including: use of financial incentives to attract short-term contract, permanent staff; proactive marketing and recruitment; things like offering opportunities for clinical skills and speciality area development; ensuring that infrastructure exists to support academic programs, and student placements would be an example of that and new-grad initiatives would be another example of that; wellness initiatives; supporting learning opportunities; developing "growing leaders" within our organization; looking at international educated health professionals as a source; improving processes of onboarding and orientation, and I believe the list goes on. These are all

consistent with strategies that you would see in the overall strategy itself.

Mr. Lucier: I think to also add — to recognize, as Mr. Bilsky has done on a number of occasions — the importance of the staff that we have today and the people who come to work every day as employees of the Yukon Hospital Corporation dedicated and giving of themselves to provide the care.

In recognition of that, I think it was just announced today that the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the assistance of the Government of Yukon, was able to make available to our existing nurses — LPNs and RNs — retention payments to acknowledge their continued and ongoing efforts with us. We are very happy to be able to make that announcement and provide that benefit to those folks who have been with us. It hasn't been easy for them. There is a full acknowledgement and recognition of that, and this is but a token bit of aid to support them in the next couple of years.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the information.

I would like to ask about cataract wait times. We understand that 554 cataract surgeries were done last fiscal year, according to information from the minister, but at the time when I asked the question, the numbers she had were from earlier in the summer.

Can the witnesses please tell us how many cataract surgeries have been done so far this year? Also, can you please tell us what the current wait times are for ophthalmology and cataract surgery and how many people are currently on the wait-list?

Mr. Bilsky: Just to go back a little bit and explain the cataract ophthalmology program here — in 2018, the Yukon Hospital Corporation and the Government of Yukon developed a plan to reduce wait times for cataract assessments and increase the number of cataract surgeries performed in the Yukon. I would like to thank the team for their dedication. There is a multitude of different departments; I would be missing out if I tried to name them all. This plan has been successful in achieving the targets that we have set.

Again, to put this in context, the program that we have as far as ophthalmology — it is not only about cataracts. It is cataract assessment and surgery. It is also retinal injection therapy, glaucoma assessments and monitoring, and general and pediatric ophthalmology assessments. The balance of all these elements must fit within the service needs that we have. But if we are speaking specifically about cataracts, we have a target in 2023-24 to complete 600 cataract surgeries. At this point in time, we have completed 326 cataract surgeries and we are expecting that we can accomplish the 600 that we have set.

The wait times for cataract surgery are currently in the range of 10 to 12 months, and that is combined — "combined" meaning from referral to assessment to surgery. We are looking at roughly about 12 months. It can vary. We are very close to what we expect the target to be in that area.

I will caveat this to say that, as we move forward with a growing and aging population, we expect that the need is going to grow by about four percent per year to be able to maintain that type of wait time.

Just in closing on this comment, again, I would to thank everybody involved in being able to achieve this — our government partners as well as all of the staff who have achieved this — because we did reduce from about a 36-month wait time — about three to four years ago or four years approximately — down to approximately a two-year wait time in total.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information, and the next wait time that I would to ask about is the wait time for cardiologists. In 2020 when witnesses appeared in this House, we heard that the wait time to see a cardiologist was five months at the time. Last November, the CEO told us — quote: “... it is just over five months to see a cardiologist. I believe that the total list is about 298 patients in total...”

Can the witnesses please tell us what the current wait time is and how many people are currently on the wait-list?

Mr. Bilsky: I want to expand on this question just a little bit to back up and put it all in context. Specialty services are provided to Yukoners primarily through a number of different avenues — resident specialists, such as OB/GYN and orthopaedic surgeons, and visiting specialists, primarily through our visiting specialist clinic at VGH and virtually through telehealth, and also through medical travel and medevac. The reason I put that in context is because if someone is looking to access a specialty, it may not only be through the services that we offer. If it's a care need that cannot be met here or needs to be met more urgently, they may use other means such as medical travel.

It's really important as a territory that we collaborate to effectively address specialty care needs for Yukoners and use all those methods that I just mentioned to address those needs. We collaborate through a committee called the Access to Specialist Care Committee, and it's a tripartite committee that involves Yukon Hospital Corporation, YG Health and Social Services, as well as the YMA. The role of this committee is to assess programs, identify priorities, and recommend action for supporting and addressing specialty care needs.

I'm proud to say that we're continuously improving the wait times for all specialties. Last year, we would have reported that approximately eight out of 13 were meeting target times. Now, thanks to the great work by the people there and the physicians involved, I can say that 10 out of 13 are meeting their wait times.

To address cardiology in particular, that is one where, if you look year over year over year, it continues to be approximately six months in wait time. The estimated total number that I have on the wait-list is 323, although that will fluctuate greatly because of the number of visits that are happening, and then you will see a drop and then an increase over time, so it may not be exactly representative of what you see on an average wait-list.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information.

I would like to ask about MRI wait times as well and just ask the witnesses to clarify what the wait times were looking like earlier this year and, with the cost-containment measures, what impact they may have had on wait times for MRIs,

particularly for priority 2 and priority 3 MRIs as well as, of course, urgent MRIs?

Mr. Bilsky: Currently, our MRI program, which actually began in 2015 — I would also like to say thank you to the Yukon Hospital Foundation for its original support in doing that and the Yukon government's ongoing support for operations. We are, right at this point — we have, again, priority 1, which is urgent and has a seven-day target — we are meeting that and are well under that at one day; priority 2 — semi-urgent, 30 days — right now is at 40 days, which is what the current wait time is; priority 3 — non-urgent, 90 days — and it is actually at 139 days.

We are performing more MRIs year over year this year, but again, the demand for MRIs is continuously increasing. We monitor this very closely with appropriate use to ensure that our per capita usage is within the range that we expect it to be. Again, that is just appropriate usage guidelines that we try to follow. That is again to make sure that the people who need an MRI have access to it when they need it. We are looking at expanding that program if at all possible, but that will take an increased level of human resources to do it and, of course, an increased level of funding to be able to satisfy the human resources, as well as the radiologist fees that go along with each and every procedure that is performed.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you for the information. This spring, as the witnesses know, the Premier approved a contract to Ernst & Young Orenda Corporation to review the financial management of the Yukon Hospital Corporation. Did the hospital ask for this review, or did the idea originate from government?

Mr. Lucier: I think the simple answer to that very specific question is that we didn't ask for it.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the answer. My next question for the witnesses is: Could they confirm whether they have seen a copy of the Ernst & Young report as well as whether that has been shared with the Yukon Hospital board?

Mr. Lucier: We have seen a copy of the report. At its announcement, certainly, we were aware through discussions with our folks in finance — including our CEO, Mr. Bilsky. We were fully supportive of a third party looking into the fiscal environment of the hospital. I am very, very aware of the nature of this report and the rules, probably, in this room here as to how that report could or should be made available.

I will say that we were very happy to participate with it. In my dealings with the primary from Ernst & Young, he said it was a very unusual experience for him to have two parties so willing to participate and achieve a common outcome. Coming from a very tenured accountant in a very reputable firm, I thought that this spoke very highly of both the employees of the Hospital Corporation and the employees of Health and Social Services for whom he interviewed.

You know, without going into enormous details and probably treading where I ought not to, what I think I can say is that the outcome, as the corporation sees it, is really going to build upon an existing relationship with Health and Social Services to ensure that we have closer and better understandings of our demands. How that manifests into

appropriate health care — and excellent health care, in some cases — for Yukoners — and I sort of categorized it as it was a document — or it is a document — that speaks about a relationship, which is sort of unusual. My experience with firms like Ernst & Young and their like is that they are very critical on the dollars and cents. This, in my estimation, was not. This one spoke about a relationship — the importance of relationship — particularly between two parties, both seemingly to achieve the same thing.

I think that, as we look at the report, it gives us great opportunity to improve our ability to be more accurate with the government — “that” being us, the Hospital Corporation — to engage in real conversation, in some respects to develop, perhaps, opportunities to understand what it is that contributes to wait times, to volumes, to the complexity of delivering acute health care in a jurisdiction where we have only three hospitals.

I think that will result in a more accurate environment of the fiscal realm — from our perspective, more accurate, but that is not to say that it will always necessarily be exact. What we are experiencing today is very difficult to be exact. In fact, you know, as the chair of the board, I am not overly happy with how inexact we are in some respects, but that is us.

I think, you know, that as we engage in this relationship, our ability to share that information on a more timely basis will improve our standing. If nothing else, it will improve the understanding of all.

I think that what will come of it is — what came of it to begin with — is great guidance. I think that it was very valuable to have a third party look at our relationship, look at how we develop a fiscal environment from that relationship, and I think that what has come of it already is notable change. Already, as Mr. Bilsky has identified, the working relationship is closer with the department — maybe better than it has been in the past — and I think that what comes from that is important.

I don't want to get too far ahead of myself, but this is important work, because when we can be better — and when I say “we”, I talk about the body that sits at this table. When we can be better, then we build a better understanding in the public. They have a greater trust in what services can be provided, when they can be provided, at what wait times they can be provided. As we look at the need to form greater integration across the system, that trust needs to extend and transcend into that integration.

I think that this report was timely. It was certainly timely given the circumstances that we had experienced in the last fiscal year, and I think that it is timely for us going into the future. Now, the individual who will be responsible for that in most respects from the corporation's perspective and has represented us thus far is Mr. Bilsky, so if time will allow, I would just allow him to make any additional comments in that respect.

Mr. Bilsky: I think Mr. Lucier has pretty much said it all as far as I can comment on, but I would agree wholeheartedly with the timeliness of the report, even though it wasn't requested by us necessarily. The timeliness of the report, the quality of the report, and the nature of using it prospectively to guide where we go — especially when we talk about the health

system integration going forward and what that means as far as a ministry and potential health authority under the recommendations from *Putting People First* — the type of guidance that this report can provide is extremely important, and I think that it's a fantastic opportunity for us to capitalize on all the things that Mr. Lucier said.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the information, and there was a lot provided there, which I do appreciate. The one question I did ask that didn't get an answer is: Has the Ernst & Young report been shared with the Yukon Hospital board?

Mr. Lucier: Yes, it has.

Mr. Cathers: I am going to move on, recognizing that my time here is growing short before handing it over to the Third Party. I just want to ask the witnesses a few questions about the government's plans to develop a health authority.

Can the witnesses please tell us about their involvement in that work and what they expect it will mean for the Hospital Corporation and its employees? Also, we understand that the CEO recently sent a letter to staff about the health authority that indicates in part — and I quote: “... Health and Social Services (HSS) have begun sharing information and timelines of what their path forward will look like.” It also indicates that the impacts to pensions and employee benefits and organization charts — quote: “... will be given careful consideration ... once planning for those details begin.” So, it sounds like that work is in its very early stages. Can the witnesses please elaborate on that?

Mr. Bilsky: I can give you Yukon Hospital Corporation's perspective on this only. YHC is in support and full collaboration in the system transformation, as guided by the *Putting People First* report and in particular system integration in the formation of the health authority. Again, just to reiterate, I don't speak on behalf of our board, but I believe that we are in support of this integration effort.

Where it will take us, — just to put it in a very brief sentence, which probably won't do it justice — but a more efficient and seamless system will be more effective for clients, patients, and families. We are talking about bringing the service delivery elements together and creating, definitely, integration among those elements so that, from a client, patient, and family perspective, it's seen as one system. I imagine that you can think of your own scenarios in that, but think of a system where information can flow seamlessly among different care providers. That would be where we would like to go.

Of course, you can't forget about the important establishment of a ministry in this process, which is different from today where government and the ministry are in some respect service providers. Definitely, the ministry would become oversight, regulator, and funder and would set the strategic direction for the health authority — the health authority being the service delivery agent, for the most part, when it comes to health services.

It's a long process, for sure, and it must be co-led by Yukon First Nations. At this point, from our perspective, the YHC is a part of a committee called the Health Transformation Advisory Committee, along with appointees from the Chiefs Committee on Health, as well as DMs from Health and Social Services. So,

this committee has been focused on enabling legislation at this point in time, and any work that is more specific to the operations is more, I would say, in line with informing and will be informing going forward as things progress for situations such as benefits and employee impacts and so on and so forth. I believe that the member is correct that those are only in the early stages, and it's about building the knowledge and information so that informed decisions can be made on a go-forward basis.

Mr. Cathers: I will ask one final question about the health authority and then cede the floor to the member of the Third Party. I thank the witnesses for the answers that they have provided.

Do the witnesses know what the health authority implementation will mean for the hospital's reporting structure? Is it going to be reporting to a health authority that reports to the minister? Will any staff be moved from the Hospital Corporation to the authority, and can the witnesses tell us anything about how this complex endeavour will be dealt with during the timelines that have been laid out?

Mr. Lucier: In my reviews of health authorities that exist in just about every jurisdiction — if not every jurisdiction of Canada except this one — I would suspect that there will be a board or a group of governing individuals that will provide the governance in a similar manner as what we see in the Yukon *Hospital Act* where we have a board that is responsible for providing that guidance, that governance, and that oversight and accountability. I don't think, in the modern setting, that it would be anything short of that. I think it's early to determine exactly how the hospitals of the Yukon will interact and align with the new authority, as that will probably be laid out either in corporate structure or in corporate regulation or bylaw as to a reporting nature of that. To that end, I haven't seen any development of that yet.

Ms. Blake: I would like to welcome the witnesses. It is nice to see Mr. Bilsky here today. I previously worked with him. I would like to welcome my friend Myra Iles to the Legislature. She's the previous health and social director for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation government and has an extensive background in nursing. It is nice to have Myra here today.

To start, I will ask a few questions about the Yukon hospital year-in-review report. I am sorry for standing over you; it's where I am situated.

This question may already have been asked. I apologize if it has been asked already. What are the wait times for emergency visits? What are the demands for the hospital beds? And how many times have people been turned away from the hospital because beds are fully occupied?

Mr. Bilsky: Just to clarify — I want to make sure that I have the first part of the question correct — it was a question about the number of ED visits and capacity, and the second part was about the demands for inpatient beds; is that correct?

Ms. Blake: Yes.

Mr. Bilsky: I will address the emergency department first. We are increasingly under pressure — definitely — in the emergency department, and it is due to several factors including increased number of ED visits and increasing hospital capacity.

There are also challenges with an increasing number of patients registered without a family doctor. Right now, the volumes that we are seeing on average are about 105 visits per day. What this translates into is that, if we were to project to year-end, it would be about 38,700 visits. This is above what we saw in the previous year of 36,200. That is an increase year over year in this year of 6.6 percent overall.

The demand for beds — this fluctuates daily. I may not be as precise in this answer just because of the fact that this is a daily, if not hourly, management of the bed situation. Occupancy routinely runs within our inpatient units at 100 percent or more. This presents a challenge for us because when occupancy is very high, it obviously takes a toll on our people and on staff. We want to make sure that we provide the best care that we can. It can cause things such as deferred surgeries. It can cause things such as patients being cared for in the ED, which is not the most appropriate setting, but we will provide care for them.

The last part of the question, I believe, was about how many people get turned away because of hospital beds. We are in a system where we do not turn people away. If you present at the ED, we will care for you no matter our condition. We will find a way to care for you. It may mean a longer wait time or it may mean a situation where you are spending more time in the ED before you are admitted into a hospital bed. The only time that there is a deferral because of occupancy is for reasons, essentially, of safety. An example of that would be that we would not proceed with a particular surgery if we cannot guarantee the appropriate type of care setting — a bed for them per se — after that. It is better to defer the surgery rather than to proceed with a particular surgery.

I'm proud to say, though, that if we just talk about deferrals of surgeries — which would probably be the only case where we're turning people away because of inpatient occupancy — in our estimation, it is very low. We are talking about less than one percent per year — probably closer to 0.5 percent — of surgeries that are deferred due to hospital occupancy. It doesn't mean that we have to manage it very aggressively, and I don't want to understate the fact that we are continuously full and continuously managing that effort, because it is every day and it is like a rising tide. It is increasing.

But miraculously and very thankfully, our teams are able to continue to provide this service as necessary. There are deferred surgeries for other reasons, but when we talk about hospital occupancy, that would be my answer. Hopefully, I have covered most of the questions.

Ms. Blake: I thank the witnesses for the response. In terms of the hospital being at capacity of 100 percent or more, how many of those beds are occupied by patients or elders who are waiting for long-term care placements?

Mr. Bilsky: I do have that information; I just have to make sure it's in the right spot, so bear with me.

Typically, in our system, we would refer to these as ALCs, or alternate level of care individuals. "Alternate level of care", by definition, just essentially means "no longer needs acute care". So, it may be people requiring care in-home or requiring care in continuing care or somewhere else in the system. So,

just to put that in context, the ALC pressure in YHC has been an issue for us since my time starting with the hospital — so we are going back over 10 years — and it has increased and decreased over time. There are situations where it has improved significantly with examples of Yukon government opening up more continuing care beds in Whistle Bend. That was a point in time when we saw a significant decrease in the number of ALCs. Again, I would like to say that we care for patients no matter what the condition until we can find safe discharges for them.

To answer the specific question, ALC pressure at Yukon Hospital Corporation has improved from August 2018. That wouldn't be a peak, but it's a higher point when we saw it at about 19 percent. With August 2023-24 as a comparator, our ALC percentage was at about 12 percent. What we would like to target is probably 10 percent or less within our hospital system. We are above target and we are seeing that trend go up. It is a factor of a growing population and a disproportionate aging population in the Yukon.

The other factor that is significantly contributing to that and contributing to our occupancy overall is acuity. We're seeing increased levels of acuity across the board. Again, with an aging population and others, complex care is just becoming — in the care that we provide.

Ms. Blake: The next question that I have is with regard to the drug poisoning that we're experiencing in the territory. We often hear about the drug poisoning that's happening in the community where people don't survive drug poisoning. What I would like to hear more information on is about those people who survive a drug poisoning. I am going to kind of stack my questions, as I am short on time.

How many cases is the hospital seeing where drug poisoning is being reversed? What follow-ups are there for people who survive drug poisoning? What supports does the hospital need to support folks who survive drug poisoning and also supports for staff who are repeatedly supporting people who experience drug poisoning?

Mr. Bilsky: That's a very important question and a complex question to answer.

Opioid use, as we know, is a national crisis and the Yukon has seen this crisis, I believe, even more acutely than other parts of Canada. The reason this is a complex question is because opioid use is complex, multifactorial, and, in many cases, rooted in social determinants of health, so decreasing opioid usage and negative impacts requires upstream health initiatives and downstream support.

We participate in part of the Substance Use Health Emergency Project Executive Committee and this group is focused on developing Yukon substance use strategies. This strategy includes four pillars: prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery, and community safety. At YHC, we currently have strategies in place under the harm reduction, treatment and recovery, and community safety pillars — some greater than others.

Examples of harm reduction — when ensuring that we place a First Nation health equity lens on overall harm reduction strategies — corporate policies about harm reduction

that support and enable patients with issues in this world. Staff and physician harm-reduction education, barrier-free naloxone distribution, safe injection, safe inhalation, and drug-testing kits — equipment for those reasons — and patient and family education on safer drug use — those would be issues of being able to refer people appropriately when we see that.

Treatment and recovery — definitely, initiatives such as the managed alcohol program and therapy within the community hospitals and establishing processes for patient referral and follow-up in the communities.

Lastly, community safety — making connections with Yukon First Nations and supporting procurement of naloxone in the territory.

I don't have the numbers — I think the request from the member was specifically how many presented and were saved. I don't have how many were saved. I would like to hope that all survived, but I cannot say that. I believe, year to date, we have seen 39 instances presenting to the ED. It can vary, but our ED visits for substance use diagnoses in the 2022-23 year were approximately 2,300 visits overall. Those aren't overdoses; those are visits for substance use. That represents about five to six percent of our overall ED visits that are related to substance use. I hope that answers the majority of the question.

Ms. Blake: I thank the witness for that response. In terms of the 2,300 visits that have come to the hospital for substance-related issues, what supports are provided to these folks in the emergency department if they are presenting with issues that are related to substance use?

Mr. Bilsky: Speaking as a non-clinical person, first and foremost, the clinical presentation would be managed by the appropriate physicians and staff to ensure that the care plan for the patient is appropriate with how they are presenting.

Aside from that, what I can say is that, from a treatment and recovery perspective — so, again, once they have hopefully been able to recover from an episode — we would focus on establishing a process of patient referral follow-up within Community Services; coordination of rapid access to mental health and substance use supports in the communities; access to social work, if necessary; and access to First Nation health programs, if warranted, and that can be provided at all three sites, and we try to do it in the most barrier-free environment that we possibly can.

Ms. Blake: My next question is in regard to the drug poisoning situations or drug poisoning visits that end up at the hospital. With the 39 — does that number of 39 also include the Watson Lake hospital and the Dawson City Community Hospital?

Mr. Bilsky: I believe it does, but to be precise, I would have to undertake to respond to that at a later date.

Ms. Blake: My next question is in regard to training. What training do staff at the community hospitals in Dawson and Watson Lake have access to in terms of supporting folks who live with addictions?

Mr. Bilsky: I would have to say that, through their professional training, which is an ongoing, continuing professional education, they would be afforded the appropriate training not just for addictions but also the overall training

necessary for acute care and emergency care within those hospitals.

Ms. Blake: My next question is: What information is the Yukon Hospital Corporation collecting on reports of discrimination and racial stereotyping? What is Yukon Hospital Corporation doing to directly address systemic racism in the health care system? Can the witnesses please explain the details of Yukon Hospital Corporation's anti-racism plan?

Mr. Lucier: From a strategic perspective — and I will turn it to Mr. Bilsky here in a moment — I think we have shared and have certainly spoke of this document, although it may not have been in hard-copy publication. It is our strategic plan that goes from 2022 — it came about late in the year — to 2027.

You know, our position on racism and equity is on page 1. We are as a board — and particularly because I think that it is relevant in all cases but with a great degree of focus through our First Nations health programming committee — we focus on this to ensure that equitable care, fair care, and the same care is provided to all people who are coming in. I will just read the very short four lines: “Yukon’s hospitals condemn all forms of racism. Our organization will not stand for discrimination, intolerance, or violence in our hospitals and we are committed to undertaking the work needed to eliminate racism and build an equitable, diverse and inclusive place for all who come through our doors, whether they be employees or patients.”

We take this really seriously, because if people feel that they are subjected to racism, an equity issue, a lack of diversity and inclusion, then they may not come. They may not seek the health care that they require. We work very closely with the administration of the hospital to ensure that efforts are taken to have people appropriately aware, to be trained. We work through our very, very good First Nations health programming on services that provide, I would say, supports to First Nations so that they feel supported so that issues can be dealt with. Even so much as in our — not security staff — but our health security officers who are now deployed within the hospital — we have had some unbelievable stories of the way that they engage with people to de-escalate people. In just about every account, we do our utmost to try to do that.

That is not to say that we don't have more to do, and we will continue to endeavour to be better, but certainly, it is a focus of the board, and it is identified in our strategic plan. Truth, reconciliation, indigenization, and decolonization — a key pillar of a four-pillar strategy as we move forward emphasizing the importance of that.

I will turn it to Mr. Bilsky to further that comment.

Mr. Bilsky: I would like to sincerely thank the member for this question. This is a very important issue for our organization, and I personally am passionate about advancing us on this journey.

As Mr. Lucier has already mentioned, it's an organization-wide initiative for us. It's very visible in our strategic plan, and that commitment is visible throughout our organization. It's supported by a local Indigenous consulting firm to ensure that we have the expertise to support the services that are applied.

As the member is very familiar with this, we are also very proud of the First Nations health program that we have within

our system, and the member was actually a fantastic part of that, so my compliments to that person, for sure.

Having said that, our strategy of indigenization is about the act of making something suit the local culture through recognition and adoption of Indigenous world views and transforming our spaces, services, policies, and programs and the inclusion of more Indigenous people in our workforce. So, pulling from that, it's about the transformation of our spaces, safe policies and programs, and inclusion of more people in our workforce. To undertake that — the elements that we're working on — relationship building has to be very meaningful for us, being honest about how we oppress, create barriers, and sometimes harm and that experiences and outcomes are often poor for First Nations and recognizing that truth, incorporating traditional and cultural ways into all the work that we do, not just through First Nations health programs but throughout all systems and processes within our hospital, and creating pathways to positive connection to YHC through youth internships, and the mental wellness unit that we are undertaking has a significant Indigenous component to it.

I would like to give an example of a few of the things that we have undertaken right now. Cultural safety questions added to interviews that we have — we have hired — we have a continuous stream, but we currently have youth interns employed at all of our sites who are First Nation youth interns. We have a REDI committee that has been formed to address equity and diversity issues. Addressing racism in Watson Lake is a focal point for us, and we are working with our First Nation partners there. Nursing division in particular — planning and advancing cultural safety — we have a lot of, what I would say, itinerate nurses, and it's very important to us to support them going into communities, as well as making sure that the communities themselves see services that are culturally safe for them. Job classification systems — to ensure that there are validations of ways of knowing in terms of Indigenous qualities.

Artwork within our facilities: We've engaged First Nations significantly in our mental wellness unit, which is a construction project, obviously, that we've undertaken. It's a pretty significant advancement in mental wellness in our community, and it's very important to us that we have a significant amount of First Nation engagement in that.

Mr. Lucier: On that note, this is a major undertaking, the first major capital undertaking at the hospital since, I believe, the emergency department was redesigned and built. As you can imagine, it would be really easy for us to focus on the instruments of construction — that capital development. The programming certainly that will happen within the hospital is in the professions and expertise of psychologists and the like, but those are two areas that we focus on.

There is a third area, and that area is indigenization. That place has to serve our Indigenous population in a way that, quite frankly, we haven't provided any services in the hospital to date. It is an opportunity to start afresh, and we have engaged from the very beginning with the need to understand, to build those partnerships, and to communicate with the First Nations so that they can guide the process. It's not our process. It's a

linked, hand-held, combined process so that when we open those doors next summer, we do so with that facility being able to meet those needs. If we don't do that, we'll have missed a significant opportunity of building a building, because it's not just a space. It has to be a place where everybody comes and feels welcome and that the services that they are provided are provided in a way that meet their needs, their cultural specificity, and I hope that we are getting there.

Ms. Blake: I thank the witnesses for the response to the question.

I am going to move on to asking a question about accreditation for WGH departments. This summer, all three Yukon hospitals received visits from Accreditation Canada, and we know that WGH received accreditation, even though several of its departments did not. The report that we reviewed listed several issues that should be concerning to the hospital. The emergency department of the Yukon hospital failed on 22 percent of their standards, and the Yukon Hospital Corporation failed on a quarter of its infection prevention and control standards. The point-of-care testing failed on more than 20 percent of those standards indicated with accreditation.

What is the Yukon Hospital Corporation doing to address the safety concerns highlighted by that report?

Mr. Bilsky: To put accreditation in context — and again, it is a very important issue for us, because we voluntarily participate in this improvement process with Accreditation Canada. This is an ongoing process for us, and it includes surveying and assessing health services against standards to identify what is being done well and what needs to improve. This is part of our commitment to continually improve the quality of services. I must say that everyone at YHC is involved in this process, from front-line staff through to physicians, through to senior staff, through to board members.

Our most recent survey — and it works on generally a four-year cycle — we were surveyed in May and June 2023. All three hospitals, as the member mentioned, achieved accreditation. We were assessed against 13 standards, which are broken into a multitude of different criteria — over 2,200 different criteria — and in 2023, we achieved overall 92 percent compliance with standards.

Definitely, it notes areas for improvement, as well as areas of strength for us. As I said, it is an ongoing process for us with a four-year cycle.

The report provided to YHC definitely contained themes — some of them noted by the member — and it is actually posted on our website if there is a need to look at any of the detail. Feedback and recommendations for improvement are a valued part of this for our culture, as we strive to deliver safe care. What ends up happening with the accreditation report itself is that we now take that back to our teams with specific areas that were mentioned by the members themselves, and we would start to put together management action plans to address those and any other concerns that we have, but as I said, it is a continuous improvement cycle so that we can always look at how we can provide better care.

Ms. Blake: This report also noted that the Yukon Hospital Corporation failed every compliance requirement for

patient safety incident disclosures — zero of the four requirements were met. Can the witnesses explain this finding and what Yukon Hospital Corporation plans to do to improve transparency and patient safety?

Mr. Bilsky: Thank you for that question, Madam Acting Chair. That is a question that unfortunately I can't answer at this moment. I can say that, with more detail — I can provide that detail as an undertaking, if that is acceptable.

Ms. Blake: The next question I have is regarding the turnaround times for biological testing, which are tests that are sent outside of the territory. What is the hospital doing to address the lengthy turnaround times for biological testing? And why did the Yukon Hospital Corporation make the decision to outsource biological testing?

Mr. Bilsky: On the topic of laboratory services, YHC has a long-standing partnership with outside labs. Due to our hospital's limited scope of lab services, we rely on labs in larger centres to support the wide range of Yukon test needs, including very specialized tests such as microbiology. The reality is that specialized tests require appropriate expertise, equipment, and sufficient testing volumes to maintain clinical competencies. Essentially, we are talking about economies of scale to be able to perform.

I think that comments have been made about — an example would be syphilis testing, which has historically been tested outside of the territory with contracted partners in Vancouver. What I will also say is that despite our geography and the significant volume and pressures that we are seeing, we continue to maintain appropriate turnaround times for test results. I have to also comment that accuracy in this case is just as important as turnaround times. So, receiving results back within acceptable time frames and in an accurate manner — i.e., specialized tests that we are talking about — in order not to delay care is extremely important.

I would also like to comment that our lab does an exceptional job in maintaining this level of service. It is an incredible team within the lab, and I think that there have been comments made about the lab failing accreditation, which is not correct. Our lab services actually achieved a very high compliance rate with all of the criteria that are set out for a lab with Accreditation Canada.

We don't seek separate lab accreditation — I would like to clarify that point — but within accreditation, there are sections that touch on various pieces of lab, and this lab team does an exceptional job of meeting the criteria. I think it's over 95 percent of total net criteria.

Again, I would be remiss by not complimenting that lab team for the service they provide. Accuracy, I think, is exceptional within that team. I think overall, with the system that we work within — both in-territory and out-of-territory — the turnaround times are exceptional and meet the care needs of the population.

Ms. Blake: I thank the witness for that response. I was going to ask a question about the lab, because it is in the report, but I will switch to employees and morale.

For the last five years, the Hospital Corporation's employee survey has consistently shown low employee

satisfaction and morale. This survey showed consistent results in terms of staff not feeling that they have support for training, career development, and support from supervisors. There is a list that also included that staff experience high levels of stress and cannot balance family and personal life and that staff do not feel safe at work or that they are supported within the hospital to take effective action to prevent violence and abuse in the workplace.

I have a number of questions. What policies does Yukon Hospital Corporation have in place to deal with violence and abuse in the workplace? Why have these policies been failing staff? How is the department prioritizing health and wellness for its staff? What is the hospital doing to address staff health and wellness concerns? And how will the Yukon Hospital Corporation make changes to fix this problem?

Mr. Bilsky: There are several questions embedded in that, so I will try to touch on all pieces.

I will start off by talking about the employee satisfaction survey that we perform on an annual basis, with the exception of 2021 and 2022, which we had to defer due to the pandemic.

We gather information about issues of importance to our teams. Survey results highlight issues that we need to explore further at the team level and provide an opportunity to involve our people in making improvements.

To be honest, I would say that over the last several years of the survey, we have experienced a gradual downward trend, as the member had mentioned, in terms of overall satisfaction, but we have seen improvements in other areas within specific teams. As I said, results are used to identify organization- and department-level opportunities.

We are also successfully working with department teams to prioritize issues affecting them directly and engaging them in developing and implementing action plans. What it highlights for us is that each and every department has a different range of issues that are really important to them, affecting their morale, affecting their work-life balance, et cetera.

I am proud to say that the areas of improvement that we've been focusing on have actually resulted in improvements, and I will give you a couple of examples of that. One would be that this was the first year that we actually included specific questions on equity, diversity, and inclusion. The results of those questions — overall, the majority of respondents, of employees, state that they feel that people are treated fairly regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. It's a concerted effort on our part to improve that and I'm proud to say that it has improved.

Surveys have also helped to inform organization-wide improvements such as: orientation; onboarding training; leadership development; improved wellness supports, such as an improved employee family assistance program; and on-site fitness facilities. We will continue to use the feedback that we get from that survey to shape the annual and long-term planning.

In particular, we also use a number of other metrics to assess morale, mental health, and stress within our organization — things such as staff retention, assessing recruiting efforts and

vacancy rates, assessing workforce wellness through metrics like sick time, and leaders continuously and routinely assessing morale qualitatively through check-ins with staff. Ensuring that employees have a balance in their work life and promoting wellness is important to us, and this means even the operational impacts of balancing things like overtime for staff. We provide a number of wellness supports for employees — the employee family assistance program, a comprehensive benefits package, and access to on-site fitness facilities, as I mentioned. We have a Working on Wellness committee, and it coordinates many activities for employees. We have a comprehensive abilities management program that proactively supports medical disabilities in the workplace, and as I have mentioned before, we have implemented a reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion committee.

Specific to addressing workplace behaviours, we have, I would say, policies and processes in place that address the code of conduct and ethics within our workforce. We have a system in place that ensures that people who are onboarded and oriented understand their commitment to that, and then we have processes that continually engage our employees in the commitment toward that. Obviously, where there are situations of incidents, we have a system of reporting incidents and the ability to take the appropriate actions within the system to improve.

Ms. Blake: I don't have any further questions. With time running out, I would just like to thank the witnesses for being here today and for their time and sharing information from my questions.

Mr. Cathers: I wasn't expecting to get another chance, but I would just ask if the witnesses could provide us with an update on the surgical services area and operating room project that had been identified as an issue of high priority by the Yukon Medical Association previously. In past Sittings, the witnesses have provided information.

Can you provide us with an update on that project now?

Mr. Bilsky: Just to refresh, I think, everybody's memory, YHC conducted a long-term planning exercise related to the future needs of surgical services at Whitehorse General Hospital in 2019. I must say that this is a large, complex, and long-term initiative, with probably a lifespan of five to seven years from inception to completion if it moves forward. It requires comprehensive stakeholder involvement to ensure that it appropriately meets the needs of Yukoners.

A needs assessment and high-level functional service program were completed at that time with engagement of surgeons, other physicians, and surgical nursing and support staff. However, I would say that work was initially put on hold due to priorities of pandemic and current health system pressures.

The planning thus far has been predicated on rapidly changing quality standards as well as projected future service needs. To be accurate, a detailed solution has not been determined, nor have commitments been made to proceed further. We have made and continue to make short-term improvements within existing surgical services to mitigate any challenges that we currently see. Essentially, we would have to

look for government commitment to proceed with this project further.

Acting Chair: The time is now 5:30. The time designated for witnesses, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 15, has now expired. The Chair shall, on behalf of the Committee, offer our thanks to Al Lucier, Chair of the Yukon Hospital Corporation Board of Trustees, and Jason Bilsky, Chief Executive Officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, for appearing as witnesses today.

Witnesses excused

Acting Chair: The Chair shall now rise and report to the House.

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. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

Also, pursuant to Committee of the Whole Motion No. 15 adopted earlier today, witnesses appeared before Committee of the Whole to answer questions regarding the operations of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

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.

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

The House adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 21, 2023:

35-1-134

Yukon Health Status Report Update 2022 (McPhee)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 162

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Wednesday, November 22, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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Hansard Administrator	Deana Lemke

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, November 22, 2023 — 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.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been completed in whole or in part: Motions No. 795 and 828, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Are there any visitors to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, there are a few visitors. I will do my very best to acknowledge and welcome many visitors here today who care deeply about housing and I would like to welcome them to the Assembly. I will go through everybody and then we can give our applause.

First is Chief Amanda Leas from the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. It's great to see you.

From the Yukon Housing staff, we have: Marcel Holder Robinson, director of Finance and Risk Management; Christie Richardson, manager of loans and grants; Daniel Jirousek, manager of Finance and Risk Management; Jyotika Dangwal, policy analyst; Paul Zylstra, acting director of tenancy supports; Colin McDowell, vice-president of Operations; and Beth Fricke, vice-president of Corporate Services.

As well, from the Safe at Home Society, we have: their leader, Kate Mechan; Anthony Boisvert; Andrea Magun; Sarah Kroon; Heidi Slat; Elske de Visch Eybergen; and Naomi Dunaway.

We have: from Habitat for Humanity, Suzanne Greening; from the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, Kristina Craig; Michelle Watson from Yukon Energy Food Security Network; Deserine Grimes from the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition; Jason Charlie from Voices Influencing Change; Jack Bogaard from Voices/Lived Experience; Lauren Manekin-Beille is also here; and Keith Welch and Kristen Sinclair.

Welcome to everyone today.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to help me welcome a number of people who are here for our tribute to the Festival of Trees. I apologize — I am sure we will have missed someone.

Welcome today Wendy Tayler and Lacia Kinnear from Alkan Air and Christian Roldan and Jennie Gjersten from Newmont. We also have with us Eva Bidrman, Amanda Leslie, R.J. Hill, and, of course, I see Joe Iles here, Frank Curlew — welcome — and Karen Forward, the president of the Yukon Hospital Foundation.

Thank you all for joining us.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming a member of our Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues — the title will be changing soon. I would like to welcome Judy Hartling.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, later on, I will be tabling the Yukon Lottery Commission annual report, and so I would like to ask my colleagues to help me in welcoming to the gallery Sara Skelton, the chair and chief executive officer of the Yukon Lottery Commission, and also Matt Ordish, general manager of Lotteries Yukon.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, just to add to the Alkan bunch, I have known in different lifetimes and flown, of course, to Wolverine by one of the pilots — Jeff Faulkner is here and, of course, Leif Austad is also joining us from Alkan Air.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I will just add in some folks as well. I see that Jeff Faulkner and Leif Austad are here from Alkan as well; Elaine Smart, a former volunteer with the Festival of Trees; I see Kerry Newkirk from Northwestel; and the founding president of the Yukon Hospital Foundation, Vanessa Innes, is here, as well as her daughter, Brittany Dixon, who happens to be my wife.

Applause

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I just also noticed that the chief executive officer of the Yukon Hospital Corporation, Jason Bilsky, is also with us and I would ask members to welcome him.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of National Housing Day

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to National Housing Day. Home is more than mere bricks and mortar or a physical address. At its core, the home is a sanctuary, a place of refuge and comfort. It is where we find solace after a long day, where we create lasting memories with our loved ones, and where we are safe to truly be ourselves.

Since 2020, Yukon Housing Corporation has added 60 affordable housing units to our portfolio, which is now a host

to 898 units across the Yukon. We also will have an additional 152 units to be completed in the coming years.

Yukon Housing Corporation has supported over 1,500 new housing completions since 2018 as well through our varied loans, grant programs, and partnerships. Through the deployment of the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, we have also supported over 300 households to pay their rent and 1,150 households through our rental programs. This government has worked hard to release new lots across the Yukon and, since 2018, has released 760 lots for people to build their dreams on.

Despite all of that hard work done by this government, we realize it's not enough. We will continue to work to provide varied housing options for Yukoners across the housing continuum. To those in need of safe and affordable housing, we see you. We are working with you and making progress along with local housing partners. Allied support is so critical to moving forward. Together — and only together — we can look to building healthy communities and to invest in our collective future where everyone has a place to call home.

Yukoners have a range of housing needs. I hear the call across the territory by community leaders that this is our collective responsibility and that we must have a coordinated and collaborative approach to meet those needs. When it comes to supporting Yukoners in core housing need, I would like to pay tribute to our housing partners who are working hand in hand to meet the growing demand across the territory. To the non-profit organizations and the front-line staff working toward sustainable and holistic housing solutions for our most vulnerable people — the Council of Yukon First Nations, Connective, the Safe at Home Society, Opportunities Yukon, FASSY, Blood Ties, and the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition, to name a few — your hard work and dedication is unparalleled. Thank you.

To Yukon First Nations and municipalities whose work to increase the availability of land and housing stock has led to the release of over 300 residential lots and the creation of more than 300 new units since the spring of 2022, we thank you. To our federal colleagues at Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for providing new housing options and to the homeowners adding rental suites and the contractors building the territory's new homes, we thank you.

The contributions by all of our partners, small and large, bring us closer to providing safe and affordable housing within reach for all Yukoners.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Housing Day. National Housing Day falls on November 22 and has been acknowledged since the year 2000. This day is dedicated to raising awareness about housing and homelessness across Canada, understanding that the importance of housing is not just the roof and the four walls but the foundation of stability and well-being.

Access to housing is essential to a community. It is where families thrive and children learn and grow. A safe and secure home gives us the stability to face life's challenges and fully

participate with a positive impact in society. Despite its importance, many people across Canada and here in the Yukon still struggle to find a safe and stable place to call home. We continue to see an increase in population bringing an increased demand for homes. With this increased demand, the cost of homes has also risen, making it difficult and in some cases unattainable for individuals to buy a home. This puts a massive strain on the rental market. With the cost of homes rising, fewer rentals are coming on the market and rent itself has continued to increase. The impacts of the housing affordability crisis are felt throughout the community by buyers and renters. This along with the rising cost of living and rapid inflation have made it hard on so many individuals and families.

National Housing Day is a reminder of the importance of safe, secure, and stable housing for individuals and communities to thrive.

Salamat po.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon NDP on National Housing Day to speak to the critical role of housing in the Yukon.

The 2023 point-in-time homelessness count revealed that 197 individuals self-identified as being homeless or underhoused. That number was up by 30 percent from the previous count two years earlier. We know that there is at times a years-long wait-list for Yukon Housing. We know that the emergency shelter is overcrowded, but for many, it is the only option. Shelters are not homes.

We know that there are people living in their cars or living in abusive or unsafe housing who have no other option. Others are living rough in tents even through the winter. Unsafe housing is not a home.

We know that local hotels have become housing for people in the winter months, but this is unsuitable and unstable. By spring, they must once again find new housing. A hotel is not a home.

We know that for many, couch surfing is a reality. A couch is not a home.

Today, we recognize all the people, organizations, First Nation governments and development corporations, and all levels of government working hard to support and provide safe housing in a situation where there is so little available, and we thank you so sincerely for that work.

To all the people who don't have safe, stable, affordable places to call home, we see you and we won't stop fighting for you. We know that housing is a human right.

Applause

In recognition of the Northwestel Festival of Trees

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize the 20th annual Northwestel Festival of Trees, which runs from November 23 to December 2 of this year. I am truly excited to be able to bring this tribute to the House today.

Tomorrow, the festival kicks off the holiday season with the Newmont BAH Humbug cocktail party here in the Jim

Smith Building. The festival combines fun, wonder, and the spirit of giving. Each year, beautiful trees and wreaths are auctioned to raise money for the Yukon Hospital Foundation. As our community gathers under twinkling lights, we see the true generosity of Yukoners.

Since the festival began in 2003, it has raised over \$8 million. In the past 20 years, the Northwestel Festival of Trees has funded critical medical imaging tools in our hospitals, such as ultrasound machines, a CT scanner, an MRI scanner, a medical simulation centre, and, most recently, updates to our pediatric unit at Whitehorse General Hospital. This year, proceeds will support the Building Better Together campaign with a \$2-million donation toward the cost of a new 12-bed mental health unit at Whitehorse General Hospital.

These festival events would not be possible without Northwestel, the Yukon Hospital Foundation, local businesses, sponsors, and many volunteers who offer their time and dedication to these amazing events that make life better for Yukoners and improve the quality of care. This year, you can bid on stunning trees that are donated for auction by local businesses or an organization. There are dozens of Yukoners who volunteer their time and creativity to decorate the trees.

On behalf of all Yukoners who get to enjoy their work, thank you. Thank you to the Yukon Hospital Foundation and Karen Forward. They do an incredible job of organizing the Festival of Trees. Thank you to the Yukon Hospital Foundation and President Karen Forward, who do an incredible job of organizing the Festival of Trees. Our entire community gets to appreciate and enjoy your work.

I have it on good authority that Santa will be at the Skookum Asphalt Santa breakfast this Saturday, November 25 in the lobby of this building. Saturday night is cocktails and crafts at The Mini Makerspace in the Horwood's Mall. You can see sparkly trees in the Jim Smith Building during the day on November 24, 27, and 28. December 1 is the Save on Foods Seniors Soiree. Then the festival peaks on December 2 with the Alkan Air Grand Ball, which is sold out again this year.

You can also support the festival online with 50/50 tickets. The winner is announced on December 14. If you need to be enticed, last year's jackpot was over \$121,000. Thank you to the Yukon Hospital Foundation and all their partners and sponsors in making an important difference to all Yukoners and for giving us so many ways to contribute and celebrate at this wonderful time of the year.

Applause

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the Northwestel Festival of Trees.

Back in 2003, I was invited by Vanessa Innes to have coffee with her and former MLA Doug Phillips to talk about a fundraiser for the hospital. The Close to our Hearts campaign was raising funds to purchase cardiac monitoring equipment for Whitehorse General so people would no longer have to travel Outside for this diagnostic care.

Doug and I co-chaired that campaign, and thanks to the overwhelming generosity of Yukoners, it was successful

beyond anyone's imagination. So many sponsors have been around since the start, like Pelly Construction, Alkan Air, Air North, Yukon's Airline, and, of course, Northwestel, and since those very early years, the Yukon Hospital Foundation has been officially established. New sponsors have joined along the way, like Nuway Crushing, Skookum Asphalt, Newmont Mining, and Save-on-Foods.

Through the years, the list of equipment purchases includes a CT scanner, Canada's first MRI north of 60, operating room and pediatric equipment, digital X-ray, and this year's support for the new 12-bed mental wellness unit through the foundation's Building Better Together campaign.

Hundreds of individuals have played an important role in this over the years, too numerous to mention here today, but I would like to honour four people who have sadly passed away but who played such an important role in the success of the event.

In 2004, Barry Bellchambers converted the old Lions swimming pool into a convention centre, which became home to the festival for many years. After an absence due to the pandemic, once again this year, patrons will be dancing in the deep end; Paul Flaherty, former CEO of Northwestel, was a huge champion of this event and a similar one in Yellowknife; Barry Watson, former owner of Alkan Air, was there from the start, and now the company, with Wendy Tayler and Jeff Faulkner at the helm, sponsors the Grand Ball; and finally, our friend Travis Adams, from Nuway Crushing, a huge supporter of this event in every way possible.

We miss them all, but their legacy lives on in this event and its impact on the community. So many great festivals have happened over the years, but for me personally, 2006 was definitely the most memorable. Amanda and I worked at the Seniors Soiree on the Friday; we worked the grand ball and auction on the Saturday; we delivered trees with Frank and Elaine on the Sunday; and then we got married on the Monday. So, it was a pretty crazy four days for us.

This year, the Hospital Foundation chair, Tammy April, the president, Karen Forward, and my wife, Amanda Leslie, are putting together a great event. It all starts tomorrow with the Newmont BAH Humbug in the foyer of this building; the Skookum Asphalt Santa Breakfast is on Saturday; and next Friday and Saturday are the Save-on-Foods Seniors Soiree and the Alkan Air Grand Ball.

There are many ways to contribute and support the event, including through an online silent auction, which opens tomorrow, or buying a 50/50 ticket online. I encourage Yukoners to take time to view the wonderful trees at the amazing venues and the dozens and dozens of amazing items donated by caring individuals, organizations, and businesses.

As the Yukon Hospital Foundation reminds us, we can do a lot if we all do a little. So, congratulations to everyone on 20 years, and here's to two more decades of caring for our community.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the beauty and the wonder that is the Northwestel

Festival of Trees. For 20 years, Northwestel has hosted a week-long series of events in support of the Yukon Hospital Foundation. The Yukon Hospital Foundation raises funds to improve the quality of health care for all Yukoners. The dollars raised by Yukoners for Yukoners stay in the territory and support so many. Every dollar given is used to support the area of greatest need.

With this year's festival, there are many ways to kick off the holiday season, from cocktail parties to breakfast with Santa, the Seniors Soiree, and, of course, the pinnacle of fancy dress in the territory, the Alkan Air Grand Ball. So, if you love trees decorated with lights and all sorts of creativity, this enchanted wonderland is for you. You can go and see the trees at the Sternwheeler Hotel from November 24 until December 3.

A big thank you to the Yukon Hospital Foundation and all of their sponsors for the work that they do in supporting the health of our territory.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 18 of the *Human Rights Act*, the Yukon Human Rights Commission annual report for 2022-23.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 8(2) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I have for tabling the Public Accounts for the 2022-23 fiscal year. I also have for tabling the Yukon Lottery Commission annual report.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 23(2) of the *Housing Corporation Act*, I have for tabling the Yukon Housing Corporation annual report for 2022-23.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Pursuant to section 15(3) of the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, I have for tabling the board's annual report for 2022-23. Mr. Speaker, this is the last year that this report will be tabled under this name. Going forward, it will be tabled under the Yukon Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling the annual report respecting the administration of the Yukon health care insurance plan, which is tabled pursuant to section 6 of the *Health Care Insurance Plan Act*.

I also have for tabling the annual report respecting the administration of the hospital insurance plan, which is tabled pursuant to section 7 of the *Hospital Insurance Services Act*.

I also have for tabling the crime prevention and victim services trust annual report 2022-23, which is tabled pursuant to section 9 of the *Crime Prevention and Victim Services Trust Act*.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling two legislative returns relating to questions raised during the debate

in Committee of the Whole for Bill No. 211, Vote 18, the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling five legislative returns answering questions arising from Committee of the Whole debate in both Vote 52, Environment, and Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have the following three documents for tabling this afternoon: a 2016 Association of Yukon Communities report entitled *Solid Waste Management: Vision for a Sustainable Model for Yukon Communities*; the 2018 recommendations of the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste; and a letter from the Yukon Conservation Society in support of our waste regionalization plans.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 22 — response

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in response to Petition No. 22 regarding bedbugs. We understand that the presence of pests in someone's home can cause significant stress and anxiety. The corporation wants to get ahead of any pest infestation, which is why, during lease-signing appointments, tenants are provided with information on how to identify and prevent bedbugs and are encouraged to report any indications of bedbugs to staff immediately. Tenant safety and dignity is of paramount importance. Staff are always willing to discuss concerns and to share information that will improve the health and safety of our tenants.

The corporation owns three heat tents, which are operated by trained staff and contractors to treat furniture and belongings when a bedbug infestation is present and is not treatable by less invasive measures. The current standard is to respond within 24 hours of the initial complaint to limit the potential of bedbug migration throughout buildings; however, the time to arrange for and execute treatment is affected by several factors.

When responding to a complaint, staff of the corporation will work with the tenant to schedule an inspection by a Yukon Housing Corporation certified pest control contractor as soon as possible. Tenants may be asked to confirm the presence of bedbugs; however, I would like to highlight that proof is not required to initiate an inspection. If bedbugs are identified during the initial inspection, the certified contractor will work with the staff to schedule a treatment as soon as possible. If treatment is required, tenants are to complete the pre-treatment checklist prior to the contractor to ensure that treatment is as effective as possible.

In cases where tenants are not able to complete the pre-treatment checklist, the contractor may be engaged to complete the work on their behalf at no cost. If the extent of the bedbug presence in a unit is beyond mitigation via non-invasive treatment and requires tenants to vacate their unit to accommodate a heat treatment, they will be relocated at the

expense of the corporation to a vacant unit. Heat treatments, on average, take about one week to complete. Following all treatment methods, Yukon Housing Corporation's contractor provides two follow-up inspections to verify that remediation was successful.

The corporation covers the cost of all treatments and follow-up inspections, as well as preventive measures, such as mattress covers, bedbug lures, threshold tape, and other supplies, as necessary, upon initial identification of bedbugs. Furniture replacements are handled on a case-by-case basis after all attempts have been made to salvage tenants' belongings. Vacant units with a history of bedbugs are treated prior to reallocation. Specifications of all new multi-unit building construction, renovation projects, and vacancy repairs include sealing all floor and wall joints, as well as additional wall sealing between units and common areas to limit migration of bedbugs.

Recently, the corporation replaced all carpets in the halls and common areas of occupied floors at 600 College Drive and added floor and wall sealing measures to reduce bedbug migration. Since January 1, 2023, the Yukon Housing Corporation has spent \$145,810 on bedbug treatments. The estimated cost for the 2023-24 fiscal year is \$208,500.

I hope this provides clarity on the actions taken by the corporation to mitigate bedbug infestation and that we continue to implement and invest to ensure that our tenants have a safe place to call home.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon mining industry on a strong 2023 season with estimated mineral exploration expenditures of \$147 million, an 18-percent increase over 2022.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to immediately increase funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation to enable them to meet the needs of Yukoners, including preventing wait times for mammography screening for cancer being as long as the 35-month timeline mentioned by a witness from the Yukon Hospital Corporation in the Legislative Assembly on November 21, 2023.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with private contractors to provide new and existing Yukon Housing tenants with access to an enclosed trailer to heat treat possessions and furniture prior to move-in dates in a Yukon Housing building or in cases of bedbug outbreaks.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with youth organizations and other levels of government to plan, develop, and open an indoor skateboard park for youth in Whitehorse.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Housing initiatives fund

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce the launch of the seventh intake of the housing initiatives fund. Meeting the housing needs of Yukoners takes partnership and collaboration. No one government or organization can do it alone. Over the years, the housing initiatives fund has supported community housing partners in building affordable homes across the Yukon. Over the last six intakes, the program supported 57 projects. To date, these projects have added 361 new units in the Yukon, with another 318 affordable units under planning or construction. That is a total of 679 units through all previous intakes of the housing initiatives fund.

This goes beyond numbers; this is concrete progress toward improving the lives of Yukoners by providing safe, accessible, and supportive housing options. Some recent examples of completed projects include 84 units at Normandy Living, 87 units at Boreal Commons, and 52 units at the Cornerstone Community Building.

Today, on the launch of our seventh intake, we invite First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and the public to apply for funding to support projects that will increase the range of affordable housing options in their communities.

Since the program's inception in 2018, the Yukon government has committed over \$28 million to this fund. This funding provides incentives for the development of quality affordable housing and includes three funding streams: the shovel-ready project stream in Whitehorse, the shovel-ready project stream in the communities, and the project concept stream. Shovel-ready projects can receive up to \$100,000 per unit and up to \$1 million per project.

These projects must be ready to begin construction within six months of the accepted application and the housing should be ready for occupancy within two years of signing the funding agreement. Under the project concept stream, which is open year-round, applicants can receive up to \$20,000 toward the development of affordable housing project proposals. This funding can be stacked with other funding sources, including federal and Yukon Housing Corporation programs.

Submitted projects must propose at least four units in Whitehorse and one unit in communities, and the rental units must remain affordable for 20 years. Eligible projects include new affordable rentals designed to provide Yukoners with a variety of housing options. Additional consideration will be given to those projects prioritizing the needs of seniors, low-

income tenants, people experiencing homelessness, First Nations, and youth aged 18 to 25.

Projects supporting staff housing solutions across all levels of government and the business sector are also a priority. We are proud of this initiative which continues to make a very real difference in the Yukon's housing landscape. This is another example of our response to addressing housing needs of Yukoners through collaborative partnerships with local housing partners. I encourage both current and aspiring partners to visit yukon.ca, contact the staff at Yukon Housing Corporation for support, and apply for funding today. Together, we can help support Yukoners and ensure that all those in need of affordable housing options have a place to call home.

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the update on the housing initiatives. The supply of housing has not kept up with demand. In fact, it is now worse under the Liberal government. We hope that this money gets out of the door in a timely manner to help address the Yukon's housing crunch.

Salamat po.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, we are in a housing crisis and we have been saying that for 12 straight years. We have said that so many times, it almost starts to sound meaningless.

I try to think of the human cost of a housing crisis that lasts more than a decade. I think of the stories I heard at the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition's tenancy rights discussion, stories of people who have been trying for years to find stable housing and who have been discriminated against and left behind every step of the way.

I think of the stories that I hear of people living in rental housing that doesn't meet the minimum requirements laid out by the act, but they are afraid to call out their landlord because if they are forced to move, they have nowhere to go. I think of going to social events and hearing that the number one thing that people are stressed about is finding housing that they can afford and wondering how long they will be able to stay in the housing they have before they have to start their search all over again.

I think of the people I talk to who are paying astronomical rent who don't qualify for a mortgage even though the mortgage payments would be far lower than the rent they are paying. They are falling further and further behind every month as they try to keep up. I think of the desperate posts on community Facebook groups of families who are running out of options or new employees trying to move to the Yukon with no hope of finding a place.

We see the ripple effects of the housing crisis at all levels of our community. We see our local businesses that, after months of searching, recruit staff to move up here to help them keep their doors open, only for those staff to realize that they could never afford housing here and decide not to come. We see the overcrowded emergency shelter desperately trying to support people who are in crisis — because how can you possibly live a stable, healthy life when you have nowhere to live? We see environmental impacts of substandard and energy-

inefficient housing which is still snatched up because people have no choice.

So, while I am happy to hear that the housing initiative fund will continue, what people are looking for is something new. Right now, we talk about the housing crisis year after year without seeing measurable improvements. We need something new; we need something different; we need bold and brave action to make sure that everyone has a stable, affordable home here in the Yukon.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, housing is a priority for this government and it is a top priority for me as Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation. That's why we continue to invest in affordable, diverse housing options, and that's why we are continuing to work with our housing partners to ensure that our housing programs support and align with the diverse needs of all Yukoners.

What I have heard today in response from the Yukon Party was that it's just worse — not any debate or policy ideas. I can understand the position, maybe. I know that over the years, we have seen funds that have been allocated. We have wanted to have those invested. Our government stands by article 25 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which recognizes access to adequate housing. We heard that, as well, from the Third Party, from the NDP, today. I know that the Yukon Party's position on this is different. When they were asked about where they stand on this, a quote from their leader was: If you're going to talk about adding housing to the *Human Rights Act*, I don't think that's something I would support.

When it comes to the Third Party, what I saw was a litany of problems. Yes, there are challenges across this entire country, but as I started, there have been hundreds of units — over 50 partnerships through this program, and I think that is new, because it has only been in place since 2018.

Again, on this side of the House, we are driven by the understanding that a place to call home isn't just a physical structure; it is a foundation for hope and opportunity and dignity. We will continue to work with our partners who are here and we will build new projects in partnership, which is the only way forward. There will be new concepts.

We look forward to some of the projects that are coming online now. I look at the projects that have just completed. I don't think there is a Yukoner who cannot stand up and say that we haven't seen new and innovative partnerships — and more to come in 2024.

We are committed to forging a path with partners that ensures that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, has access to safe and affordable housing. The housing initiatives fund has helped make significant progress in the availability of affordable homes across the territory. This is good news for Yukoners.

We have also had the strongest growth in the entire country. It is projects like those that we have seen through the housing initiatives fund that help reduce Yukon's housing gaps through pioneering new partnerships and innovative ideas.

Since 2020, the Yukon Housing Corporation has supported over 300 households as well as helped them pay their rent

through the Yukon Housing benefit program. The Yukon Housing Corporation has supported 470 new housing completions since 2020 through its loans and grants programs.

With that, what I will say today to Yukoners is that we understand that the work is far from done and we understand that we have much to do, but I do want to thank our partners, whether they are contractors, First Nation corporations, First Nation governments, or NGOs. Thank you for the work that you do, and we will continue to see progress and I look forward to the builds of 2024.

Speaker: This then brings us to the Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Government relationship with municipalities

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Community Services' difficulty in working with communities is becoming well known in municipal circles. The minister often allows these private disputes with mayors to leak out into the public. There is no better example of this than when the minister unilaterally cancelled the Yukon's bid to host the Canada Winter Games. Despite this clearly being a decision of the Liberal Cabinet — and the Liberal Cabinet alone — the minister tried to blame it on the City of Whitehorse, which prompted a letter from the Mayor of Whitehorse criticizing him for the inaccuracy of his comments.

Then, of course, there was the public letter that the minister sent to the city just a few weeks ago that scolded city council for not taking action on drinking water. Shortly before that, he surprised many municipalities when he told the *Yukon News* in October that the lack of emergency preparedness was not his fault but the municipalities'.

Can the minister explain why he has such a hard time working with Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I really want to commend our municipalities for all the work that they have been doing over the last several years. I just recently — two weeks ago — had a very cordial meeting with the Mayor of Haines Junction and I appreciate him and his team taking time out of their busy days to meet with me last Friday. It is not easy to meet on a Friday, but we had a really great conversation about several issues, some of which I will get into this afternoon. Just last week, I met with the Mayor of Whitehorse. I have cordial relations with them.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, I have to say this afternoon that I absolutely completely reject the assertion by the member opposite that I have a bad relationship with mayors. I work very closely with our municipal partners and I have given all of them my phone number and we work cordially on a number of issues, be it emergency planning, on infrastructure, on housing, on recreation — any issue that comes forward from municipalities to my desk, I handle quickly and with respect.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, the minister's relationship with rural communities has been, in a word, difficult. When the minister tried to ram his better buildings legislation through, the towns of Mayo, Watson Lake, and Teslin all wrote to the

minister and asked to be consulted. He was forced to delay that legislation and actually consult, but he has since blamed that delay as the reason why the program hasn't been successful.

Meanwhile, his handling of rural transfer station closures has infuriated several communities and even prompted at least one petition calling for his resignation.

Then, at their AGM this summer in Watson Lake, the AYC passed a resolution calling for more respectful consultation from the minister. In his speech to the AYC this summer, the Premier promised to bypass the minister and engage directly.

So, can the Premier tell us if his interventions have improved the relationship between the Minister of Community Services and the municipalities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, once again, I am going to challenge the narrative of the member opposite and I would please ask the member opposite to produce the motion that she referred to in her question. I think that she will have a hard time finding it.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, there are real challenges facing Yukon communities. Under this government, we have seen services cut back, reduced, or even cancelled altogether in rural Yukon. Municipalities are facing huge funding issues and have called for the comprehensive municipal grant to be revised and increased.

In the case of the City of Whitehorse, they have made it clear that the infrastructure challenges facing them are beyond their capacity and they need help from the Yukon government. While the minister has been quick to scold and criticize Whitehorse for their handling of the water treatment plant, he has refused to step up and help.

Put simply, many rural communities have lost faith in this minister. We have seen the Premier step in and take files off the desks of struggling ministers before. Will the Premier live up to his commitment at AYC and agree to step in and help manage the relationships with Yukon communities?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting from the MLA for Watson Lake — all the promises made but nothing delivered while in government representing the community of Watson Lake.

What I will say, though, is that when it comes to supporting municipalities, we have seen the comprehensive municipal grant go up 10 percent this year.

I can remember being on city council — the City of Whitehorse — and not seeing anything like that from the previous government.

I will say, though, that what I think Yukoners are thinking about is the leadership that we saw from the Minister of Community Services this summer, first with extensive flooding through the territory and then with fires that challenged us more than we have ever seen before. What I saw was a person who led throughout that whole process. There wasn't a time — at any time of the day — that I couldn't get in touch with that minister to find out what his next move was to support and make sure that Yukoners were safe. Thank you for keeping us all safe this summer. Thank you for doing a phenomenal job this summer as we saw other territories and other provinces not have the same leadership.

Question re: Energy strategy effect on electricity rates

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are just starting to feel the impacts of the Liberals' failed energy strategy.

The application to hike power rates that is before the independent Yukon Utilities Board calls for a 14-percent increase to power rates. According to the GRA, one of the major rate-increase drivers is the increasing cost of renting diesel generators. In fact, over 20 percent of the total increase is specifically because of the rentals.

In the Spring Sitting, the minister told the Legislature that Yukon had spent over \$26 million renting diesel generators. We know that this cost is going nowhere but up, and the Energy Corporation confirmed that we will need to rent for at least the next decade — probably more.

When will the Liberals realize that Yukoners just can't afford to pay for their failed energy strategy?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is a general rate application in front of our Yukon Utilities Board that Yukon Energy has put there. I know that the Yukon Party characterizes it as a 14-percent increase, but the effect to Yukoners and households is a six-percent increase.

There are costs in there for our diesel capital equipment — for sure. There is also our Whitehorse interconnection project for the Riverside substation upgrades, transmission line replacements from Carmacks to Faro, and the Aishihik five-year licence renewal.

We have the start of the demand-side management program. I encourage all Yukoners to sign up through Yukon Energy to the demand-side management program.

We have the cost of purchasing renewable electricity through our independent power producers. We have all sorts of pieces in there, including diesels — yes, there is a cost for that and, yes, we are looking to update the system throughout. The member opposite is correct that the increase would be six percent to Yukoners' bills.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, just about every single project the Liberals have banked on is either stalled, delayed, or dead in the water. The Yukon Energy Corporation has confirmed that they have no other options than to continue renting diesel generators for at least another decade — probably more. All this time, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has refused to consider constructing a new thermal plant for generation in the Yukon. In fact, on November 8, 2022, he told the Legislature that it would be wrong to build a thermal plant because it will tie us to fossil fuels, but that is exactly what this minister is doing right now. In fact, the plans that are before YESAB right now are for a 15.5-megawatt permanent diesel plant in Dawson City. So, can the minister explain why he thought it was wrong last year but this year, it's just fine?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will stand up every day, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, we do need thermal for backup and we should replace that when we get to end of life, as we are doing right now. We also are growing. What we should be doing is working toward renewables. Sometimes, if we can't get those renewables on fast enough, we should supplement.

Right now, that is rental diesels because they are cheaper. That is what our witnesses told us, although the members opposite don't wish to believe them. I find it completely disrespectful. However, I have also said to the energy utility to keep doing diligence on this and keep coming back and looking at the numbers to see if they change over time, because prices are in fluctuation.

Overall, we should be working toward renewables. That is what we say.

Right now, over 90 percent of the energy that we have in the system is renewable and just one or 1.5 percent — I think that is what Yukon Energy Corporation told me — is supplied by the rental diesels. That is what all of this debate is about: one or 1.5 percent of our total energy supply. What we need to focus on is how we build new renewables, not a permanent diesel plant.

Mr. Kent: Well, the fact is that the minister is adding additional permanent diesel capacity in Dawson City. Yukoners are concerned about the cost of living in this territory and the rising power rates that are coming due to the failure of this Liberal government's energy strategy.

We know what the Premier thinks about renting diesels. He said — quote: "We believe it's a good investment." Since then, the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources has insisted that renting is cheaper than owning, but even the Yukon Energy Corporation is not so sure about that. In fact, they have hired Colliers Consulting to analyze renting versus a permanent plant.

Mr. Speaker, if the Colliers report shows that constructing a permanent plant makes more sense for ratepayers, will the minister abandon his affinity for renting diesels and finally start looking out for ratepayers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, three key things — some Yukoners remember next generation hydro. Next generation hydro was when the members across the way spent millions and millions of dollars on a new renewable energy plan that never happened. Then they tried to have a partnership with First Nations. Not one First Nation government would partner with them — not one — and then they gave up and said: We're just going to build the diesel plant because we can't get anything else done.

Then we came into government. What we did was to put an independent power policy in place, because we knew that we could get it done and we got it done. Then we leveraged money that did not go to rate — grant money — and we made sure that this money was spread to Old Crow, Beaver Creek, Haines Junction, Burwash — across the Yukon and here — to build renewable projects.

Do you know what's interesting? When we talk about dollars and cents — and I hear the Member for Lake Laberge piping up across the way — you know what? This is a really important fact to know. Out of all of the debt that this government, since it has been responsible, has ever incurred — it has been energy products predominantly led by the Member for Lake Laberge — 75 percent of all of the debt that Yukoners have on their backs is because of his decisions — so, remember that.

When we talk dollars and cents, we know that we're doing the right thing. We're not putting it on the backs of Yukoners and we'll make sure that we have a long-term plan to pay the debt that was put on the backs of Yukoners by the Member for Lake Laberge.

Question re: Seniors housing

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, last week, we had yet another Yukon senior come to our office for help. They have been living at the shelter since they were rent-evicted 10 months ago. They have been unable to find a new home that they can afford with their small pension, and they are not the only senior using the shelter.

Some are paying for their belongings to be in storage until they can find a permanent solution where rental prices are out of reach for many and the wait-list for seniors housing is long. This is not how anyone should spend their senior years.

Why has this government abandoned seniors to live long term at the emergency shelter instead of providing adequate, dignified housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is very difficult to take one particular case that the member opposite is speaking to. I know that what we have done — in my work with members from both sides of the House when they are representing individuals and making sure that they advocate on their behalf — is to make sure that we work with Yukon Housing to find solutions. Again, it is very difficult in this case.

What I can say is that we are working with many of the folks who were here today — whether from the Anti-Poverty Coalition or from Safe at Home — or working through the by-name list ensuring that we can prioritize for seniors or those folks fleeing violence. Those are the things that we do. We will continue to do that work, but I would be happy, outside of this public domain, to have our officials work with the member opposite to ensure that we understand what this particular situation is and that we look to remedy it.

Overall, we are always making sure that we have options and that we prioritize options for seniors, and that is some of the work that we have done. I look forward to question 2.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, when seniors have no choice but to live full time at an emergency shelter, we know that successive Yukon Party and Liberal governments have failed them. The Whitehorse Emergency Shelter was never intended to be used this way. Emergency shelters are not housing. They should be the last resort for someone in crisis, not the only option. Senior citizens in our community are being priced out of the rental market and they are scared that they will have to spend their retirement at the shelter or homeless.

When will this government finally address the needs of seniors so they aren't forced to live at the emergency shelter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services have been working with the seniors supportive housing program to address the gap in the housing continuum for seniors. I know that the Third Party, the NDP, has been very critical of our partnership on Normandy. That is just another example of the private sector coming in and building a

structure. The corporation — we have leveraged 26 affordable housing units at Normandy. That is just one option.

We invited all Members of the Legislative Assembly to look at the new build on the south access that overlooks the Yukon River — that 46-unit building. Again, it is a variety — it is not just for seniors, but it is a mix of housing options.

We have debated thoroughly here about Vimy and I will say that we are behind on that project. We are trying to make sure that we support the organization to come to a point where they have a feasible, fundable plan. These are all things we'll do.

Again, walking into the House today, bringing a case where it's — I know of a situation where there is a person — I want to help. Please, let's make sure that Yukon Housing Corporation has a chance to work — or through the Anti-Poverty Coalition — but one of those avenues that work very well.

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, the Yukon NDP has been calling for new public housing for over a decade. The former Macaulay Lodge, now an empty lot, has been underused for years. We also know that there are some empty units in some of the seniors housing buildings, yet we still have a long list of unhoused and underhoused seniors. Many more are living in places they can't afford to heat.

Now the government has announced that it is working on a winter housing strategy. This sounds like a great idea and we are pleased to hear that they are looking into this. Unfortunately, it is already well into winter and we have seen temperatures below minus 20. We have seen a lot of strategies from the government with few results. Yukoners can't afford to wait.

What solutions is this government going to implement now to get seniors into appropriate, warm, and dignified housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I think that we have strategies in place right now and I want to commend the Minister of Health and Social Services and the work of her team, which has actually made sure that we have a relationship with the Safe at Home Society to ensure that we have housing options into the spring of 2024. I think that 22 or 24 units are in place there.

You talk about strategies. I see bricks and mortar. I see the support that we put into Normandy. I see a very significant build along the riverfront. I think the work that we are doing through our communities to support the private sector to build new units is important work. I think the hundreds of thousands of dollars that we have put in place to support Vimy and de-risk their project is real. It's putting your money where your mouth is. I think that this is solid work.

I think that there is lots of work that needs to continue to be done. But again, it's not just about strategy; it's about real projects and real building. I was happy this summer to see a number of other buildings throughout our communities. I look forward to our multi-unit building in Watson Lake being completed. I look forward to deploying the funds that we have in place for our significant multi-unit buildings in Dawson City as well.

Yes, we are growing at a rapid pace, but we are continuing to build where we need to and fill those gaps.

Question re: Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and downtown core concerns

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, last night, the Yukon government hosted a public consultation on the current state of the Whitehorse Emergency Shelter and many other issues facing the downtown core. We have heard that businesses and neighbours in that area are feeling desperate and defeated. They want to see real change made, and all they have seen so far has been cosmetic changes and more promises from government.

It seems clear to most people that what is really needed to change is the operating model of the emergency shelter. Will the government agree to consider making real changes to the way in which the emergency shelter is operated to try to limit the negative impacts that face so many people's businesses?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, our government facilitated a downtown community residents meeting in Whitehorse and I certainly want to thank everyone who participated and asked questions and shared their ideas. That took place last night.

The event provided a safe, apolitical space for people to voice their concerns, to share solutions, and to discuss their priorities and the needs of the downtown residents and businesses.

Mr. Speaker, this is where we are going to come up with solutions — not from the opposition who just want to redesign a model on their own.

We need to work with our communities. The safety and well-being in the vibrancy of downtown Whitehorse and in all of our communities is something that I think everyone cares deeply about.

Last night was an opportunity for community members to speak freely, to ask questions, and to work collaboratively and bring their voices, ideas, thoughts, and feelings — and the purpose to their solutions. They had an opportunity to discuss and to make things right, to be heard, and to be heard by other community members. It is but one step in the work we are doing to make the downtown community of Whitehorse safe.

Ms. Van Bibber: Another challenge for downtown businesses and residents that came up at last night's meeting was the rising incidence of property crime, vandalism, and poor behaviour that make it hard for small businesses to operate and for residents and visitors to enjoy the downtown core.

Earlier this session, we passed a motion calling for increased resources for the RCMP to help address the surge in crime. Beyond what is planned already, how much in additional resources will be provided to the RCMP, and how many front-line RCMP members will be added following this commitment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the opportunity to discuss RCMP funding and resources to them, as I do with them on a regular basis, but certainly it was an opportunity to do that here in the Legislative Assembly.

I am not sure how the members opposite did their budgeting, but as this motion was discussed only a number of

weeks ago, I can indicate that conversations are ongoing, as we work on the budget for next year, including issues of resources to the RCMP. But if the question is if we have sent them money between the time that the motion was passed and today, the answer to that is no. They are working very well with the resources that they have and the increases that they have had over the last number of years from this government, including in last year's budget, which the members opposite speak about on a regular basis with respect to resources to all kinds of important services for Yukoners, including the RCMP — they just never vote for the budget that they need.

Question re: Yukon University Act consultations

Ms. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, four years ago, this House unanimously passed the *Yukon University Act*. That act is unique to the Yukon and requires that the university must be accountable to the Government of Yukon and each Yukon First Nation. Section 55 of the act spells out that the minister is required to establish the accountability and performance measures in consultation with First Nations.

Can the minister tell us the status of those consultations?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon is very proud of its collaboration with Yukon College to establish Yukon University as Canada's first university north of 60. It's a hybrid university. Yukon University offers degrees, diplomas, certificates, career and trades training, second language support, and upgrading to meet the diverse learning needs of Yukon communities. We are very proud of the work that we've done to make this a reality. It was a long vision in *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*.

We have realized that, and the work that we're doing around the accountability framework is really important. We have been working with the university and Yukon First Nations on this framework. The initial draft of the accountability framework from Yukon University has been received, and consultation with Yukon First Nations is currently underway. The plan is to have an approved accountability framework in place by 2024.

Again, I am happy to bring forward more information around this. We look forward to continued collaboration with Yukon University, which helps achieve the commitments outlined in the strategic plan.

Ms. Clarke: In the university board minutes from last December, it says that YG will hold public consultations in the winter and spring and then in fall 2023 and that the framework will be approved by the minister.

It is the fall of 2023, and we cannot find any record of consultation on this framework nor any accountability and performance measures for the university. When can Yukoners expect consultation on this, and when will the measures be in place?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I just answered the question. I believe that we are in possession of the draft. A lot of consultation has gone into that draft accountability framework, and we are doing our final consultation and doing our due diligence to make sure that this meets the expectation of our partners. We are now doing a final consultation with

Yukon First Nations, and this is being done through a contractor who has led this work over the last year and a bit, and the plan is to have an approved accountability framework in place in 2024.

I am looking forward to that, and, of course, it is a very important part of our work with Yukon University. We will continue to support that and look forward to having an approved accountability framework that has done all of the due diligence with Yukoners and particularly our partners with Yukon First Nations. Again, I will just restate that this was a long vision of *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, and we are meeting that commitment.

Question re: Psychiatric services

Mr. Dixon: Yesterday, we asked about the closure of a local psychiatry clinic, which comes after a long-time psychiatrist has complained about the lack of responsiveness to the concerns that he has been raising for over a year with this Liberal government. He feels that he has been treated unfairly by this government and, as a result, could be closing his clinic and leaving the territory.

Since then, we have received many calls and letters from concerned patients who want to express their support for the Soulshine clinic and to make it clear that the loss of this psychiatry service will be a huge loss for each and every one of them and the Yukon as a whole. In response to all of this, the Minister of Health and Social Services implied that this doctor was being unethical, and she thinks that the Yukon Medical Council should review his actions. The Yukon desperately needs doctors and in particular psychiatrists.

Does the minister really think that impugning the character of this doctor will help convince him to stay?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I guess I should be surprised; I'm not surprised that the private business — and it is a business — of a psychiatrist here in the territory will be brought to the Legislative Assembly floor. It is certainly not my preference to discuss it here. The Department of Health and Social Services is committed to exploring contract opportunities with physicians interested in a contract or a blended model to support service delivery.

We have noted concern about this letter — that the psychiatrist said to his patients asking them to advocate for his financial gain. Meanwhile, the Department of Health and Social Services is reviewing the way that psychiatric services are provided. I spoke to the media yesterday and indicated our important dedication to this to make sure that psychiatric services are provided in a fair way here in the territory.

We continue to request and look at the data from physicians on the service delivery models, and we are moving forward in an equitable way based on the data, and the review of the psychiatric and psychiatrist services is targeted to be completed in January 2024. This particular psychiatrist has been advised of those dates.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, we don't want to be bringing this to the floor of the Legislature either, but this psychiatrist has raised this directly — privately with the minister — for almost a year now and has gotten no response. Yesterday, the

minister dismissed this issue and seemed entirely unaware of it. This was despite many e-mails and letters having been sent to her, her department, and even the Premier now for months. Then, when speaking to the media, her staff handed out the contract history of this doctor to the media, and the minister implied that the doctor was violating his ethical obligations under the YMA's code of conduct and suggested that the Yukon Medical Council, which deals with physician discipline, look into it.

It's becoming quite obvious to everyone that this minister has an axe to grind for some reason. How can a doctor, who is already concerned that he is being treated unfairly, expect to get a fair hearing on this issue from this minister? So, will the Premier agree to step in and help to mediate this issue? Because it's clear that the minister's actions have made an easy resolution much more difficult.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, the person opposite — the member opposite — in their role as the Leader of the Official Opposition, should have the facts correct. There have been absolutely many responses to this particular individual. I don't know them, so "axe to grind" is certainly speculation on their part. I have never even met this person that I'm aware of.

Nonetheless, what I can say is that improving the mental wellness of Yukoners is a priority for our government, and we will continue with our ongoing work to transform the territory's health and social services system, including working on the review of how psychiatric services are presented and provided here in the territory, with a blended model of fee-for-service and contract physicians.

Both models play an important role in the delivery of primary and specialist health care, which is what I am concerned with here. We are certainly not opposed to providing doctors with contracts when we are assured that they are good value for the use of tax dollars, while ensuring that patients receive a high level of service. We respect that many physicians are small business owners and that we work with them and all physicians to ensure that they are compensated fairly. We cannot force them to take on more patients. Physicians who are not on contract with the government do continue to be compensated fairly with a fee-for-service.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, what we are concerned about are the many, many Yukoners who have reached out to us who are losing this critical service. We have already seen many letters of support come flooding in for this doctor from colleagues, patients, and other Yukoners. The loss of this clinic could hurt Yukon's already struggling health care system even more, and yet despite this, this minister has chosen to engage in a bizarre open conflict with this doctor.

Yukoners want to continue to have access to already scarce psychiatry services. They don't want to lose these services, yet the conduct of the minister just here today, as well, has put that in jeopardy.

So, will the minister agree to hand this file off to the Premier or even some other minister so that a swift resolution can be found?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I will share is this: The team at Health and Social Services and the minister's team have been working directly with the doctor who we have been talking about. We will continue to ensure that we work through this discussion. There have been lots of discussions. The concern from this side of the floor is that this is a negotiation on a monetary decision, and in this particular case, 200 people who are in a vulnerable position and who are seeking guidance are now in the middle of this discussion.

I have spoken with individuals, and the minister has received information, and the opposition has, but this is something that has been ongoing with this particular doctor.

What I will say is this: Tomorrow, the members opposite have a great opportunity to show leadership to Yukoners. We have over \$17 million that is available to support our hospital and our health care system, and I can tell you on this side of the floor that when we do make a mistake and we have to show leadership, we do it. We call it out and say: We can do better. But for political reasons, I will watch tomorrow — Yukoners will watch tomorrow. After all, we have heard for 29 days in this Legislative Assembly — people will be watching the Leader of the Yukon Party and all of the members opposite. Will they support our health care system tomorrow afternoon in the best way they can?

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please.

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

MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Motion No. 856

Clerk: Motion No. 856, standing in the name of Ms. White.

Speaker: It is moved by the Leader of the Third Party:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to keep the solid-waste transfer stations open at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn until solutions that meet the solid-waste disposal needs of each community are found.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I don't think that this surprises anyone that this is a motion that I chose to bring forward today. I have been speaking at length about the transfer stations in these communities and the importance of keeping them open. As a matter of fact, I was thinking about the sheer amount of space I have taken up in Hansard in talking with the minister opposite about the importance of transfer stations.

Although I appreciate that he has tabled the documents he has tabled today, I have referenced them in the past. I will remind the minister opposite that, when we talk about AYC and we talk about who they represent, it's not who he thinks or who he suggests that they do. The reason why I bring this forward is that he keeps on laying into the fact that it was the AYC's

decision, the AYC completed the consultation, and that it has been at the direction of them. I have listed off previously the associate members of AYC, and I will just remind everyone again that they are the Hamlet of Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, South Klondike, Tagish Local Advisory Council, and the Hamlet of Ibex Valley.

The reason why I bring this forward is that none of those unincorporated or those associate members do represent Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, or Braeburn, and so, that's an important thing.

At this point in time — in the last 12 years, I spent a fair amount travelling around the territory and going to landfills. It's interesting, because before the education I got from the City of Whitehorse, I would have referred to it as a "dump", but they are not. They are not dumps; they are not just something where something gets deposited. They're actively managed, and I think that's really important.

In the number of years that I have been travelling around the territory — the real privilege of travelling around — I often go by to see what the landfill looks like or what the transfer facility looks like. There are a couple other points too.

I will say right now that I don't disagree with some of the actions taken. It is very true that residents of Whitehorse would drive out to the periphery. It is absolutely true. They would go out to Mount Lorne, or they would go to Marsh Lake, or they would go to Lake Laberge. I don't think anyone is disputing that, but when we take the lens of Whitehorse and we put it on a far-reaching community like Johnsons Crossing, or Silver City, or even Braeburn, I think we are not doing those unincorporated places any kind of favours.

Saying that the behaviours of people in an urban setting should affect everyone in rural Yukon — well, I just don't think it's right. We know that people in an urban setting are not people in rural Yukon, and I don't think everybody deserves to be painted with the same lens.

It's important to note at this point that I have attended a fair number of meetings. I have had lots of conversations. I have visited the transfer stations that I mentioned because I have been invited out by community members, and I think that's also an important point. When I am speaking to this, I am actually speaking to the area that exists. I know what it looks like in my head. I have a clear picture of it.

It's also really important that, when we talk about where we are right now with transfer stations, transfer stations are actually a success story. Transfer stations were an environmental decision. Prior to transfer stations, individuals were responsible for their own waste. Whether it was stored properly or incorrectly at their own property, that was part of that story. We do have a long history — if we look at Silver City, as an example, there was an open pit — I going to call that one a "dump" — there was an open-pit dump at one point in time.

Then the decision was made that there should burning to keep that waste under control. That was in an open-pit form. Then the decision was made that it wasn't the safest or the best or the most environmental way, so then it went into burn barrels, and that was really important. That was a better step up

from the open-pit burning and certainly from the open-pit dumping.

Then the real decision — the real success — is when conservation officers got involved and we looked at the transfer stations. I am going to talk specifically about the one in Silver City. It's important to note that the transfer station in Silver City is not marked from the highway. There are no directions. It doesn't tell you where it is, and to be perfectly frank, if I hadn't followed someone to that transfer station, I'm not sure that I would have found it. You can't see it from the highway. You have to go down a ways, but that transfer station — even from the road driving in — you can see that it's well-cared for. It is well-maintained.

That transfer station does have an electric fence, keeping in mind, of course, that this is in the heart of Kluane country. Why is this important? It's important because of the wildlife. It's important that we talk about where this is and where the Johnsons Crossing and where the Braeburn transfer stations are, because they are all in the heart of wildlife.

At Silver City, there is an electric fence; there is a cattle guard, and currently, waste is being put into metal containers, and they do not have wildlife conflicts. The residents are very careful: They close the lids, and if someone has left stuff behind, they clean up, but in conversations with that community — because I was out there at the end of August for the consultation — well, I'm going to say "meeting"; I don't think it was necessarily a consultation; we didn't get into any kind of conversations about solutions, and I think that is part of the problem — there were suggestions at that meeting.

I have brought forward the suggestions or the questions from residents in Johnsons Crossing who have sent me photos from successes that they have seen, for example, in Toad River with suggestions of what could be done. I think the real challenge is that the minister doesn't appear to be listening to what some of those suggestions are. I feel that, when I use the word "consultation", I have a vision in my mind, and it's a conversation, and it's a back-and-forth — it's charting a path forward. It's not superseding; it's not me telling you what we're going to do; it's us having a discussion about what we're going to do and how we're going to get there. That was my expectation.

The issue with rural transfer stations is so big and is of such importance to people in rural Yukon that I actually included it in the 2023 confidence and supply agreement. I wanted those conversations to continue, and I wanted government to work with those unincorporated — those rural — communities to find a solution, because I believe there are solutions.

So, I have sat again — I have sat in Zoom calls; I have sat in the research centre; I have sat with people, and I have had them make suggestions. I have heard from the minister — I have actually heard from a couple of ministers. I will just say this: I don't believe saying that rural Yukon should have access to services is not an environmental stance. I look forward to someone correcting me and telling me why I'm wrong — because I disagree with that statement.

I believe that rural Yukon should have access to services. More than that, rural Yukon has made suggestions. So, when

the minister says that rural Yukon does not want to pay and they shouldn't get a free ride, well, I'm just going to let everyone know that rural Yukon has said that they will pay. They have actually said: We're happy to pay, but it doesn't make sense to have someone that we have to pay every time we drop off. It can be added to our property taxes. Just put it on there, and we'll pay it all at once, and we will pay. We will pay our fair share. Tell us what that is, and we will pay. But the minister has said that they want to do it for free. The minister has said that they are irresponsible. He has said that they lay waste; they bring things that are inappropriate to the transfer station.

I will say that it's not the people in those communities. The people in those communities have said: Put a gate on it and put a lock on the gate. We will volunteer, and we will keep it open. Give community members keys, and we will take care of it. We will put things in. But the minister continues to say that rural Yukon refuses to participate and that they don't want to find solutions. I disagree. I do disagree.

Partially, today I'm making sure that this motion comes up, and I am going to be really honest with everyone in the room — having the first spot for debate day is a big deal in the opposition, because there's a chance we're going to get to a vote. Of all the really important things that we have brought forward as the NDP, not just in this last 27 days — just to correct the Premier — but in this time, there are many other things that I think are incredibly important, but this is the one that I decided we had to talk about today. Right now, in rural Yukon, there is a real fear that, with not enough notice, they are going to be told that their transfer stations are going to be closed. That is why this is here, because I really believe that there is an opportunity to find a solution.

We were told that the reason why we are closing these down is the recommendation of the AYC, and then we're going to talk about the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste or the solid-waste action plan. That's fine; the minister can recite all those documents, and it's all important, and that's fine, but again, these sites, as they are — and I don't disagree that they are contaminated, but they've been contaminated for a very long time, and it was not the fault of the people who live in those communities right now. The contamination that started in Silver City was far before the current residents of Silver City, so to say that the current people in those situations are going to be punished for the mistakes of the past I don't think is fair.

I think that there is an opportunity, if we are concerned about contamination and that those sites need to be remediated — well, that's fine; then remediate them. Then build another one and line it, put the right surface on it, put in the electric fence, put in a cattle guard, and put in a gate that locks. No one in rural Yukon has said that they won't separate their waste. As a matter of fact, today at 4:00 p.m. — and I really do appreciate it. I've said again that the public servants who have been tasked with these consultation meetings are doing the absolute best they can — there was a meeting planned today in Silver City. There is some illness in Haines Junction and in the surrounding areas, so this meeting has gone virtual. It was at the urging of people who initially were not going to attend but changed their

minds and are going to go. I am grateful for that, because they are keen to try to find a solution.

Again, I believe that there is a solution, but the solution can't just be: We're closing it down and that is it. Because that doesn't work for rural Yukon; it doesn't work for rural Yukon.

I am also going to point out here that in the communication that was circulating for the public servants who were hosting the meeting today in Silver City — again, I appreciate — or at the meeting in August where there was a decision to have a second meeting where they would come forward with different solutions and different experts — there is going to be recycling today and there is going to be compost today in that conversation. It is all really important, but initially, that community said: We don't want to go back. They said: We went to the first one. We thought it was going to be a consultation; it wasn't a consultation. We were just being told what was going to happen, and that doesn't feel like a conversation. That feels like we were just being told what is going to happen.

I actually responded to them, and I said: Please, please go back. Please go back and bring your good ideas and bring your suggestions, because if you don't, then where can I go? Where can I lean into — if you are not making suggestions, how can I say that the communities are still trying to work with Yukon government?

The reason why I say this is because I am included in a very long e-mail thread at this point in time with many, many folks whom I have a lot of respect for in the Silver City area, because, again, I went there and I heard from them, and I heard what was going on. I have also had lots of blowback. I mean, the Member for Kluane wrote a colourful letter to the editor last week, which is — he is entitled to his opinion. I disagree with him — never wavered on this issue, but he has opinions.

So, when I sent the e-mail to those folks in Silver City, I pleaded. I said: Please go. Forget about the minister. Know that the public servants who are coming are going to do their best and that the experts who they are bringing — they just don't want to be pawns of government; they want to work together. They want to help you find solutions.

I am just going to read an e-mail, and I have sent it to Hansard, so I thank them for that in advance. I am going to read this e-mail. This is the response that I got from someone, and I think that it is important, because it helps colour the conversation. It says: "... we had a change of heart and we are willing to attend the November 22nd workshop. However, we are suggesting to also have the meeting via zoom as at the end of November the weather and the highway can be unpredictable. This way more people can attend. We want to emphasize our concerns that our participation at this workshop will be misconstrued as community buy-in. It is not! We want the Silver City transfer station kept operational and improved like a locking gate, recycling, organics and so on. We are willing to listen to the experts and we want input towards workable solutions within the present transfer station site. The following quote is from Toshie Cartier. She makes a very good point."

I am quoting from another e-mail, and it says: "We will attend if the workshop is meant to keep and improve our transfer station, but we don't this workshop to be used as justification to close the transfer station. We do not want to have an experience like the presentation we had at the end of August which was mistakenly called a consultation."

The reason I wanted to read this in is that it shows that there is a willingness from that community to work together still. Despite the mistrust that they have in the process, they are still willing to go and I think that's important.

I have spoken at length about this issue. I have read in some very unflattering thoughts about the minister that have been sent in to me and to the public media. I could read it all in again, but I don't think that it is actually helpful.

Really, ultimately, I know where the rural members in this Chamber stand because, as people who represent rural Yukon — I should say that I know where most rural members stand — they understand that the reality is a bit different. The truth of the matter is that we have a Whitehorse MLA who is in charge of the file. We have one rural member from the government side who, I am sure, will have some thoughts to share with us about why I am wrong and why it is not the environmental way.

But ultimately, what I am asking for today is that these transfer stations be kept open.

Pardon me; I am just going to make sure that I get it right — that the solid-waste transfer stations are kept open at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn until solutions that meet the solid-waste disposal needs of each community are found.

I do not want anyone to be surprised by a government decision that is imposed on them. I believe that people in rural Yukon have really good ideas about a path forward and I believe that we should work toward that. It is really important that, in this Chamber — there are 19 of us who were elected and we have always recognized in the Yukon the importance of the urban-rural conversation, so much so that MLAs in urban Whitehorse typically have far more folks whom we represent than rural Yukon, but we all make the decision that we do not want rural Yukon to be superseded or to have things imposed on them by the City of Whitehorse. This is one of those conversations. The bad behaviour of folks who live in Whitehorse should not affect all rural Yukon. It should not.

Again, people are willing to pay. They have said that. They are willing to find a way forward, and so now I look forward to hearing from others about their position on this. More than that, I am hopeful that, with three hours, we will be able to get to a vote.

I am going to sit down and I will pass it over to the minister. I look forward to him agreeing with me. That would be wild; that would be a great Christmas gift. I look forward to the conversation and, more than that, I look forward to finding solutions.

I wish those folks in Silver City who are just about to go on their Zoom call at 4:00 p.m. to try to talk about solutions as they learn from experts — I wish them well in their work. I thank them for going back to something when they have felt that going back doesn't make sense, but they are going back. I

appreciate that. I wish the people hosting that meeting would as well.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, just before the minister gets a chance to respond, I just wanted to put my two cents in as well. It certainly is a pleasure today to rise to speak to Motion No. 856, which was brought forward by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King. I would like to thank the Leader of the NDP for bringing this motion forward. It's very similar to Motion No. 793, I believe, that I brought to the floor of this Assembly about a month ago. I think it was on October 25.

Unfortunately, that motion didn't get to a vote as I had hoped it would, but I think it is important. I have to thank the Leader of the NDP for her comments today, because I think that it really does reflect well on the thoughts of rural Yukoners — certainly the ones to whom I have spoken and the ones at Johnsons Crossing in particular. These are people whom I have known for many years. I deal with them very regularly and I appreciate where they are coming from. I brought the motion forward back in October on their behalf to try to encourage the government to understand, I guess, and to see their point of view. They are taxpayers of this territory. They deserve to be respected and listened to — just the same as anyone else. I think it's important that we take time out of our lives in the Legislature to discuss this issue.

Again, as the Leader of the NDP said, the minister and possibly the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes will talk about, in particular, how the Yukon Party doesn't believe in any of this, but that's not true. I agree that regionalization is important. I agree that solid waste is very expensive. I agree that it's important. I agree that we need to deal with it.

But in my remarks on October 25, I talked extensively about the importance of consultation. That's the crux of the problem here. When you go and tell someone how it is and then say that it is consultation, that's wrong. People don't accept that and they don't respect that. I think that it's very important — for this minister in particular — to understand that.

I look forward to others' comments today. At the end of the day, I would love to see this motion get to a vote and I would love to see the government see the error in their ways. We heard the Premier in Question Period today talk about how this government can make mistakes and stand up and say that they take responsibility. Well, here is a perfect opportunity for this government and this minister to stand up and say: We made a mistake; we were trying to do the right thing; we didn't go about it in the right way and we're willing to listen and fix it.

I would be very happy to hear that or see that today.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy this afternoon to be addressing this issue again. My good colleague the Leader of the Third Party, in her remarks — there is an awful lot to respond to there. I'm happy to do that this afternoon, because what I heard this afternoon is my colleague trying to separate the environment from rural Yukon. I think

that's frankly disingenuous. You can't separate the environment from this issue.

The environment is central to this issue, just like it was when the former government got rid of burning in rural Yukon. At that time, it was a very contentious discussion. Lots of people were complaining about trash being burned in landfills. Many groups stepped up and ended that practice, and the government actually did act on that and got rid of it. Great — that was an advancement in the way we handle our garbage in the territory. But it was about the environment then and it's about the environment now. The environment can't be ignored here; it's front and centre in this discussion.

Right out of the gate, the second thing that I would just like to, right off the hop, get on the record is that today they are having a remote meeting because the venue was cancelled for whatever reason — illness, sure. The venue cancelled this morning, so they have gone to a virtual meeting to provide all of the expertise for Silver City to work on ways to deal with the garbage that those citizens produce. That is happening today. I look forward to hearing what comes out of that meeting and we'll see where it goes from there.

The meeting is being done because this government takes its commitments to the confidence and supply agreement very seriously, and we're working through the very process that was outlined in our confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon New Democrats. We take it seriously, we are working through and we are honouring that agreement, and we are going to continue to honour that agreement. We said that we would talk to the people in rural Yukon about rural transfer stations and we are.

As a matter of fact, I want to note this afternoon that we actually have found a solution in Keno, working with the community — businesses and citizens. That is tremendous.

Now we are working on one for Silver City. We have held meetings in Braeburn and in Johnsons Crossing, and my good colleague will be able to talk about the work that he has done in more detail and I will talk about it a little bit more this afternoon as well.

The work is ongoing. We are looking for solutions and we are looking for solutions whereby we advance a system of regional landfills across the territory. The goal is to help the environment. There is a lot of good that will come out of this refinement, improvement, and investment in rural Yukon. Central to that is improving and protecting the environment that Yukoners revere and depend on. It will also help us to deal with the garbage that we produce, and that has all sorts of really, really great implications for the territory.

What we can't have anymore are landfills that are not controlled, like the one at Silver City, like the one at Braeburn, like the one at Johnsons Crossing, like the one at Pelly, and like the one at Keno, which is now closed because we found a solution for that. We are looking for solutions in these other areas. We cannot, in a regional landfill model, have areas where people can get rid of their garbage without any oversight. That has a whole host of problems and that is what we're trying to say.

The environment is central to this, which is one of the reasons why, on November 10, the Yukon Conservation Society wrote to me in support of the regional landfill initiative. I will talk about the letter this afternoon, but one of the key takeaways from that letter is that the Yukon Conservation Society is concerned about unregulated garbage disposal in community landfills across the Yukon. Again, the Yukon Conservation Society — which has been in the service of Yukoners since 1968 — is saying that they want to ensure that the Yukon's natural resources are managed wisely and that development is informed by environmental consideration. One of the key things in this letter is that the Yukon Conservation Society is concerned about unregulated garbage disposal in community landfills across the Yukon. That would be in Keno, Johnsons Crossing, in Braeburn, and in Silver City.

What we're seeing there are really, really terrible outcomes. In Braeburn, at the beginning of October, we saw a bunch of car parts — oil-soaked transmissions, engines, fuel canisters, and all sorts of detritus from society — dumped in the uncontrolled Braeburn site, polluting it. It cost the Government of Yukon a lot to clean that up. We saw oil spilled in one of our uncontrolled landfills. Again, it cost tens of thousands of dollars to clean up. Just last week, we saw a fire start at the Pelly landfill, which is uncontrolled, but it will become one of our regional stations. We are investing in that landfill to make sure that it will be staffed and have regular hours, gates, and tipping fees to make it fair to everyone. That's coming, but just last week in that currently uncontrolled landfill, we saw a fire started. Fire in a landfill is exceedingly expensive. It could be dangerous, and it is something that we have to wrangle.

This is the state of affairs right now. The territory is working to improve the way it manages the amount of garbage that society is producing. We are doing that through a regional landfill model. We are doing that for the environment, for municipalities who have asked us for this, because they want to be able to see that people from outside their municipal borders who are contributing to the garbage that they are paying to dispose of in the municipality are actually contributing to the solution by paying for it. That doesn't happen right now.

The solutions we are seeking in Silver City today — and the civil service is tremendous. The group at Community Services is doing an absolutely incredible job dealing with citizens in Silver City, Braeburn, and Johnsons Crossing — currently, those are the last three areas that we are dealing with that have these transfer stations that are uncontrolled. The civil service is looking for solutions. In all three of those communities, they have held consultations on this, and they are doing so at the behest of this government and at the behest of me. I am seeking these solutions. I want them.

It's not like there's this disconnect between the civil service that's working really, really hard to find solutions and I am trying to block them. It has nothing to do with that. I want to see good solutions that help to ease the transition for people living in these small communities. In sum total, we are talking about probably fewer than 75 people. We are working very, very hard to find a solution that will help them transition to the

regional landfill model, where they will then dispose of garbage equally with everybody else.

Again, the member opposite is right. We have spent an awful lot of time on this issue in this House, and I think that's tremendous. We are talking about garbage, though. We are talking about waste oil, hazardous waste, metals, old cars, plastics, building materials, industrial materials, brush, fallen trees, recycling, and compost. We are talking about changing the way we manage these things, central to the environmental discussion we are having today.

It's not about rural services, because we're actually investing in rural services. We are putting more people into rural Yukon and more jobs through the management of their landfill. We are investing in capital expenses to make their landfills better for everyone. We are putting tipping fees in place so that there is no more dump shopping, where people travel hundreds of kilometres to throw their garbage into an unmanaged landfill because they can. They have waste oil because they just changed all the oil in their trucks. This thing is sitting around in their driveway, and they want to get rid of it. They drive to an uncontrolled landfill to get rid of it, throw it in there, and a truck comes along, picks it up, and throws it right into the midst of the rest of the garbage at the landfill. We have to end that. We have to put controls in place.

Communities like Keno, with 25 people, were not large enough to sustain a regional landfill. It wasn't big enough. Silver City has fewer than five residential homes. It is smaller than Keno. It cannot sustain a regional landfill with a gate and a supervisor collecting tipping fees. It is not viable. So, we have two landfills that service that region, one at Destruction Bay and one in Haines Junction. That is the plan.

With Haines Junction, I just spoke with the mayor two weeks ago. We had a great conversation about this. When we got on to landfills, one of the first things that came out of the community of Haines Junction was that they are upset because people are dump shopping. They don't have controls on their dump, so people are driving from Whitehorse to Haines Junction and tossing their garbage into the landfill unsupervised, and they have to pay for that as a municipality, and they want to know how we can fix this. I said: Well, we're looking at regional landfills. That's a great way to start. How can we get you there? So, they are working on that now.

This is a big issue, but it is about the environment. It's about dump shopping and basically sociology, in that there are a few bad apples who will drive a long way to get rid of trucks. Trucks at Haines Junction again, so waste metal. There are lots of cars being dumped at the Haines Junction landfill. They are just showing up there, and now the municipality has to pay to truck them back to Whitehorse and pay the tipping fees to get rid of them. They don't find that this is fair.

The member opposite is shouting something; I don't know what it is, but the reality is that people in Haines Junction — the mayor and the CAO — told me just two weeks ago that they have a problem with waste metals — cars and that type of thing — showing up at their landfill and that they have to bring it back to Whitehorse. They want to know how that happens and if we can help fund that.

I understand that change is hard. We're working with Yukoners to manage that change. We're doing that as we speak to try to find ways to work with this to make landfills better. Several dozen Yukoners most affected by this change are looking for ways to transition to the new landfill model. That's what this talk this afternoon is all about — talking about how to make that happen. That's fair; that's good.

But before I get into the nuts and bolts of the plan, I want to say explicitly that I'm very surprised by some in this House who have called the plan dumb. This is disrespectful to the many thoughtful Yukoners who have come up with a plan, which was spurred by municipalities who saw first-hand the very real problems that are caused by unsupervised transfer stations on the side of the road. Those problems are exacerbated when gated, supervised landfills are the norm, because people will then start moving their garbage to the unsupervised sites and getting rid of it for free, out of sight.

The plan is to have Yukoners bring their garbage to gated, supervised, and well-managed landfills, and they will be paying a relatively small fee for that privilege, which is not dumb, as some in this House have characterized it publicly. It is responsible, it is fair, it is coordinated and consistent, it is flexible, and it is based on community involvement. It is also sustainable, it is environmentally wise, and it is important financially to municipalities. It's also an adjustment to a few dozen people fortunate enough to have had free and unsupervised transfer stations near their homes for many years.

Such an adjustment can be painful. That's why the incredible staff at Community Services is working with residents on tools to make that transition easier. We've done it in Keno. We're now looking at how to ease the transition to the regional landfill model for these other small communities: Silver City, Braeburn, and Johnsons Crossing.

The member for the riding of Nisutlin has told us that the population of Johnsons Crossing is about 56 people, and that is borne out by some of the stats by the Bureau of Statistics. For Braeburn and for Silver City, the stats are so small that they don't have actual numbers for those communities.

Now, in the confidence and supply agreement, our government committed to consult with communities to determine household waste options in Keno, Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, and Braeburn, and I'm very glad the team at Community Services worked with Keno residents and businesses to come up with a solution for that community that allowed the uncontrolled transfer station to close, and that is why it is no longer part of the discussion. Keno's 25 or so residents represent one of the largest of the four unincorporated communities affected by the new regional landfill plan, so that was a great start. There is more work to be done, though. That's what we are talking about, in part, this afternoon. We are doing that work. As I said, the meetings are happening today.

Now, I have been speaking to people in communities, and there is still a lack of understanding about the amount of consultation that we politicians and departmental staff have done on this file. It is significant. We have held multiple consultations and public meetings in each of the communities since 2019, when we began this journey. It is not something

that was just forced on communities out of the blue. We have been working on this report — the initial report came out in January 2016; it is now 2023, so we are looking at seven years. The Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste started this journey in 2018, and we have had 28 public consultations on solid-waste disposal since then. Let me repeat that: 28 meetings in the communities on solid waste. That includes six meetings with Keno residents, four meetings with Johnsons Crossing residents, three meetings with Braeburn residents, and three meetings with the Silver City residents this year alone. An additional workshop is scheduled for today with residents. We will see where that goes and what comes of that.

We have been working very hard to accommodate citizen participation, and we are listening to residents and trying to suss out viable options for the problems that they face. I'm not opposed to that; I'm looking for solutions. I hope that today we find some concrete ways forward. We are working to make it easy for people to participate in these meetings. Today is a virtual meeting. It is important, because we want to hear from people, and if they don't elect to show up to these meetings, then their ideas to solve the problem before us will not be part of the discussion. We are working with residents and committed to consulting with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, and Braeburn. The transfer stations in these three unincorporated places are not closing in the near term, but once we get the regional landfills established, residents will have to use the controlled, supervised landfills.

We have talked a lot about the great work of the civil service. I have to commend that and keep that going —

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): The member has 30 seconds.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thirty seconds? So, I will wrap up my comments by saying that the Association of Yukon Communities has done great work on this in 2016. The one thing their initial plan was not was dumb.

Mr. Istchenko: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to Motion No. 856 regarding the solid-waste transfer stations at Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, Silver City, and Keno. I would first like to begin by thanking all the people over the many years, which I will speak to in a little bit, who have helped to improve the way in which solid waste has been disposed of in the territory.

Just listening to some of the comments from the minister earlier — before I get into it, I wrote a couple of things down here. The minister talked about 25 residents at Silver City. At any given time in the summer, if you go to the Kluane Lake Research Station, you will probably see 25 or more people there just at that location. You go to Yukon Lake Cabins, which you can see from there, which is just up the lake, and at any given time in the summer, you could probably see that many people there, too. If you go to Shakat Tun Wilderness Camp, Chief James Allen's camp on Christmas Bay, at any given time in the summer and the winter, he is actively busy with lots of people.

Icefield Discovery across the street on any given day in the summertime will have people there.

The previous minister — this goes back a long way, and one of the first letters — when we heard that they were going to close Silver City — that was ever written to this Liberal government was written to the previous minister by the Kluane Lake Research Station. The minister, earlier today in the House, said that we need to help the environment and improve and protect the environment and that's why we're closing it. I don't know if the previous minister will get up and speak today. Maybe he has a copy of that letter and he can read it, because the letter from the Arctic Institute — and the fellow who wrote it — highlighted the reasons why it needs to stay open for the residents, which is because of the environment.

We know that solid waste poses many issues throughout the territory. We know that it's especially challenging in rural Yukon. We also know that consultation with rural Yukon is the first step to finding solutions, and this has not happened.

My colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin mentioned before that the CASA states that the government will consult with these four affected communities. I do thank the NDP for this, but unfortunately, this has not been the case and there has still not been adequate consultation.

I would like to remind the minister that releasing a statement to these communities telling them that their rural transfer stations are closing with no input from the community members is not consultation. The government plan might work for some of those communities, but I know that they haven't been adequately consulted in my riding.

During Community Services debate, the Leader of the NDP also reminded the minister that being told the outcome is not consultation. That is so true.

With that being said, it is no surprise that many rural Yukoners are unhappy. My constituents in Burwash, Destruction Bay, and Silver City, as well as Keno residents, have sent letters to both the Minister of Community Services and the Premier expressing serious concerns regarding this decision and requesting proper consultation before the Liberals force this through.

This minister continues to demonstrate a lack of understanding and respect for rural Yukon. A resident shared that they have been asking for this proper consultation for over three years regarding these transfer stations. Surely, the minister could have found some time to listen in those three years. Instead, there were a couple of community meetings labeled as "consultation" — and I think the minister thinks that the one happening today is — with government officials telling rural Yukoners that their transfer stations are closing because the minister says they are closing. The officials are doing the best they can in working with the constituents, and I thank them for that. Especially in my riding of Kluane, not only am I hearing from individual community members but also from the Kluane First Nation, the Village of Haines Junction, the Arctic Institute of North America, and the majority of business owners whom I spoke about earlier who have reached out to express their concerns and objections to the closures.

Even with all these concerns, the minister isn't willing to listen to these rural Yukoners and reconsider his decision. Instead, he just blames others for the closure. The frustration in these communities grows as the minister continues to ignore their voices.

These issues are getting to the point where the Premier should maybe consider stepping in, just as he has with other ministers, to make sure that communities are consulted and decisions are made in a meaningful way with input from residents who will be affected.

I am advocating for rural Yukoners and residents in my riding, as I have on many issues in the past. Here are just a few concerns I have heard on this issue. There are concerns that, by closing the landfill, residents will have to store their garbage on their property until they are able to make a trip to another community. This will increase human-bear conflict and pose other issues, as well, for homeowners and business owners.

Then there is the emissions debate. Considering that this government is trying to find ways to reduce emissions, closing transfer stations will result in every resident, business, and organization having to travel individually to the landfills, burning more fuel.

I have advocated for the work with rural Yukoners on many issues. There is certainly a wish for residents to be putting their energy into things that will actually help to expand services in their communities rather than fighting these service cuts that we are talking about today. I know that, in my riding, they would rather be working with the government instead of begging for services. Their priorities for government are things like better cell coverage in that area, connecting to fibre, reliable green energy sources, firesmarting, and brushing. They are worried about forest fires. They are worried about road maintenance — and working with the Tourism department for more tourism opportunities. They want to work with all of these government departments to find solutions to things like health care closures, overworked EMS workers, and improvements to highways, like I said earlier. This is just to list a few. Instead, they are begging for discussions to take place regarding these transfer stations. They just want to be heard.

The confidence and supply agreement — CASA — requires the minister to consult with rural Yukoners regarding the solid-waste transfer stations. This motion today shows that the NDP also realizes — and I believe that they do — that rural Yukoners deserve consultation. My colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin also spoke in-depth to a similar motion, but the bottom line is that these residents need consultation. My colleague from Lake Laberge echoes the same thing. He wants to ensure that his constituents in Braeburn are being heard.

The minister needs to speak to the affected community members — those ones that he called, I believe, on the fringe of society — those ones, yes — to get their input and come up with better solutions together instead of cutting even more services to rural Yukon. We need to remember in this Assembly that, in rural Yukon, it is vast and diverse, and just because it works in one place, it may not work in every place.

In closing, I would like to thank all those mentioned earlier for their work. The ones who have been writing letters — and

who sometimes haven't been responded to yet from the government — and those ones who are doing research and who are trying to explain why these landfills need to stay open.

Like the Leader of the Third Party said, if the minister had gone to one of those meetings and listened, he would have heard so many solutions that he wouldn't know which one to pick. They know what they're doing out there. They live in rural Yukon; they don't live in Whitehorse West or wherever the minister comes from.

Again, thank you to all of them and I sure hope that we can find a solution. I sure hope that every member in this House today supports this motion.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the motion, the same as I appreciated the motion from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin when he brought forward the last one.

One of the reasons that I'm glad that we're talking about this is because I absolutely hate waste. The folks around me — I know that whenever I'm around them, they know that I struggle to not print paper — which is such a hard thing to do in this job — and to just generally try to reduce waste. It does not even just have to do with physical waste. I hate waste of time; I hate waste of energy; I hate waste of all of the resources that we have.

I think that this is an incredibly important thing — what we are talking about. Between two weeks ago when we were debating a similar motion and today, I happened to bump into one of the past executive directors of the Association of Yukon Communities. Back when we started with this, the AYC urged us to move ahead on this issue. I made a commitment to the AYC, including to that executive director, that I would hustle on this when I had the role as Minister of Community Services. The commitment was to try to improve our solid-waste system across the territory and it was based on these recommendations from the Association of Yukon Communities. That is 2016; that is before we were elected in government. In fact, I remember being on city council and going through a lot of those meetings talking about solid waste and our concern across the territory about the overall system and our frustration that the Yukon government wasn't moving on it — that it was stalled.

I remember raising this issue through the Association of Yukon Communities to the then-minister — a couple of the people across the way were ministers of Community Services at one point or another — of the Yukon Party.

By the way, when the Member for Takhini-Kopper King raised this, she referenced who the AYC represents, but it wasn't quite an exhaustive list, so I'll just add to it. Yes, it does include Mount Lorne, Marsh Lake, Tagish, Carcross, and Ibex Valley. But it also includes Carmacks, Dawson, Faro, Haines Junction, Mayo, Teslin, Watson Lake, and Whitehorse. While the member was speaking, I looked up the latest demographics of Yukon to try to see what percentage of the population is represented by the AYC. The answer is 93 percent or more. It's a little bit difficult because of some of the unincorporated areas. They represent nine out of 10 Yukoners. No, it is not all, but it is most. I will also note, as the member did, that it does not include Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, Braeburn, or Keno.

What was that plan by the Association of Yukon Communities? It was to do several things. The first one was to introduce polluter pay — in other words, to get all Yukoners to pay not everything for their waste but something for their waste so that we could send a signal that waste has a cost and that we should do our best to try to reduce, reuse, recycle — in that order. So, it was to put a price signal out there. It's a very common practice and it's one of the underlying principles. The Association of Yukon Communities came to us and said that we need a system in the territory that deals with polluter pay. We agreed.

By the way, I would be happy if, at any time that we do engagement with Yukoners, we get 93 percent. That would be amazing.

This was coming as a recommendation from them.

The second thing was that, under polluter pay, we try to make it as level as possible to stop this thing happening of dump shopping — and I agree with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King when she referenced “dump” as a pejorative term for our transfer stations and our solid-waste facilities, but Yukoners know what we're talking about and what goes on — because I have lived in Marsh Lake for 25 years and I have volunteered on our solid-waste society several times. I know when there are Yukoners who drive out to use the Marsh Lake solid-waste transfer station.

The idea is to try to make the cost roughly level across regions so that we don't get that differential so that people will load up the back of their pickup truck or their car and take garbage to another place. As part of those two things — to have polluter pay and to have leveled cost — we realized that what we needed to do across the Yukon was to gate and staff the solid-waste facilities — all of them.

Those are the overarching pieces of regionalization. That was brought to us as a government from the Association of Yukon Communities. We agreed with it and we said that we would plan around it and that we would talk to Yukoners. That led to a committee being formed that included some municipality folk, some Department of Environment folk, and some Department of Community Services folk from the Operations branch, and they worked through this plan and they brought it to us. Again, that's the plan that was tabled today, and so far, so good. In fact, I don't think that it has the concerns raised yet. But that's 2018, so to try to suggest that we haven't been out there talking with Yukoners is a bit far-fetched for me. In fact, I have done a bunch of that engagement with Yukoners as I have been in this role, and I'm going to talk about one set of that engagement in particular.

It's true that once that plan got to that stage where they worked it all through and they said: Here's what we're going to do: We're going to work with our municipalities, make sure to support them — and we had to do long-term liability work with them because the Yukon government shares some of that liability, so we had to negotiate that with them.

Another one of the early steps was that we would start to charge in those solid-waste facilities closest to Whitehorse. That includes Deep Creek, Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne, Tagish, and Carcross. I tell you, even though the amount we were

charging for those landfills — which was trying to be comparable to Whitehorse — turned out to be more or less a buck a bag of garbage, that charge is maybe a quarter or one-fifth of the total cost to deal with that waste. But it was, again, to put a price signal out there. I recall doing that. I would have to look it up — in 2018, we had the plan put in place, and that first step had to do with those solid-waste landfill facilities, and that got put in place. It's in my own backyard. I recall after that — so, that had to be in 2020 or earlier. Then we were in dialogue with smaller communities. Yes, I had letters from Silver City.

By the way, here's one of the things that no one seems to be talking about. Those solid-waste facilities are meant for residential folks. They're not supposed to be for businesses. They are not supposed to be for academic institutions. Those places are supposed to deal with their solid waste themselves. That is what these landfills are designed for. They are designed for residential, and we know that there are lots of businesses and other groups that use the landfills, but that's not the service that is meant to be provided.

When I wrote back to the Arctic Institute, I talked to them about their concerns. I did have a letter from Silver City, yes. I don't recall any conversations from Braeburn. I do recall many conversations with Keno. I travelled to Keno several times. The Premier travelled to Keno, too.

By the way, just in terms of engagement with communities, when I was in the role of the Minister of Community Services, I made a point of making it to try to tour Yukon communities. I won't say that I got to every Yukon community, but my goal was to try to get to Yukon communities twice a year. I certainly made it to every municipality twice a year, and I had quarterly meetings with the City of Whitehorse.

When I was a councillor with the City of Whitehorse and I experienced the Yukon Party in the role with Community Services, I never saw that. I saw the minister once a year at an AYC meeting. So, I knew how frustrating that was under the Yukon Party — that level of engagement — so I made sure to try to up that. I have checked with the Minister of Community Services, and I believe that they have kept up that practice of regular, in-person meetings in our communities. Now, COVID will have mucked up a bunch of it, for sure, but the point is that we are working to get into our communities.

The one that I want to talk about is Johnsons Crossing. The folks from Johnsons Crossing reached out to me — I think it was in late 2019 or early 2020 — and they talked to me about trying to find other solutions. I said: Yes, let's get together. I recall going for a first meeting held at the restaurant, and we talked things over, and we agreed to do follow-up. There was some correspondence back and forth during that time. We went and spent — I don't know — a couple of hours or a few hours sitting at a resident's home. I made sure to reach out to the MLA for Pelly-Nisutlin, but he already knew, and it was great that he was coming, and I appreciate that he attended. We had a pretty involved conversation about ideas and solutions and what could happen, so I'm going to talk about a few of those things.

Before I do that, I just want to acknowledge — and I will go back and read the Hansard — but I want to appreciate the

comments that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin made about agreeing with the principles of regionalization or something like that, about some of the things trying to be achieved with this report. I heard — one of the qualifiers that was being discussed by the Minister of Community Services — what I'm going to say is that this is a smart report. It is a really good approach, but we have this challenge that there are several small communities that have had landfills but are probably not able to have them gated and staffed due to their size. So, what could we do? One of the suggestions was: If there is a business that already has that responsibility of dealing with their solid waste, could they piggyback off a system like that? That was discussed.

Another solution that was discussed was: Could the residents go onto the site — could we gate the existing site, give keys to those folks, and then they pay for someone to come and haul the waste away? The concept of having a place where you store that garbage where it will be safe from wildlife and interactions like that and is paid for — that concept was fine. To put it right on the site where the transfer station had been was not great, because there is a liability with that site. That's what I recall the conversation being about. If there were to be a separate site to be set up, could we support that work for a place to be set aside that the residents would have the responsibility for the site, that they would have the keys, they would pay for the haul — yes, that conversation was met well. I'm not sure that's what they wanted.

Shortly after that, we hit COVID, or maybe that meeting happened during COVID. I just recall us sitting pretty far apart. I'm guessing it was July 2020. We were in the heart of COVID. That was the work that was going on.

To suggest that there weren't meetings with folks, I know that there were. I never turned down an offer to try to meet. I couldn't always make the time that was being asked for, but I never said that we shouldn't meet. I always said that we should. In fact, it's my fault, but on one of those times — and I took two government officials with me — we drove to Johnsons Crossing only to find out that the meeting had been cancelled, and we didn't know. Oh, well; it was a nice drive.

But I am saying this because I want to give the sense that we want to try to do both things here. One is to improve the landfill system, or our solid-waste system across the territory, and one is to continue to serve Yukoners.

One of the ways that the Minister of Community Services talks about how we are increasing the level of service, especially in our smaller communities, is that any single local job is an improvement or an opportunity for those communities. The fact that in Marsh Lake, Mount Lorne, Tagish, Carcross, and Deep Creek — and as we move forward to these other areas where we then see these facilities staffed up — these are local jobs within those communities, and that is a great thing. It is not always an easy job. I will just say that folks at our landfills have tough jobs, and they are always looking to try to improve. For example, they will always be encouraging people to sort their waste. They will be encouraging people to recycle. They will be doing those sorts of things, and it isn't always great.

Earlier, the Member for Takhini-Kopper King talked about the folks from Whitehorse and the folks from our communities. I want to say that my sense of it is that Yukoners, in general, are pretty responsible around their solid waste. They all think that they should do the right thing — sorry, not all. They almost all think that they should do the right thing. However, there are some folks — and my guess is that they are distributed across the territory, and it is just if you have one person or a few people who put things into our landfills that contaminate the whole site, it becomes super expensive. That is why we have decided that we need a system that is going to be gated and staffed and that is polluter pay — not the full price, as I have said, but just something to send that price signal out there. Part of that, for example, is still held in that solution that I was discussing where if the residents of Johnsons Crossing were using a gated area that they had responsibility for and they were paying for that backhaul, then that polluter pay is there. It is there in the system.

I will stop there. I believe in this as an important thing. I could — if I get a chance again, I will talk about the greenhouse gas emissions and why it works better the way that we are proposing or has been proposed, and I look forward to the rest of the debate today.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Motion No. 856, standing in the name of the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

As our society and environment changes, we must ensure that our environmental protection is responsive, dynamic, and adaptive. The Department of Environment works to minimize the impacts on our territory's natural spaces and to develop, manage, and enforce legislation that creates a stronger, cleaner, and more sustainable community. We do this work to ensure that the Yukon continues to thrive and that our territory is protected for future generations of Yukoners. Waste management and recycling is, of course, part of this.

The Department of Environment permits and regulates municipal and commercial solid-waste facilities throughout the Yukon. We ensure that appropriate locations are used and that waste is managed in a way that protects the health and sustainability of our water, land, and air. We collaborate with provinces, territories, and the federal government on solutions like the Canada-wide action plan on zero plastic waste. A key objective of the Council of Ministers of the Environment is to reduce Canada's plastic waste and to create more resilient communities.

In 2022, the territory-wide single-use shopping bag ban for plastic bags came into effect. On January 1 of this year, we also banned paper bags across the territory. We have committed to increase waste diversion by 40 percent in 2030. In 2022, the diversion rate was 30 percent, compared to 25 percent in 2020. So, strides are certainly being made.

Most Yukoners know that everyone has a role to play when it comes to responsible waste management and recycling, but that responsibility does not just fall on the shoulders of Yukoners alone; it is an effort that should start when a product is made, continue through its use or consumption, and end in the latter stages of recycling, reuse, or disposal. Extended

producer responsibility — which is also known as EPR — is a system that will make producers of packaging and products responsible for those materials at the end of the product's life.

The Government of Yukon has a commitment to implement extended producer responsibility by 2025. We are working with partners across the territory — including industry, the City of Whitehorse, communities, and other government departments — in order to develop this efficient and cost-effective waste diversion system. Extended producer responsibility shifts the cost of waste diversion from taxpayers to producers, reducing the significant financial pressure that municipalities and regional governments have to provide recycling services.

We recently published the “what we heard” report on extended producer responsibility. Feedback received will help the Government of Yukon implement an EPR system that meets the needs of Yukoners, reduces our collective waste, and better protects the environment.

As committed to under *Our Clean Future*, the Yukon is on track to implement EPR in the territory by 2025. The priority materials will be paper products and packaging — which includes materials you would normally put in a blue box — and hazardous and special products, such as paints, solvents, and waste oil.

Another issue of responsibility for the Department of Environment is air quality. Air quality plays an important role in the health of our communities. Although the Yukon currently has some of the cleanest air in the world, Canada has seen unprecedented threats to air quality due to increasing wildfires across the north and the west. This development and enforcement of our legislation and air-monitoring initiatives ensure that we continue to have clean air. The Yukon now has real-time air quality data for 11 communities in the territory, which helps inform Yukoners of air quality conditions.

The Department of Environment also works to review and assess the effects development has on the land, air, water, wildlife, and wildlife habitat. Our scientists help to determine ways to mitigate adverse effects that development projects could have on water, soil, fish, and wildlife in order to ensure that industry continues to be successful in a responsible and ethical way. We know that the success of our economy goes hand in hand with the success of our environment. These environmental assessments are critical tools in ensuring that our growth as a territory does not come at the cost of the long-term health of our environment.

In addition to the proactive monitoring and assessment work that we do, in order to ensure that our environment remains healthy, the Department of Environment also works to prevent and respond to the release of contaminants into the environment. The Department of Environment maintains the 24-hour Yukon spill report line, which can be reached at 867-667-7244. When spills are reported, we will work with the responsible party to ensure that contaminants in the soil and water are properly cleaned up. We also permit and regulate businesses that handle and treat contaminated material throughout the Yukon to prevent severe environmental impacts that often come from the release of contaminants. I encourage

Yukoners to visit the online contaminated map site, which provides instant access to information on contaminated sites across the territory.

The obligation to protect the environment from human impacts does not just fall on one sector, government, or industry. It is truly the collective effort of all of us that will ensure that we continue to grow in a way that is responsible and environmentally sustainable. The Department of Environment will continue to support this objective by guiding Yukoners and businesses in doing their part in achieving this important goal. We know that, as the environment changes, our approaches as environmental stewards will need to shift and be adaptive to respond to the environmental challenges that we could face in the future. The Department of Environment will continue to work with community partners across the territory to ensure that the Yukon's environmental legislation meets the needs of Yukoners and protects our environment for generations to come.

This is just some of the work that the Department of Environment is working on in this field.

Related to environmental protection, we are talking today about the closure of transfer stations. The Government of Yukon is taking steps to ensure that waste management in the Yukon is sustainable from both a cost and environmental perspective. As committed to under the confidence and supply agreement, we have consulted with Yukoners who may be impacted by planned closures of solid-waste facilities in Keno, Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn as we transition to a sustainable, regional service model.

Extensively hauling waste from around the Yukon to Whitehorse is no longer an effective solution to waste management. As I heard briefly from the Minister of Community Services, sometimes it is hauling significant waste from Whitehorse to Haines Junction or the Haines Junction area and then having to haul it back to Whitehorse at not insignificant cost. So, that is certainly suboptimal.

A modern solution involves recycling, sorting, and composting organic waste and landfilling the less harmful waste near to where it is produced, ideally. This means making investments in our solid-waste facilities across the territory, and this means supporting our municipal partners to do the same.

As we have heard extensively in debate in this Assembly during the Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, the consultation in this matter has been lengthy and significant and has been over the course of many years. The consultations provided for active and engaged community discussion and will help us tailor the future of solid-waste management in the Yukon. We have recently learned that there are three full-time households in Silver City and a collection of recreational cabins or tourist businesses, many of which are busy during the summer months.

It has been discussed that the waste facility in Destruction Bay is a full-service facility where one can access a variety of waste management services, including brush and clean wood disposal, construction and demolition waste, e-waste collection, household garbage drop-off, household hazardous waste, recyclables, tires, vehicle bodies, waste metals, and

organics disposal options. Destruction Bay is one of the 12 full-service facilities that Yukoners can find all around this beautiful territory.

As we have also heard, residents of Johnsons Crossing can access a full spectrum of waste services approximately 50 kilometres away at the Teslin regional solid-waste facility or 80 kilometres to the Marsh Lake solid-waste facility. I would imagine that the Teslin option would make more sense.

We have also heard that residents of Braeburn will meet as a community to work on community-based solutions to waste management, and they can also access full waste services 64 kilometres away at the Deep Creek solid-waste facility or approximately 67 kilometres away at the Carmacks regional facility.

Circling back to consultation, we continue to work with the residents of each of these areas in order to identify infrastructure for services, such as bear-proof bins or free spring cleanup days, that will make this transition easier. We are committed to supporting all of these residents in their community-led solutions where possible. At the same time, we remain committed to the modern and sustainable regional vision for solid-waste management that we have been working on with the Association of Yukon Communities for many years.

Mr. Speaker, landfills have a limited lifespan, and if care is not taken, groundwater aquifers under the landfill can be impacted. Once at the end of life, a landfill must be formally closed. Landfill closure and environmental monitoring work are important components of responsible waste management. For example, groundwater monitoring continues for a minimum of 25 years after a landfill is closed and the final cover is in place. Reaching sustainability as it relates to landfill management — and in many other areas, of course — should be a common aspiration for all of us.

Diving into this concept, as it relates to waste management at landfills, it is defined as — quote: "... the safe disposal of waste within a landfill, and its subsequent degradation to the inert state in the shortest possible time-span, by the most financially efficient method available, and with minimal damage to the environment..." The time-span issue is critical, as it is not only the right thing to do from a moral standpoint, as we should not pass along the burden of dealing with our generation's waste on to future generations, but also as it determines the potential for environmental accidents during the period of activity of the landfill. Community Services has closure plans in place for all sites.

A risk-based approach to prioritizing former landfill closures — for example, capping with a waterproof membrane with one metre of soil — has been developed and will be in place over the coming years. I am advised that Keno and Braeburn are higher risk facilities, and they are in need of formal closure. The Keno transfer station was, in fact, closed in December 2022. We are pleased to learn that Alexco Resources — now Hecla Yukon — stepped in to provide regularly scheduled waste pickup service to Keno residents. The Yukon government has provided residents with bear-resistant garbage and recycling carts and will also provide large bins for annual, free cleanup days.

We know that waste transfer stations — which are a temporary waste storage facility — are used all around the world to reduce transportation costs. The challenge that those operating the waste transfer station face is the ability to determine when the construction of these facilities becomes beneficial. This brings the issue of trash hold distance, which is the minimum distance between the waste generation nodes and the landfill from which the construction of the waste transfer station becomes economically profitable. In the same analogy, identifying the best location for a landfill is also a critical factor, as it contributes to the optimal design and operations of the landfill.

The work of optimizing the performances of our waste management in the Yukon is something our government takes seriously. We are not reinventing the wheel. We are led by science. We are applying some of these ideas and concepts to our waste management systems in the Yukon. The consultations our government has undertaken address the confidence and supply agreement commitment to consult with impacted communities about household waste-disposal options.

Workshops to date have been productive and generate ideas that the department is exploring with the communities. Landfill liabilities for municipal and Yukon government sites total nearly \$50 million of present value, including Whitehorse. This is not something that we are proud of, but it must be said loud and clear, and I have said this a few times in the Assembly over the last few sessions: Canadians currently generate a huge amount of waste.

In 2018, national solid-waste disposal was estimated at approximately 694 kilograms per person. Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia were estimated to dispose of less than 550 kilograms of solid waste per person. Not to pick on Alberta — but these are the stats that I have been provided with — Alberta was estimated to have generated a whopping 958 kilograms per person. The territories — Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut — Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Ontario all were estimated to have disposed of more than 700 kilograms of waste per person. Those were 2018 statistics, but with waste diversion, additional composting, and other initiatives, we certainly hope that those numbers come down.

We are all accountable for the garbage that we produce. Given increasing pressure to mitigate environmental risk, improve monitoring, and reduce waste management costs over the long term, it is essential that the number of waste management facilities be better managed and that investments be made in the remaining facilities. All Yukoners, both private residents and businesses, share responsibility for waste management and waste diversion. We are pleased to be working with businesses and households on a shared responsibility in adopting best practices for solid-waste management.

I certainly thank the House for the support with respect to the environmental producer responsibility regulations that came into force and effect in the Fall Sitting, and I certainly look forward to being a strong advocate for that plan being put

into place in 2025 in order to continue the meaningful reduction of waste in the territory.

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, transfer stations and waste management facilities are important to every community, regardless of the size of the population or their location. These facilities are important to everyone for environmental reasons, for the health and safety of wildlife and people, and also for the protection of our water, our lands, and air.

We know that Old Crow is still burning their garbage even after a gasifier was installed years ago. The same gasifier has been broken since 2017. Old Crow doesn't have the luxury of driving to a transfer station or having garbage picked up and hauled away. Everything is dealt with locally in the community. As a result, depending on the wind and temperature, smoke and the smell from the burning garbage can envelope the community. As a result, a university study has shown that many dangerous chemicals are leaking into the ground, the groundwater, and Porcupine River. It is directly impacting the people of Old Crow.

Why am I talking about this when we are talking about transfer stations? Because this government is responsible for managing waste throughout the territory. It is this government that purchased and installed the equipment to manage the waste of Old Crow and it is this government that has a responsibility to protect the health and safety of Yukoners — not just the health and safety of Yukoners but our environment, our air, our land, our water, and our wildlife.

Small communities such as Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Beaver Creek — and yes, Old Crow — need to know that their waste is being treated responsibly and ethically. The small communities have not asked for something for nothing, nor is Old Crow.

I support this resolution. We need to ensure the health and safety of all Yukoners and of our environment and we need to ensure that all communities, including Old Crow, are authentically consulted and collaborated with to ensure that the best solutions are found and are sustainable in the long term for all of Yukon.

Mahsi'.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to rise today to speak to Motion No. 856. I want to thank the Member for Kluane for speaking to the importance of rural Yukon and meaningful consultation.

This past summer, our government sought out as many opportunities as possible to speak with people from our communities, our local leaders, and First Nation governments. I am proud of the work that we have done as a government, meeting with numerous First Nation governments in their traditional territory and attending general assemblies, and, of course, we have held two Yukon Forums at the table together. We have had many discussions and we have met with mayors and municipalities.

In the last few months alone, I have met with Vuntut Gwitchin Government officials, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in government officials, Selkirk First Nation government

officials, Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation leaders, Ross River Dena Council government leaders, Ta'an Kwäch'än Council government leaders, Kwanlin Dün First Nation government leaders, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations government leaders, and Liard First Nation government leaders. I had planned to meet with the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun, but that was cancelled due to the evacuation.

We also had an opportunity to attend the Council of Yukon First Nations General Assembly and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council General Assembly. Those were held on June 19 at Helen's Fish Camp. As well, on September 26 and 27, we had Yukon Forum meetings in Dawson City.

Concerning municipalities, we have had opportunities to meet with the municipality of Dawson City leadership in Dawson City. Mayo — mostly just contact directly with the Mayor of Mayo, and that was really focusing on the work that was happening during the evacuation this summer and, as well, some other items concerning some of the more challenging times that the municipality had. Those discussions were earlier in 2023.

As well, I appreciated having the opportunity to spend some time with the Mayor of Watson Lake and really having a chance to look at some priorities — drive through the community with Mayor Irvin and really had a chance to see some of the key items that needed maintenance right away and also areas where there is lots of potential and opportunity for partnership.

Concerning the community of Teslin — having a chance to meet with the mayor and attend community events there — at least one community event where a number of the members here from the Legislative Assembly were also in attendance — it was just great watching the community of Teslin come together — all members of the community, First Nation leaders, municipal leaders — coming together for a great cause.

As well, I appreciated the time to sit with the Mayor of Haines Junction to get a good sense of some of the thoughts and views around priorities and opportunities in that community. Of course, this work is ongoing — this relationship is ongoing — and we have and will continue to meet with Yukon communities and municipalities to discuss their priorities and how we can move together to achieve our shared goals and visions.

As the Minister for Community Services stated, community consultation on this file has occurred and continues to occur. I believe that the minister had stated that 28 public consultations on solid-waste disposal have happened. That includes with the residents of Keno, Johnsons Crossing, Braeburn, and Silver City.

The bottom line, as the Minister of Community Services said, is that we so have to do better when it comes to managing our garbage. We owe that not only to today's generation of Yukoners but to the generations of Yukoners to come.

I just want to raise something that I heard the Member for Takhini-Kopper King say in her opening remarks. It was something along the lines of: The residents living in rural Yukon aren't the ones who created the problem, so why should they have to pay for it? I just want to just stop and think about

that comment for a minute. If we, as a government, took that approach — that we didn't create the problem, so we don't have to be part of the solution — where would we be as a government or as a community?

We have heard time and time again in this House the members opposite talk about the climate emergency. There is a lot of talk in this House reminding us not to saddle the generations to come with the environmental debts that we incur today. Tackling big issues like climate change and creating real, meaningful change requires us to take responsibility not only for our own actions but for the reality that we face as a result of the decisions of previous generations. I have to say that I'm concerned to hear that line of debate brought forward by the member opposite: that we are only responsible for the problems we create. Let me tell you that, as a member who came in after 14 years of another party's governance, I wish that were the case, but it's not. We have the responsibility to do better in a number of different areas and we will carry the duty of care to do better than those who came before us. That is what Yukoners expect of us.

We have come a long way with respect to how we deal with our garbage. We used to burn municipal garbage against the advice of Environment Canada, the Yukon Conservation Society, YESAB, and hundreds of community members and community councils. Burning garbage was common throughout the entirety of the Yukon until 2011. Since then, we have worked hard to bring our waste-disposal practices into the 21st century, making them more fair and environmentally sustainable.

Whitehorse has been fortunate to have a group of thoughtful citizens dedicated to recycling with Raven Recycling Society, now known as Raven ReCentre, operating since 1989. With the territory now in a position to implement extender producer responsibility, we have seen Raven shift priorities and the City of Whitehorse step up to implement a municipal blue bin program.

These changes are good for the environment, our climate, and our collective health. The cost is that a few Yukoners living in the smallest communities are being asked to carry their garbage to town when they get gas or groceries. Most rural Yukoners already do that. Very few have a free, unsupervised transfer station within a kilometre of their home. As the territory grows and in the face of increased climate change-caused wildfires and floods, we all have a role to pay in lowering our garbage production. Handling our garbage better — separating the organics and the recyclables from the mix — is an important part of that societal effort, and better management of our landfills is key to doing that.

I would like to discuss methane and carbon dioxide production in our current landfill model and dig into it a little bit. When people dump organics into these transfer stations, they are not separated out. Organics consist of food, garden waste, textiles, and wood and paper products. These organics are then transported along with all the waste to a landfill. In the landfill, most gas is produced by bacterial decomposition, which occurs when organic waste is broken down by bacteria

naturally present in the waste and in the soil used to cover the landfill.

From my time on council with the City of Whitehorse, some of the most challenging conversations that occurred were around what would future liability be at the — in that experience, it was to the Whitehorse landfill. But it was a real concern about working with the Government of Yukon and just working as a municipal government in understanding where we were in our reserves and understanding those extra pressures that we continue to keep an eye on when it came to the long-term liabilities and challenges.

It's not something that many Yukoners spend late nights thinking about or understanding the financial implications of these particular challenges when it comes to the work of a municipal finance department. I remember working through these conversations with Mr. Rob Fendrick, and it was always something that was of great concern in his role of trying to ensure that we knew that we had to do better at the landfill.

I have to say, when I look at the leadership that has occurred around Whitehorse — when I think about Marsh Lake, I had an opportunity last year to go there. I brought a lot of clothing to donate. They have a great system in place. I knew that those items would be reused, so my son and I drove out. I spoke to the MLA for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes just to understand what happens there. It takes a little bit of time, but everything is there. Hangers are there. You go out and take some time to make sure. It's an incredible system that the community has really supported and got behind.

I also know that folks like — the MLA for Lake Laberge, that community, and I'm sure the MLA felt very strongly about — living out in that area — the fact that there were some real challenges where people would be making that 25- to 35-minute drive and abusing the system. It's important that, in these areas around Whitehorse, where we saw inappropriate dumping — and we know that, between Haines Junction and Beaver Creek, there has been some pretty significant — that there has been some inappropriate behaviour when it comes to dumping. There has been a lot of work, and I know that the Member for Kluane has also been focused on ensuring that, in some of those really rural areas, there is not inappropriate activity happening — whether it is abandoned vehicles or if it is industrial waste that shouldn't be dumped.

There are people who take advantage of these particular structures. For us on this side of the floor, I have listened very closely and respectfully to the conversations that have happened around the folks in those areas, and I know that the goal has been to try to come up with a series of solutions — really — solutions and, at the same time, ensuring that there is an understanding that people have been inappropriately using this infrastructure and doing it, and it can cause some really significant costs and challenges.

As I touched on earlier, landfill gases can be created when certain wastes — particularly organic compounds — change from liquid or solid into a vapour, and this process is known as volatilization. Landfill gas can be created by reactions of certain chemicals present in waste. For example, if chlorine

bleach and ammonia come in contact with each other within a landfill, harmful gas can be produced.

Landfills often accept waste over 20- or 30-year periods, so waste in a landfill may be undergoing several phases of decomposition at once. This means that older waste in one area might be in a different phase of decomposition than more recently buried waste in another area. When it comes to climate change or global warming, whichever term you prefer, the time to act was yesterday, and we know that here. We see that every spring. We certainly saw that over the last number of years, where we have seen this increase in fire activity, and we have seen this increase as well.

I think it has been fair to say that, in the areas when it comes to the partnership — and I still believe it's in place — with Hecla — I think there has been — I want to thank them for their community partnership in Keno. I did attend, with the previous Minister of Community Services, conversations with municipal leaders on this topic and heard both — as we walked through that — concerns as well as opportunities to work together. Specifically, I can remember our meetings in Mayo with the previous Mayor of Mayo, and I think that there generally are some ways that we can help here. I think there is a lot of folks in these communities, although small in number, who have put together some good ideas, and in many cases, as the Member for Kluane touched on, some of those new operations are thriving tourism businesses. I will say that I want to touch on that comment.

I know that the Member for Kluane said that they want to know that there are supports in a number of areas. I would say, look — I know that the Member for Kluane was a champion of the — I think it touched on renewables, tourism, a number of different types of engagement in that region that he represents. I would say: Look, I think, although it gets challenging here in the House to commend any work by the current government from the Official Opposition, but the Member for Kluane I think should be happy that, you know, number one, there is a wind turbine project that — there were dollars in a line item, but there was no independent power production mechanism to actually be able to build that turbine and then have that energy sold into the grid. So, we did that, and we supported that work that the Member for Kluane believed in.

Also, I know that the Member for Kluane has brought different concerns and information to the House from the community of Beaver Creek, and I think that we did a lot of work — I know that, as Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, when things got tough, we brought everybody together and workshopped the key items and challenges when it came to Beaver Creek, and that meant bringing CIRNAC Canada — the federal government — to the table with Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation and making sure that the right amount of money was in place to build a solid solar project for that community. That work has been carried on very well with great leadership by the current Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources.

When it comes to tourism, you know, there has been — in previous roles and having a chance to work with the Department of Tourism and Culture and carried on by my

colleague the Minister for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, we have tried to refocus, as well, on the Kluane region and support the work being done, whether that is through the marketing of some of the operations and organizations that the Member for Kluane highlighted earlier or just generally trying to coordinate the approach to supporting tourism in that area. I think that a lot of things that the MLA for Kluane said — that the community is looking to see — as I chart back over the last number of years, even through the disruption that we had in 2020 and 2021, we have tried to make sure that — and effectively done the work — to see the folks in that jurisdiction realize their priorities and their interests.

Thank you for giving me a chance to talk about this today. We are trying to ensure that we are working closely with our community members — truly. Some of these decisions are tough decisions. There is tough change, but we are trying to figure out good ways to work hand in hand with the ideas that are coming forward. I look forward to hearing more ideas today from the members opposite.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to the motion brought forward by the Third Party, the MLA for Takhini-Kopper King, which urges the Government of Yukon to keep the solid-waste transfer stations open at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn until solutions that meet the solid-waste disposal needs in each community are found.

We have heard from a lot of colleagues here today. We have heard a lot of interesting words from the current Minister of Community Services, speaking very passionately about the need to address waste management in the territory in an environmentally prudent manner. This is a topic of interest for myself, as a rural MLA, but I also think that I will focus my attention more on my role as the Minister of Finance and look at this from a more fiscally concerned manner in general, but again, I will probably veer off that and into my urban background as well.

The Government of Yukon has been working toward modernizing the management of waste in the territory for an awfully long time. I watched the Yukon Party when I was in opposition start to tackle this concept. I have watched two ministers of Community Services, which brings us all here today to this debate. Part of this process has involved investment in 12 regional sites right across the territory, creating full-service, modern facilities that provide residents of unincorporated areas with the best possible management for solid waste. These sites will provide full-service facilities that include composting, recycling collection, household waste collection, and all the other services residents expect from a properly managed, environmentally responsible solid-waste facility.

We have put a focus on making sure that waste is disposed of in properly looked after sites, which is extremely important when we talk about the costs. There are environmental costs and there are financial costs. I want to examine some of the financial considerations around these decisions and where they stand now.

The transfer stations at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn were all marked for closure, going back some years. The 2019 environmental liability report that was issued in 2020 confirmed that these sites were ready to close at that time. You may ask why we don't reverse this decision and keep them open. The issue is that the sites aren't being actively managed. Any costs associated with these transfer stations are earmarked for closure and monitoring the sites after these closures are completed.

So, closure work is yet to start, but in the meantime, these sites are not being actively run, and the waste isn't being managed properly. Our plan is to have residents bring their waste to properly managed sites within driving distance in places where they will already be going. We talked a lot about that — about a lot of movement through the communities and properly disposing of waste as folks head to larger centres where these facilities will be.

We trust that this will not be an undue burden on residents and that it could be part of existing trips, although we do recognize that there is an issue of convenience here. For the three places listed, there are such facilities within 60 kilometres. The upside is that the waste will go to a properly managed site, benefiting the environment and allowing for a more efficient allocation of resources. The upside is obvious to that.

To accommodate this move, we are increasing funding to the municipalities through interim regional agreements. In return, municipalities manage these sites. That is already the case now. Municipalities manage their own solid-waste facilities. It is only in unincorporated Yukon communities that this falls to the Government of Yukon. That includes transporting items, like recycling, to facilities that can be processed — those types of materials in Whitehorse, for example.

In regard to the budget, closing the sites at Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn has some advantages. One is an obvious consequence, which is just a savings in operational costs for not managing these three sites, although this is a very small detail. Another more important aspect is that we can start work on closure and post-closure earlier, and that reduces future value of the liabilities associated with closing, remediating, and monitoring these sites.

The Government of Yukon is responsible for environmental monitoring of groundwater of these sites for 25 years. Responsibly managing waste means formally closing the landfills and environmental monitoring, and that work, of course, will happen after the closures. The longer you wait, the more environmental impact a site can have and the costs go up for dealing with that.

In the short term, dumping of materials, burning of garbage, and other activities at unmonitored sites will end up with another huge price tag. For example, the cost of a typical oil spill at an unmanaged site could run up to \$50,000. Leaving the gates open increases the risk of this happening. No matter whose responsibility, it will still be a liability for the Yukon government to deal with the aftermath.

At a managed, gated site, we can exert more control over illegal dumping and reduce our operational costs for cleanup and managing incidents at the sites. We're not moving ahead on these closures site unseen. We consulted with Yukoners who are going to be affected by these coming transfer station closures. Together we will work toward a more sustainable model of waste management through the regional service model. After all, we have to take responsibility for the waste that we do create.

With growing needs to mitigate environmental risk, improve our monitoring, and reduce the management of waste over the long term, we have to make sure that Yukon waste management facilities are properly managed. To tackle the modern era, we need to have waste processed close to where it is produced. Having this happen in multiple small waste sites across the territory isn't an efficient or responsible way to make this happen.

Instead, we need to invest in a set number of solid-waste facilities. Consolidating the number of sites where we dispose of the waste has the added benefit of reducing the environmental footprint of waste management activities. This holds true even far down the line, since closing a limited number of sites and monitoring them afterwards will cost less overall than doing the same for a larger number of sites spread across the territory. After all, in a closed waste management facility, you still have to pay for getting the site properly shut down and monitoring it thereafter. Fewer is better in regard to these costs.

By having waste management facilities, concentrated municipalities' regional agreements ensure the best practices are followed at these facilities. The Government of Yukon can also share the cost with municipalities for closing facilities and monitoring them afterward. It is difficult to provide an average cost breakdown for a solid-waste transfer station under the old model. The truth is that the costs can vary greatly.

That being said, a site that serves a smaller population can run a much higher per capita cost than a larger facility that serves more area residents. Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn all fall into this category.

I would point out, as the Minister of Community Services has said in this House since the beginning of the session, that the Yukon government is implementing recommendations jointly developed by YG, the Association of Yukon Communities, and the City of Whitehorse. These are recommendations informed by discussions with all partners as well as previous work, such as the Association of Yukon Communities' solid-waste management vision from 2016 when the members opposite were in government and this journey began.

After the recommendations were completed, they were handed over to an implementation advisory group that included the executive director of the Association of Yukon Communities, plus representatives from four different municipalities — an interim agreement that has been signed on to by Teslin, Mayo, and Carmacks. All of these municipalities are taking charge of their landfills and buying into this plan, which was brought to the Yukon government in 2016 and again

in 2017 by the Association of Yukon Communities. We're following through with the requests from the AYC.

The Minister of Community Services has been throughout the territory this past summer. Earlier, he spoke with mayors and councillors. He has shared with this Chamber that this is not an issue that comes up in his discussions with municipalities that are providing the services to handle waste in the territory, but they are asking that the Yukon government approach waste management and address the environmental liabilities that they present and that we should be doing that responsibly.

I did have the honour to head out on some community tours with the former Minister of Community Services as well. We stopped off and had conversations about waste management in Carmacks, Faro, and Keno as well. When you take a look at the number of years that this has been consulted on and how many communities our ministers went through — and I am not sure about the previous government and how many communities they consulted with in their year or so when the AYC brought this to their attention — but this has been consulted on for a very long time.

I think that the Department of Community Services has done an exemplary job, just like countless other departments and public servants, talking to communities and coming up with mitigations to help make the transition to a much better and much more manageable supply of our waste-disposal sites in the territory. It's extremely important that we do that, not only for the environment but also for the municipalities, because the municipalities said that the existing system — the old system — was not sustainable.

The Minister of Community Services and his team — and the previous minister from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes — have stepped forward. We want to make sure that our garbage is managed in a way that is responsible to the environment and responsible to our municipalities. From their direction, they want to make sure that garbage going into our sites is managed in a way that is sustainable and environmentally sound as well.

They want gates. They want to have sorting inside of those transfer stations so that the garbage goes in one pile and compost in another — that type of thing. They want to cut methane and other greenhouse gases as well.

We want to make sure that we do this properly and that we are doing this in conjunction with the residents and with the municipalities. Many Yukoners know that the Yukon Liberals and the Yukon NDP have developed, since 2021, a working relationship as two separate teams. This was borne out of a recognition that the Yukon is facing many challenges and that Yukoners benefit from having a stable government and MLAs working together to address the challenges that Yukoners face. Addressing the problems will take bold actions. These are not my words; these are the words taken from the confidence and supply agreement that was made with the Third Party.

As folks know, I was at least a little involved with the creation of the first CASA, but now, as our new Premier, the Member for Porter Creek South, signed a new agreement with the Leader of the Third Party — the mover of this motion that we are debating today — a particular commitment between the

two teams was articulated, among other policy initiatives, that our government is to — and I quote: “... consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in Keno, Johnson’s Crossing, Silver City and Braeburn.” I will note for the record that the CASA commitment did also include Keno, but as members know and as the minister could address in more detail, the Keno rural waste management needs have been addressed and are in a bit of a different situation than the other unincorporated communities that we are speaking of here.

I raise this as the New Democratic Party previously agreed that this is the way for the government to move forward on rural waste management — that we should consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options. Understandably, given that agreement and the approach, that is precisely what our tremendous public servants at Community Services have been working on and basing their work on.

I think that it is appropriate that we remain consistent and that we continue to provide the public servants with the direction that is fiscally responsible and environmentally responsible and provide clarity to Yukoners on what is happening. I think that the minister responsible has made it clear that this is exactly what has been happening.

Given all of this, I would like to move an amendment to the current motion. The amendment, if adopted, will change the motion to be consistent with the wording of the commitment made by our Yukon Liberal government in the confidence and supply agreement made in January 2023.

Amendment proposed

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move:

THAT Motion No. 856 be amended by:

- (1) deleting the phrase “keep the solid-waste transfer stations open at” and inserting in its place the phrase “continue to consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in”; and
- (2) deleting the phrase “until solutions that meet the solid-waste disposal needs of each community are found”.

Speaker: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Minister of Finance:

THAT Motion No. 856 be amended by:

- (1) deleting the phrase “keep the solid-waste transfer stations open at” and inserting in its place the phrase “continue to consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in”; and
- (2) deleting the phrase “until solutions that meet the solid-waste disposal needs of each community are found”.

If amended, Motion No. 856 would read:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to continue to consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, earlier, I laid out how the closures of these sites will benefit Yukoners and the financial decisions that went into them. I know that, given the financial

environmental liabilities, the Minister of Community Services is taking those considerations seriously, all while continuing to address things in the spirit of the CASA commitment. So, the work is ongoing and his team is looking for solutions. I look forward to hearing comments from my colleagues and am just grateful to be able to be here debating this on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. I will conclude my comments at that.

Ms. White: It’s interesting, because in so many different arenas when there is a motion on the floor and an amendment is proposed, often it’s viewed as a friendly amendment — something to strengthen or improve, and I have to say that this is not friendly. This totally takes away the intention of the original motion, which is to ensure that the solid-waste transfer facilities are open until a solution may be found with those communities who are affected. I don’t think it will surprise yourself or anyone in the room that the Yukon NDP will be voting against this proposed amendment.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to echo the sentiments of my colleagues on this side of the House who have risen before me to speak today to the proposed amendment — my colleague from Klondike — and to the motion, which is mirroring the wording from CASA. Our government has been working to create and modernize our services and our systems and agreements across our departments to create new opportunities and efficiencies, to build healthy communities and invest in our collective future. This undertaking requires many engagements, which we identified earlier today, and consultations with stakeholders, such as our communities and municipalities, First Nation governments, and industry.

Since 2017, our government has conducted over 100 territory-wide public engagements about a broad range of topics and initiatives, and we have consulted with Yukoners on so many different things: school facilities, barriers to Indigenous recruitment and retention, land use planning, community safety, health initiatives, and transfer stations, as we spoke about today, just to name a few of the consultations that we have facilitated.

This government takes the responsibility of consultation with communities and partners very seriously, and we have been doing this since we have begun the consultations regarding waste transfer stations specifically, throughout this year, in a number of communities, with over half of Yukon communities signing on to our interim regional agreements. As outlined in the 2018 recommendations of the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste, we have signed interim regional agreements with Watson Lake, Mayo, Carmacks, and Teslin. We are modernizing waste management facilities across the territory to reduce the environmental and operational risks, while also ensuring sustainable access to waste-disposal services for all Yukoners in years to come.

Through this, we have been investing in upgrades to landfills and transfer stations, including our recent implementation of composting at some facilities. These measures are to move toward efficient, cost effective, and sustainable solid-waste systems to benefit Yukoners now and

looking into the future. Such measures, under the interim regional agreements, are gates, site management, and monitoring tipping fees, which limits the dumping of hazardous waste materials that have serious impacts on the environment and wildlife.

As part of this process and in line with our CASA agreement, the department is working with communities to schedule meetings and consultations to determine household waste-disposal options. In our CASA commitments, there is a specific line that reads: "... consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in Keno, Johnson's Crossing, Silver City and Braeburn." We feel that we have been upholding this commitment as we move forward with the modernization of transfer stations across the Yukon and in the implementation of the recommendations from the ministerial committee.

Over the summer and into the fall, there were meetings with Keno, Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, and Braeburn residents to provide opportunity for members of the community to share their ideas and concerns, examine challenges and opportunities, and discuss options and workable solutions related to household waste disposal. Through our meetings and consultations with Keno, there has been a solution reached with Keno residents and Hecla Mining to see waste collection in the Keno community. As of November of last year, Keno received bear-resistant garbage receptacles, recycling carts, and a trailer provided by the Government of Yukon to assist Hecla in transporting the waste to a nearby facility. This is one example of community members and partners, alongside the Yukon government, coming to the table and adopting creative solutions to waste management.

We have been committed to consulting residents and finding workable household waste-disposal options with and for them. Many of our community landfills are not staffed or monitored, which sees an increase of illegal dumping, which we have heard in some of the previous statements here today.

The 2023 confidence and supply agreement has provided Yukoners with opportunities that we would not otherwise have been able to achieve on our own. Again, I'm proud of the positive outcomes for Yukoners that stem from this agreement. I stand by this agreement and the wording it contains. The wording is thoughtful and, of course, intentional. For that reason, I believe that the wording as written in the 2023 confidence and supply agreement and that we have proposed as an amendment is and should continue to be the way forward on this file.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, back to the amendment, the first thing that I want to talk about with it is just a follow-up on what the Premier was discussing and to talk about Keno and how we will work with these other communities — Silver City, Braeburn, Johnsons Crossing — and just to give a shout-out to Hecla. They stepped in and helped the community. I thought it was a really neighbourly thing to do. Also, it's Hecla that is dealing with the polluter-pay part of this, not the residents of Keno City. At least that part of it is being upheld by the mining company. I appreciate what

they're doing for the community. If we find solutions like that in the other communities, then terrific. I'm still hopeful that those solutions still maintain that polluter-pay piece.

With respect to the amendment saying that we should allow this conversation to happen, I don't think anyone — well, I hope no one here is disagreeing with that part of the amendment, that if the amendment were to go through, that we would continue to consult with communities. I think that is not what is of concern to — well, I haven't heard from the Yukon Party, but I'm guessing that they also were concerned with the amendment, but the NDP, when they rose just now — when the Leader of the NDP rose to speak to it — they said not supportive of it, because it takes away the essence of the original motion, which is talking about that you have to have that solution first.

Now, let's just talk for a second about those communities — Silver City, Johnsons Crossing, and Braeburn. Even though we have had the adopted strategy in place for five years — five and a half, let's say — and the recommendations from the Association of Yukon Communities seven and a half years ago — so, we have not closed those facilities, and we have been in dialogue with them, but the concern that I just heard from the NDP was that this would be too much pressure on those places.

What I wonder — and this is when I had my conversations with Johnsons Crossing — we did not take away from the notions of those solutions that we are talking about, but I did hold onto the need to make sure that we were adopting this overall approach for the environment, which was that we would have staffed and gated facilities, that there would be polluter-pay, and that we would work to levelize that across regions. We know that the problem — every landfill — municipality, Yukon territorial government run — whoever the groups are that are running them are concerned about contamination.

In the amendment, just talking to this reference to the confidence and supply agreement, I just want to note that the agreement is from the recently signed — I think earlier this year, 2023 — it is not the confidence and supply agreement that the Yukon Party agreed to or what they said was that they would agree to it. It is always a little bit difficult for me to track where they are on that, because sometimes they say that they agree with it, and sometimes they say that they disagree with it.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, it was certainly the Yukon Party's willingness to seek to support the confidence and supply agreement so that they would assume government. That is what they had talked about. I have not heard them on this one. I hope that they would be supportive of talking with communities. They say that is important; the Yukon Party says that it is important to talk to communities. Although, as I have noted recently in debate around, for example, a citizens' assembly, they voted against that, even though that is what Yukoners asked for. So, I am not quite sure where they are with these issues, but they have spoken pretty clearly that they don't believe that we should close these transfer stations in these smaller communities.

I now will have to check back to the words from the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin today, because he did talk about

some of those principles that he agreed with, and so I will check on those.

With respect to the amendment that is here, it is still that we should have that engagement and that conversation. The difference is that — and what I will say — and let me talk for a minute about the public servants who have been doing this work. I travelled with them to many communities, and one of those was Johnsons Crossing. I had the assistant deputy minister with me — or an assistant deputy minister — and I had the director of operations, who deals with our solid-waste facilities and funding them and supporting them. Those folks are pretty dedicated to a couple of principles: one, the principle of talking with communities; and two, finding solutions that will work to improve the overall system to uphold the values that are underneath the strategy that was brought forward and also work within the community. So, I — and sorry; I travelled with him as well to Keno, and we went over a range of solutions that might work.

So, here we are — I forget what the number is that the minister had added up in terms of the number of engagements, and I would have to look back, but quite a few, and those are happening in the communities. We have one, apparently, that is happening today. I didn't know about it ahead of this debate, but I have heard several people talk about it in Silver City, and I will say that the public servants who have been going to these meetings have been there in the spirit of finding solutions. So, you know, the amendment that we have before us — that we are debating right now — isn't about not working with communities; in fact, that is what it says: If we were to pass the amendment, it would be to continue to consult and engage with the communities to determine household waste-disposal options for them.

The part that is not in there and is not in the original motion is this notion of upholding the overall values that are trying to be sought by the territory-wide strategy. That is the part that is missing for me in the original motion, and at least, if we go for this amendment, we will not be holding ransom the progress. I will say that the work that I have seen of the public servants in the communities seeks to find solutions.

Now, the last thing I will say about the amendment that we have in front of us is just about these questions in the environment. For Yukoners who might listen in or for the members of the communities who check these transcripts later on, there seems to be this argument from the opposition members that it is not environmentally friendly to close landfills, and we keep saying that it is. What seems to me to be at the heart of that is how people take their garbage to the landfill or transfer station.

I live outside of Whitehorse, and I can tell you the way in which I do it, which is that I wait for a moment when I am going to be heading by the landfill. I think that's a pretty common thing for most Yukoners. We make the best of our trips. We even call them "town days", when we decide to come in, buy groceries, fill up the truck, do all of our errands, and, at the same time, as we drive past the landfill, we will stop in and drop off our garbage. Now, of course, in Marsh Lake, it's costing \$1 a bag. That's what I and my neighbours all have to pay. That trip,

then, isn't an additional trip that I'm trying to do just to take the garbage; it's a trip alongside of other things. That's where the difference lies in this debate.

My impression is that all Yukoners are pretty frugal with their time and don't want it to be wasted, and so they wait. Of course, we know that, where I live anyway, we don't have a gas station; we don't have a grocery store. I will say that I miss Tilly's, just for those who remember Tilly's, but that's the way this is. We don't have all the services in our community, so we make the best of trips.

The amendment that the Member for Klondike proposed, in my mind, keeps us in that dialogue with communities where we work to find a solution together. That's why I support the amendment. I think that it was what we agreed to under the confidence and supply agreement. I will say, from my experience with the public servants, that it's exactly what they have been trying to do through engagement with those residents.

By the way, when I rose to speak to the main motion, I listed off some solutions that we had worked out with the residents of Braeburn. What I don't get — because I have had conversations with the Member for Takhini-Kopper King where we talked about potential solutions, and one of the ones that I listed off today — at least what she indicated to me was that it would be fine. Yet I don't understand, then, why it's not fine for Braeburn, having had us discuss it some three or three and a half years ago.

I look forward to further debate on the amendment and seeing whether we agree on whether this is an improvement to the original motion.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I will speak to the amendment this afternoon for a little while. I think it has been an important discussion this afternoon. I think it's obviously an issue that many people in this House take very seriously, and I think the more we can talk about how we deal with our garbage, the better off we are.

The amendment that we proposed this afternoon is directly in line with the confidence and supply agreement that we struck with the New Democratic Party caucus in 2023. We're working to make good on that commitment that we made through the confidence and supply agreement.

I will say this afternoon that I was heartened, actually, to hear the Member for Vuntut Gwitchin start talking about the environment this afternoon. I think that's important. I think that cuts to the very heart of this issue — the environment in the territory, and I think that shouldn't be lost. I know the Leader of the Third Party is trying to bifurcate the discussion, saying that, no, this isn't about the environment; this is about rural Yukon. But really, at its heart, this is about municipalities, it's about how we manage our garbage, how we look after our environment better, and how we get to the 45-percent greenhouse gas reduction that we committed to through *Our Clean Future* with the support of the New Democratic caucus.

The way that we manage our landfills will help us reach that 45-percent target, but we can't reach it if we don't act. Here we are again — I've seen it before — with delays on issues that

we could be acting on in a climate emergency that then become delayed and pushed out because of issues that we have to work through that are legitimate for the individuals who we're working through and we are working through to the point of the amendment —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, on a point of order.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I am going to use Standing Order 19(b), which speaks to matters other than the topic under discussion right now. The amendment to the motion is very clear. It is very short; it is very concise, and I appreciate that the minister is looking to repeat his comments from the initial debate, but I believe that the discussion is supposed to be about the amendment.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: On the point of order, the minister has been speaking for two minutes, and I am sure that he is going to get to the amendment topic.

Minister of Community Services, please continue.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying just moments ago, as far as the amendment goes, the amendment actually restores the intention through the confidence and supply agreement that was negotiated and says that we will continue to consult with communities to determine household waste-disposal options in Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, and Braeburn. The only difference from the original confidence and supply agreement is that Keno is no longer on the list, and that is because we have found solutions for Keno, which was our government working in good faith under the confidence and supply agreement.

What we are saying with the amendment today is that this is an important discussion to have with municipalities, but — and there is a big “but” here — because the environment cannot be forgotten in these discussions, we have to eventually move ahead with the intention of the *Solid Waste Action Plan*, which was initially proposed by the Association of Yukon Communities in 2016 for the benefit of the environment.

Here I think is where there is a little bit of a disagreement — a difference between ourselves and the New Democratic caucus on the intent of the agreement that we struck. I see it as a — this whole initiative to deal with landfills in the territory is, at its heart, a discussion about the environment. We are going to continue to talk about options for community members who would be affected in Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, and Braeburn, but we will do so, and we will do so in good faith to come up with real options. As a matter of fact, this afternoon, right now, at the moment, we are talking to residents of Silver City and hearing and discussing ways to reach a solution so that we can actually help the transition for these residents of rural Yukon to the new model, which is a regional landfill model.

Now, it is also important, I might add, to the Yukon Conservation Society, which as I said earlier today, wrote me a letter. The letter does cut to the heart of the discussion about

the amendment that we put on the table today, because the Conservation Society says — which is directly relevant to our discussion on the amendment — that closures should only be done as long as there is an alternative landfill within a reasonable distance and there is support for waste diversion to the greatest extent possible. Basically, what they are saying is to please do appropriate public education and transition plans as part of the initiative, which is exactly what we are doing under the confidence and supply agreement.

The reason why this is important to the Yukon Conservation Society — in its letter, it says that these facilities — these regional landfills — are not cheap to operate, but compared with the cost of environmental cleanups at non-standard facilities, it is easily worth the cost of implementation. The Yukon Conservation Society recognizes that some currently existing smaller landfills will have to close. It is not possible to implement the solid-waste management for northern or remote communities guidelines in an environmentally and fiscally appropriate manner at some of these landfills. However, closures should only be done as long as there is an alternative landfill within a reasonable distance and there is support for waste diversion to the greatest extent possible.

Well, we are working very, very hard with the communities and the residents affected by the regionalization program, but as the Yukon Conservation Society says in its letter, having these waste transfer stations in very, very small communities is just not doable. It isn't fiscally responsible, and logistically, it is almost impossible to do. The reason why they think that this is important is that they are concerned about unregulated garbage disposal in community landfills across the Yukon.

So, when we were negotiating the original confidence and supply agreement, we wanted to make sure that we dealt with the residents of these rural communities, as we say in the amendment that we are talking about right now, but we also wanted to make sure that people understood that there will eventually have to be change, because as we have heard, in the Yukon, people dump shop. They will go to places that are open, places for garbage, and they will dispose of their garbage — their waste oil, their transmissions, their cars, industrial waste, construction waste — at these sites to avoid paying the tipping fees and to just get it off their lot or out of their house.

As I heard in Haines Junction just two weeks ago, that is happening in Haines Junction, which has a landfill, but people are actually driving hundreds of kilometres to dispose of their waste in a municipal landfill that is not controlled because it is available and because people want to get rid of the garbage they produce cheaply in ways that are not necessarily convenient but that gets it off their lot.

So, this is what municipalities are dealing with across the Yukon. It's why the regionalization initiative that we have proposed is fair and responsible. It's flexible; it involves the community; it's important for us, and that is at the heart of this amendment that we are proposing today: that we involve community members in the discussions and help facilitate and ease their transition to a regional landfill model.

The regional landfill model that we are talking about this afternoon came out of the *Solid Waste Management: Vision for a Sustainable Model for Yukon Communities* that the Association of Yukon Communities put in place in 2016. For us, we came into office in 2016. In 2017, the Association of Yukon Communities came to us and said: Please initiate this plan.

I mention that because we talk about the civil servants who are working on the regionalization plan at Community Services, and they are doing a tremendous job. They are doing a tremendous job even as we speak — consulting with communities, which is really the heart and soul of the amendment that we are talking about this afternoon.

But there is more to this. There were more experts involved and very clever people came around to build this plan. One of the recommendations of this plan was to make sure that there were no places where Yukoners can avoid going to a controlled and managed landfill.

As we move toward that model, we have to continue to talk to Yukoners. That is important. That is what the amendment addresses today and that is exactly what we are going to do and have been doing, which is why Keno is no longer on the list. But I think it's important as well to recognize and thank the people who were originally involved to develop this plan. I am thinking about — well, there are a number of them, actually, and they are listed in that report. They include: Cory Bellmore, who used to live in Dawson; Ian Dunlop, the former CAO of Faro; Margrit Wozniak of Mayo; Shelley Hassard of Teslin; Monika Schitteck, who represented Haines Junction; Christine Smith of Whitehorse; Bryna Cable of Whitehorse; David Albisser, who is working for Whitehorse; Dave Hatherley of Haines Junction; Cole Hunking of Teslin; Norm Carlson of Dawson; Tony Radford for the Yukon government; Bev Buckway, who was working for the Association of Yukon Communities; and Laura Eby of the Association of Yukon Communities. These are the people who came up with the plan that we're trying to implement and have been working on since 2017 — for six years. It's a plan that actually is more than that now — seven years old now. They drafted this 17-page report upon which all of our actions that we are talking about this afternoon are based.

We know, as our amendment says, that we cannot advance this without speaking to Yukoners and working with them, which is why the great folks at Community Services have worked so hard to come up with solutions for the residents who are transitioning to this new model.

I know that members opposite have said that it is going to come quickly, but we have been talking about this for a very long time now. I think it is well understood that eventually change is going to have to happen if this model is going to work. This is a model, as I have noted, that some very smart people worked on, endorsed, and pushed to have us embrace and advance, which my colleague the member from beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes worked very hard on at the beginning.

Since we started on this journey, we have actually had numerous consultations — 28 in total, dozens — including

consulting with people in Braeburn, in Johnsons Crossing, and in Silver City. Again, we are still talking today, which cuts to the heart of the amendment that we have today — that we have committed to talk and we will continue to talk to members of those communities to make sure that the transition to a new system is eased.

At the heart is the environment and also putting on a polluter pay principle that actually forces people to consider how much garbage they are producing, and it makes sure that they deal with it in a responsible manner. To the Yukon Conservation Society's point, they want to make sure that diversion is part of it as well, which is where, just this session, we started talking about extended producer responsibility and how that is going to help finance some of the changes we are making to the waste stream in the territory — certainly in Whitehorse. It's all part of making sure that we do better for future generations.

My colleague the Minister of Finance had some great points this afternoon in that the faster we get these transfer stations dealt with — it lessens the liability that we will have in the future.

The overarching goal here is to make sure that people do not circumvent the managed and controlled landfills that we are investing in across the Yukon — investing in rural Yukon for the betterment of all Yukoners — and circumventing that by a roadside stop where you can do it for free. That's important.

But it is a change and it is a change to a way of life that has been going on for a very long period of time — tens of years. People are invested in that. We have to transition. We have to make it easier for them to transition to a better model so that they do understand what the cost of their garbage is and what the impacts of the waste that we're producing have on the environment. It also makes sure that municipalities are not left paying for garbage, industrial waste, commercial waste, and everything else that goes along with it — that they have no revenue for. These are people outside the municipalities' borders who are bringing garbage and waste of all types within their facility — that they have to pay for. That's simply not fair.

We're trying to bring a fairness and an accountability to the model for the way that we produce waste and handle waste in the territory that hasn't been seen before. I think we have to make sure that we do this in a responsible manner, which is why, through the amendment that we put before the House today, we want to make sure that those conversations happen. They have been happening and we want to make sure that they continue to happen. It's certainly my goal, which is why, working with the Department of Community Services, I have asked that we hold consultations and gather community input to hear ideas from the community that will help us facilitate a better waste management regime in the Yukon.

That work is vital to the success of the larger venture. I know that the team at Community Services is deeply invested in that. They believe in what we're doing. I think that anybody who has had to deal with waste or garbage in the territory knows that we have to do it better. Municipalities have told us that. But in order to advance this, we really do have to get buy-in from the people most affected by this, which will be people

living in small unincorporated communities who will have to carry garbage eventually to a regional site. That's going to be a transition for sure.

We worked with Keno and learned some lessons from working with the small community of Keno. We are now taking that knowledge and putting it to use in Braeburn, in Johnsons Crossing, and also in Silver City. Even as we talk, there is a Teams call going on that is actually soliciting good ideas from the year-round residents of Silver City. I look forward to hearing what ideas come out of today's meeting.

Thank you for the time to talk to the amendment this afternoon, and I want to hear what other people have to say this afternoon.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I certainly had no intentions of speaking to this amendment, but it seems pretty obvious that the Minister of Environment has a 20-minute speech set up and ready to go, so we clearly are not going to get to vote on this amendment or the motion. I am going to take a minute or two of your time and give you some thoughts.

Firstly, if this wasn't such an important issue to many people's lives, I would say that what has happened here today is almost comical, but it is not funny. I think that the irony of this amendment is just beyond comprehension — I mean, to amend the motion to say that we are going to continue to consult with communities. The whole point of this debate and the previous motion was about the lack of consultation. So, for the government to suddenly say that they are going to continue — if you don't start something, you can't continue it. You have to begin first.

My colleague from Kluane today used a quote that the Leader of the NDP, from her discussions with the minister during Community Services debate — where she said that being told the outcome is not consultation — and I think that is very important, because it is not. We just heard the minister stand here and say that there were lessons learned from Keno. I am not really sure that there have been any lessons learned, because they haven't learned the definition of "consultation" yet, so I'm not sure what lessons he could have learned.

I also wanted to make very clear that this is not about the public servants; this about this government. This is about Cabinet — the ones who sit here and make the decisions. Yes, they pass on the direction to the public servants, and the public servants have to go out and meet with those people and try to relay the wishes of Cabinet. But when the decision has already been made, that is not consultation and it never will be.

Another problem with this amendment is that it doesn't give any assurances for those citizens in those communities. To say that we won't close them until the solutions have been found — so, now they have nothing. They don't know if it's going to be tomorrow or next Wednesday or the following Thursday when their transfer station gets closed — except for the guarantee of the words of the members opposite, and I think that it was worn thin a long time ago.

Another thing that was interesting to hear from the members opposite — and every one of them who spoke talked about the engagements and the dialogue that have taken place,

but not one of them, to the best of my knowledge, actually said the "consultation that had taken place". Again, that leads me to believe that this Liberal government really doesn't understand the definition of "consultation" and I think that they continue to prove it over and over.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, I had no intention of speaking to this amendment, and I had really hoped that we would have voted on this motion, but here we are. Thank you for your time.

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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: 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: Disagree.

Ms. Blake: Disagree.

MLA Tredger: Disagree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 7 yea, 11 nay.

Speaker: The nays have it.

I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to Motion No. 856 negatived

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the main motion?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to rise today to speak to Motion No. 856. I am going to bring a little bit of a different perspective to the debate that we have heard so far today. I wanted to just start with the whole notion of seven generations, that the decisions we make today should result in a sustainable world seven generations into the future.

Teaching children about climate change and recycling is so important. It empowers them to understand the environmental challenges that our planet faces and encourages responsible behaviour from an early age. By educating children, we instill values of sustainability, conservation, and eco-consciousness,

fostering a generation that is more likely to make informed choices and take proactive steps toward a healthier planet.

Today's debate, Mr. Speaker, I think has focused quite a lot around this notion. I really want to talk about some of the work we are doing in Education to ensure that our children are educated and that it's woven into the curriculum that we have. Fortunately, our redesigned curriculum offers a strong foundation for climate change education. We provide all early kindergarten to grade 12 students with a modern curriculum that follows best practices from Canada and the world and incorporates a Yukon context and Yukon First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

The concept-based and competency-driven curriculum allows for students to access deeper understanding of the environmental challenges facing our world today, including climate change. Flexible learning environments that include space for incorporating local context and place-based learning opportunities are at the forefront of the current curriculum. Topics related to the environment and climate change are found in science curriculum from kindergarten to grade 12. Yukon also offers two locally developed courses, Climate Change 10 and Climate Change 12, for Yukon schools. These courses were co-developed by Yukon teachers in collaboration with representatives from the Council of Yukon First Nations and the Yukon University and were approved for use in Yukon schools.

The Yukon Climate Change 10 course outlines a broad range of processes that have accelerated the rate of climate change, the environmental impacts associated with these changes, mechanisms that may mitigate such impacts, and adaptations designed to cope with anticipated changes.

The course synopsis for Climate Change 12 states that climate change is the most complex and wide-reaching challenge facing humankind today. Reducing the impacts of climate change and moving Canada and the globe toward resiliency and adaptability for climate impacts will require substantial changes at all levels of Canadian and global societies. It is critical that Canadians understand climate change causes, impacts, and risks. An educated and proactive public, including youth, is essential to driving the required transformation.

Yukon Climate Change 12 is designed to provide students with a background permitting actions to address climate change. Both courses seek to include First Nation perspectives and specific actions of First Nations in addressing the causes and impacts of climate change, along with informing students of the Indigenous and Yukon First Nation experiences of climate change and to help them to learn how First Nations have adapted for millennia.

These courses have integrated Yukon First Nation perspectives and coincide with many aspects of the Yukon First Nation *Umbrella Final Agreement*, particularly chapter 11, Land Use Planning; chapter 14, Water Management; chapter 16, Fish and Wildlife; and chapter 17, Forest Resources.

Students learn about climate change from multiple perspectives, fostering a holistic understanding of causes,

impacts, and potential solutions. Here are some of the aspects that students typically learn in our curriculum regarding climate change. In science, students explore the scientific principles underlying climate change. They learn about the greenhouse effects, carbon cycles, and how human activities contribute to the changing climate. This includes understanding the role of fossil fuels, deforestation, and other human-induced factors in driving climate change, including waste.

In geography, climate change is studied in the context of geography, examining its global impact on ecosystems and weather patterns in different regions around the world. Students learn about the effects of climate change on landscapes, biodiversity, and natural resources. In social studies, climate change is approached through a social lens in focusing on societal impacts, including displacement of communities due to rising sea levels, the effects on Indigenous cultures, and the socio-economic challenges associated with climate-related disasters.

In environmental studies, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of environmental stewardship and sustainable practices. Students explore solutions to mitigate climate change, such as renewable energy sources, conservation efforts, waste reduction, and sustainable living practices. Critical thinking and problem solving — in this area, students are encouraged to think critically about climate change issues. They learn to analyze data, evaluate different perspectives, and develop informed opinions on topics related to climate science, environmental policies, and actions to address climate change, much like the topic that we are talking about today.

In personal and social development, the curriculum fosters a sense of personal responsibility and social awareness regarding climate change. Students are encouraged to take individual and collective action, understand their environmental footprint, and engage in activities that contribute to environmental conservation and sustainability.

Students have opportunities to study the environment and climate change in more detail through specialized science courses, such as Earth Science 11, Environmental Science 11, Science for Citizens 11, and Environmental Science 12. For example, in Science for Citizens 11, students learn about how climate change affects different parts of our world. In food production, for instance, they see how changing weather can make it hard for farmers to grow food. This helps them to understand the challenges that farmers face and why it is important to find ways to help.

In terms of plants and animals, they learn how climate change affects where plants and animals live. They might see how some animals move to new places or how plants struggle to survive in different conditions. By visiting coastal areas, students can see how rising sea levels and bad weather can damage homes and buildings.

This shows them why it is critical for communities to plan and protect themselves. Ocean problems are also looked at. Students explore how the ocean becomes more acidic because of climate change. They learn how this hurts sea creatures and the whole ocean ecosystem. In addition to this —

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. 856 accordingly adjourned

The House adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled November 22, 2023:

35-1-135

2022-2023 Annual Report Yukon Human Rights Commission and Yukon Human Rights Commission Financial Statements Year Ended March 31, 2023 (Speaker Harper)

35-1-136

Yukon Public Accounts 2022-23 (Silver)

35-1-137

Annual Report Yukon Housing Corporation For the year ended March 31, 2023 (Pillai)

35-1-138

Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Annual Report 2022-2023 (McLean)

35-1-139

Health Care Insurance Programs — Health Services — Fiscal Years 2013-14 to 2022-23 — Annual Report April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 (McPhee)

35-1-140

Annual Report 2022-23 Crime Prevention & Victim Services Trust Fund (McPhee)

The following legislative returns were tabled November 22, 2023:

35-1-111

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Clarke related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — committee recommendations (Pillai)

35-1-112

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Clarke related to general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — community land trust (Pillai)

35-1-113

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Istchenko related to general debate on Vote 52, Environment, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — campground access roads (Clarke, N.)

35-1-114

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Drury Creek rest stop (Clarke, N.)

35-1-115

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — third-party rental agreements (Clarke, N.)

35-1-116

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — sound barriers on Alaska Highway (Clarke, N.)

35-1-117

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — brushing between Johnsons Crossing and Lone Tree Creek (Clarke, N.)

The following documents were filed November 22, 2023:

35-1-167

Yukon Lottery Commission Annual Report 2022-23 (Silver)

35-1-168

Environmental contamination at Yukon landfills, letter re (dated November 10, 2023) from Martin Melendro, Executive Director, Yukon Conservation Society, and Lewis Rifkind, Mining Analyst, Yukon Conservation Society, to Hon. Richard Mostyn, Minister of Community Services (Mostyn)



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 163

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, November 23, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Fall 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

Kate White	Leader of the Third Party Takhini-Kopper King
Lane Tredger	Third Party House Leader Whitehorse Centre
Annie Blake	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, November 23, 2023 — 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. The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the actions requested in the motions have been completed in whole or in part: Motion No. 829 and Motion for the Production of Papers No. 11, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming a number of guests here today for the tribute that we will be doing for the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League in a few moments.

First, we have Guin Lalena, Dana Hodgson, Kathleen Smith, Kim Stavert, Moira Lassen, Tash Watcham-Roy, Jeane Lassen, Coralie Ulyett, Alex Bouchard, Brianna Warner, Trish Pettitt, Alison Adams, Cheryl Rivest, Maralyn Rogers, and, from our Cabinet Office, Carla Gostick.

Please help me in welcoming them.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of people here today on our last day of the session. We have some here for the Share the Spirit tribute that we will be giving in a few minutes.

I would like to introduce firefighters Barry Blisner, Yogi Ponsioen, Megan Coyne, Jeremy Beebe, Ocean Stimson, Wyatt Gale, Jack Blisner, and Nick O'Carroll. Those are the firefighters we have.

We also have, from Northwestel, Tammy April and Sara Thompson.

Please join me in welcoming them here this afternoon.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of welcoming to the House two classes from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School: Ms. Sylvia Hamel's sciences humaines grade 10 class and Ms. Monica Sharma's social sciences grade 10 class. I have the names here and I apologize in advance for any completely unintended mispronunciations.

We are welcoming to the House Margaux Espinas, Jenna Henderson, Udo Jarviven, Levi Matao-Sotil, Christian Ocampo, Aquin Puliken, Souleymane Sangare, Gabriel

Thomson, Savy Cabuguason, Oslo Cunning — sounds familiar — Ithaniel Egipto, Lennox Huebenthal, Mason Klink, Maegan Morrison, Brody Nash, Caleb Power, Oliver Suitor, Sadie Warren, Quinn Wright, Magnolia Zhang, and Em Cachola. We also have adults accompanying this group: Rachel Benoit, Laurence Landry, and Becky Leslie.

Welcome to the House.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League. The league is marking 16 years of existence this year and celebrated with a jamboree in November featuring 112 players across eight teams — more than double from the previous year. Yukon women have been playing hockey for decades and the dedication of players and organizers through the years has truly laid the foundation for tremendous success and opportunities for women and girls in hockey.

The Whitehorse Women's Hockey League has eight teams and 15 players on each team, and it continues to grow in numbers. The league is developing more than just players. Through their referee clinics, the league now has 12 women officials across its three divisions, which is a remarkable achievement.

The Whitehorse Women's Hockey League is also leading in the ways that really matter. Their gender-inclusivity policy was groundbreaking and provides a safe and welcoming space for all players, regardless of their gender identity or expression. Inclusion is a strongly held and practised value in the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League.

I also want to congratulate the Yukon female hockey club for their leadership and a shout-out to the Yukon Wild team for their success in southern tournaments. I know that some players from the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League play with the Yukon Wild team to further enhance their skills. I am confident that the future of women's hockey is in great hands.

The next year sees the puck drop on the new Professional Women's Hockey League here in Canada and the United States. It is exciting to think of Yukon girls having the opportunity to turn pro. I am even more excited to think about those who will simply play for the joy of it and realize the opportunity to participate in sport for a lifetime — from Tyke or Timbit to Midget in minor hockey to adulthood in the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League.

This brings hope for players like my niece, Sofia Jan-Asp, and every other girl or gender-diverse player to continue to play and develop their skills well beyond minor hockey. That is a win for everyone who loves the game and ensures that hockey remains a relevant cultural touchstone for our country. It is also happening because of the dedication of organizations like the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League that are leading those

efforts, creating space for everyone, and setting the social and sporting example that we should all incorporate into our lives.

We are proud of our vibrant sport community and wish the league and players great success in the future.

Applause

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Women's Hockey Association. Now, we understand that the league is celebrating its 16th anniversary. This is indeed a significant accomplishment, but I think that I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the current league is just the latest iteration in a long and storied history of women's hockey in the Yukon. I won't go back to the 20th century versions of women's hockey, although I certainly recommend that interested readers check out the *Klondike Nugget's* early coverage of ladies' hockey games in 1902 and 1904 between the Dawson Maids and the Dawson Matrons hockey clubs and, of course, the chapter on women's hockey in Yukon from John Firth's book on Yukon sport.

From my perspective, the really good stuff began in the 1970s and 1980s. That is when people like Joanne Gallagher, Paulette Dufour, and my mother, Linda Dixon, began playing organized women's hockey. Time won't allow me to go through some of the fits and starts that they experienced in those days, but there has been an active women's league in Whitehorse for as long as I have been alive.

I grew up as a puck boy or a stick boy for several of those teams and had the pleasure of watching, learning from, and looking up to players like Ruby Ho, Susan Hamilton, and Cheryl Rivest, who I see is rocking the old Acorn Services jersey. I believe they won the Westerns at least once, possibly twice, back in Manitoba before I was born.

It is for that reason that Yukon women's hockey holds such a special place for me. It is with that history that I understand and appreciate how important and successful the current Whitehorse Women's Hockey Association has been. There are two observations that I would make about the current league. One is that they have done an incredible job of making the league and the sport so much more accessible and inclusive than ever before. This is absolutely critical to continuing the growth of the sport of hockey. I have lost count of the number of Yukon women who have told me that they started playing hockey because of how fun and welcoming that league is. For new Yukoners, old Yukoners, or anyone else in between, the women's hockey league has become not just a league but a community.

The second thing that I have noticed is that they do a wonderful job recognizing and appreciating the contributions of all those women who came before. As I said before, this may be the 16th anniversary of the league, but the roots of women's hockey in this territory go much deeper. From what I can tell, those in charge of the league today really appreciate how far things have come.

Let me close by giving huge kudos to all those in the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League today who have taken up the mantle of women's hockey in the Yukon. You're doing an

incredible job, not just of growing the sport of hockey but for making hockey such an important part of the lives of so many people, not just here in Whitehorse but across the Yukon.

Applause

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League.

I'll start with a story from when I moved back to the Yukon. I had been away for several years and I was worried that I wouldn't know anyone anymore here and that it would be hard to make new friends. When I saw that the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League was holding a skills clinic a few weeks after I moved back, I signed up right away. From the moment I walked into the changing room, my worries about not having a community disappeared.

By the end of the skills clinic, I had made friends, picked up some great tips, and had even been recruited to join the board. Over the next few years, I met so many people who had a story just like mine of being welcomed into this league known for being friendly, competitive, and incredibly fun.

I'm going to add just a couple things to the long and exciting history of women's hockey in the Yukon. I want to highlight the competitive women's hockey team that played in the 1980s and 1990s. They played all over the country and enjoyed some pretty impressive successes. I hear they won at the Arctic Winter Games, BC provincials, and the Western Canadian Shield. As mentioned, I think there is a jersey from that time up in the gallery today.

After that team wrapped up, there was a bit of a gap in formal women's hockey until Ruby Ho and Margo Millette started a new program called "learn to play hockey". They recruited, taught, and encouraged beginners.

Then, in the early 2000s, some people decided that the Arctic Winter Games girls team needed someone to practise against, so they pulled together an informal team of women to help the girls get ready for the games. I include this story because it illustrates so much of what this league is about: supporting women in sport and creating opportunities for this generation of players and the next.

The next few years were full of drop-in games, skill clinics, and jamborees, which grew into the thriving league we know today. That's a whirlwind history. I was talking to one of the founding members today and she said that someone should write a book. I absolutely agree and I can't wait to read the full unabridged history of the league.

Today, women's hockey is absolutely thriving in the Yukon. I know that the league at times has had to add more teams to try to keep with the demand, and their biggest limit is ice time, not interest. The league has even invested in training women as referees so that they can be involved in every part of the game.

I also want to give a special highlight to the league's gender-inclusion policy. It makes it possible for trans people to play the sport they love and be welcomed into the community and it's something that the whole league should be really proud of.

There are enough fun, heart-warming, and hilarious stories about this league to fill up this entire afternoon, but I do have to wrap up, so I want to finish by talking about the incredible volunteers who started this league and keep it going. It takes a lot of work, a lot of logistics, a lot of expertise, and mostly a lot of time to make this league thrive. All that work is done by volunteers and has been done by volunteers for decades. I think I speak for everyone when I say that the Yukon is a more fun, more vibrant, and more active place because of the hours you put in, so thank you to everyone, past and present, who makes the Whitehorse Women's Hockey League happen. We are so grateful, and here's to an amazing season.

Applause

In recognition of Share the Spirit Yukon campaign

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, as we enter the holiday season, I rise to invite Yukoners to share the spirit. Run by the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society and Northwestel, the Share the Spirit Yukon campaign ensures that families have a magical holiday season by working closely with Santa and his partners to ensure that gifts and meals are delivered to children and families who need it most.

This year, 565 families in the Yukon in most every community will have a wonderful Christmas thanks to Northwestel and the firefighters who have committed to serving the community even after their shift ends. Everyone works year-round to raise funds for Share the Spirit, but they still rely on the generosity of Yukoners. Yukoners care about their neighbours and that care and generosity is especially present during the holiday season.

As we approach this festive season, I encourage Yukoners who can to consider giving back to their fellow community members. Share the Spirit Yukon offers several ways to help a family have a great holiday season. You can make a monetary donation, you can sponsor a family where you will be provided with a Christmas wish list of a Yukon child, or you can volunteer your time. You can do all of that and find more information at sharethespirit.ca.

Thank you to everyone who brightens the holidays for their neighbours and a huge thanks to the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society and Northwestel. Firefighters demonstrate their care for others in so many ways. I thank them for giving us the opportunity to thank them for their efforts, making the festive season brighter for our neighbours and our friends.

Finally, I applaud Northwestel for donating \$5,000 to the campaign and for their continued support and service to all Yukon communities.

Have a safe and happy holiday, everyone. Thank you so much.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the project Share the Spirit. In 2019, we did a tribute to this worthy cause. It was 1997, and Ed and Donna Isaak were operating the Discovery Bar in the Taku Hotel. They started a campaign to help seven families. Donna called it Adopt-a-Family, and it morphed into Share the

Spirit. Eventually, the Whitehorse Kinsmen and the Kinettes kept the program moving.

Since 2016, we honour the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society, who are dedicated to this amazing work year-round. With COVID in our world, the firefighters paid a visit to Ed and Donna at their home on Christmas Eve 2020. Doing the distance thing, a firefighter used cue cards and video-taped the visit, stating how much their idea to help seven families has grown to over 550 families and 1,000 children — a moving, emotional, very special thank you.

To this year's campaign, one can drop off a new, unwrapped gift for a child or teenager by December 10. Northwestel has not only donated \$5,000, but their 2nd Avenue retail store is there for collecting gifts. If you don't have time to shop for that gift, money is always acceptable. As a charity, they can issue tax receipts, and the money is then taken to buy and fill hampers.

Elf Central, this year, is in the Jacobs Industries building. Bob Jacobs, who left us last year, was not only a firefighter but a huge community supporter, and his family stepped up to help with much-needed space for this charity. Volunteers to wrap all those unwrapped gifts are needed as well, so many businesses stepped up — and I can only mention a few, due to time: On November 28, Winterlong Brewing Co. will donate 50 percent of their profits; G-P Distributing has donated for several decades, and this year, 300 turkeys will be given, and there are so many more. You know who you are. Thank you.

In the last six years, the need for help has increased, but the donations have decreased. So, please step up: a gift, a few dollars — because they do add up — or a few hours of time, Christmas gifts, Christmas turkey and fixings, Christmas lights — a “take for granted” for many but not there for some.

So, let's fill those hearts and homes with some happiness. Thank you, President Nick O'Carroll and his band of merry firefighters. Yukon is blessed to have you.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate the efforts of the Whitehorse Firefighters Charitable Society all year-round, but today, we rejoice in the Share the Spirit campaign. This year, Share the Spirit elves anticipate bringing holiday cheer to more than 500 families and 1,000 children in 18 Yukon communities. This gift of love is monumental, and these actions change lives.

Even if you feel more like a grinch than a resident of Whoville, I believe that we can all play a role. There are many ways for those of us who don't have a direct line to the North Pole to help. You could register as a sponsor or Santa-in-training and get maps for the family where you will get to shop off a child's wish list, and trust me: A wish list is much easier than trying to guess what a stellar human may want for the holidays.

All of this is organized by elves who are experts in making lists and checking them twice. These gifts are then delivered to Elf Central by December 10 to ensure a Christmas delivery. Soon enough, when Elf Central is ready to open its doors, you could even be a volunteer gift-wrapper.

While the hard-working elves — who at times may be disguised as firefighters — fundraise all year-round, they need a little extra holiday cheer to help them make Christmas dreams come true. So, whether Santa or the Grinch, there is plenty of space for you to share the spirit. Any donation, either big or small, will be used to make these dreams come true. So, thank you to all of those who sponsor, volunteer, and share so freely during the holiday season.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling, pursuant to section 48(1) of the *Environment Act*, the 2023 Yukon state of the environment report.

As well, I have four legislative returns for tabling arising from Committee of the Whole debate with respect to Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling this afternoon a legislative return for the Member for Lake Laberge.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a legislative return in response to a question from Question Period for the Member for Copperbelt South.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling five legislative returns that are each in relation to a written question.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a letter dated today from the Yukon type 1 diabetes support network, addressed to the Minister of Health and Social Services in regard to her comments about the Yukon type 1 diabetes 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

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

THAT this House congratulates the Yukon building industry on continued investment in building construction with year-to-date value of investment in:

(1) residential building construction of \$195.1 million — an increase of \$25.7 million over the same period last year; and

(2) non-residential building construction of \$135 million — an increase of \$36.3 million over the same period last year, for a total value of \$330.1 million — an increase of \$62 million, or 23.1 percent, compared to the same period in 2022.

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

THAT this House congratulates Aparna Verma on her recent gold and silver medals at the World Karate and Kickboxing Union World 2023 Championship.

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

THAT this House congratulates Whitehorse City Councillor Dan Boyd as a recipient of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Municipal Trailblazer Award.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce legislation or regulation to:

(1) protect Yukon consumers who possess gift cards, gift certificates, or any other prepaid service or item that contains expiry dates or are unused at the closure of a business; and

(2) protect Yukon consumers by ensuring companies inform customers of contract renewals prior to these being automatically implemented without notice.

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

THAT this House congratulates Junior Canadian Ranger Eden Dulac on receiving the Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers Group Commander's Commendation as a result of her efforts and achievements in personal skill development, shooting, and coaching.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to extend the airport trail snow-fencing pilot project along the entire airport trail.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to install accessible parking signs that are visible in the winter in all Yukon government parking lots.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to adopt Ontario's energy affordability program, which offers free cold climate air source heat pumps to eligible low-income households.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to eliminate charges for local or long-distance calls for people who are incarcerated at Whitehorse Correctional Centre.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the standards listed in the 2023 accreditation report of the Yukon Hospital Corporation.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to complete the required risk for sexual violence protocol assessments for every convicted and incarcerated sex offender.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Health care services

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, Yukoners are starting to become very concerned about the crumbling state of our health care system under this Liberal government — service cuts at our hospitals, reductions and closures at health care centres in rural communities, and more gaps in EMS coverage. Rebranding cuts at our hospitals as cost-containment measures doesn't change the fact that they cut services across the medical imaging department because of a lack of government funding.

On Tuesday, we learned that women will now have to wait 35 months for a routine mammography exam. Early detection of cancer is key to successfully treating it. In response, there has been indifference and inaction from the Health minister. When she doesn't like the facts, she dismisses them.

How bad does it need to get before we see real action from this Liberal government to fix our crumbling health care system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I always am very pleased to have the opportunity to rise to speak to Yukoners about the importance of health care here in the territory and the committed work that we are doing every day with the Yukon Medical Association, with the nurses association here in the territory, and with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to make services for Yukoners better, to make responsible decisions with respect to them, and to implement the health transformation that has been contemplated by *Putting People First*, which was a study, of course, that was responded to by thousands of Yukoners.

It is our road map forward, it is the work that we are doing to transform Yukon's health care system, and it is the work, regardless of the narrative that is trying to be written by the members opposite, that is responding to the needs of Yukoners every day.

Mr. Cathers: One long-time Yukon doctor said — quote: "Health care in Yukon ... on the down slide and crashing..." There are thousands of Yukoners without a family doctor and not one single person is focused on recruiting more doctors to move to the Yukon. Surgical services are being cut by 30 percent; wait times are increasing; medical imaging, including CT scans, mammography, and X-rays, are being cut; and according to hospital documents as well as the chair and CEO, wait times will grow even longer. X-rays are capped at

35 exams per day and the CEO told the House that the wait time for a mammography will grow to 35 months.

Everyone but the Liberals recognizes that they are chronically underfunding Yukon hospitals, failing to recruit health professionals, and failing Yukoners. The minister continues to insist that there is nothing wrong with what she is doing, that the hospitals have all of the money that they need, and that none of this is their fault.

How bad does the health care crisis need to get before the Premier finally steps in to fix the problems that his minister is making worse?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the characterization that the member opposite is trying to make about what he heard from the Yukon Hospital Corporation CEO and president of the board of trustees the other day when they were here as witnesses for two hours to answer questions from the opposition.

What they indicated was that these were not cuts. This is not a characterization made by our government. This is from the witnesses who came and who are responsible for these services at Yukon Hospital Corporation. I am extremely disappointed to hear the characterization that is being made here of their testimony as being somehow inaccurate or somehow not what the member wanted to hear. I appreciate that it is not what that member or the Yukon Party wanted to hear about the services that are at the hospital, because what they heard was that there is a dedicated team of professionals at Yukon Hospital Corporation — at the three hospitals here in the territory — that we have the best working relationship ever between the Hospital Corporation, this government, and the Department of Health and Social Services, and that we are all working with the same goals in mind, which are to put people at the centre of the services that are provided here in the territory and to provide those every day to the health benefit of Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Only the minister thinks that things are going well in health care. It is cold comfort to people who don't have a family doctor, women who won't be able to get a mammography screening for cancer for three years, people who are paying out of pocket to get an MRI down south, and the many others in need of health care services that they can't get under this out-of-touch Liberal government.

Thousands of people are without a doctor and, in response, the Liberals cut the funding for the only recruiter. This week, the minister picked a public fight with a doctor and angered health care professionals who were excluded from retention bonuses. She failed to open a walk-in clinic and now her plan is to poach doctors from existing clinics, making people who have a doctor wait longer to see them.

The health care system is crumbling while the minister makes things worse. We have seen the Premier step in before to take files off the desk of flailing ministers. Will the Premier finally step in and take real action to stop the Yukon's health care system from crashing?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very mindful of the fact that we have fantastic young students from the territory here in the Legislative Assembly today, and I am very mindful

of the fact that I am speaking every time that I stand in this Legislative Assembly to Yukoners — and that I caution them about the information that is being provided in the preamble to this question, because much of it simply is not accurate.

What I can say, with respect to the importance of the issues that we are resolving here in the Yukon health care system, is that our transformation and our focus on providing better services for Yukoners in every aspect of our health system are also focused on health human resources. Health human resources here in the territory and in Canada and in the world is the greatest challenge facing Canada's and Yukon's health care system today. Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges. We heard that in the opening statement from the witnesses from the Yukon Hospital Corporation the other day. Unfortunately, the members opposite didn't listen carefully to that statement, and what they did hear, they didn't like.

Domestically and globally, we are facing unprecedented challenges. We are working every day to resolve that. We have a health human resources committee — unprecedented anywhere in the country — working on these issues going forward and we look forward to their results.

Question re: Rural communities funding and support

Mr. Hassard: Rural Yukon continues to be an afterthought for this Liberal government. Over the past year alone, we have seen a steady pattern of the Liberal government cutting back, reducing, or even closing services altogether.

Take EMS, for example. Many communities were shocked to learn that, at various times, they simply have no EMS coverage at all. In some communities, like Watson Lake, the municipal government has had to step in to fill gaps. In Dawson, a group of private citizens is trying to organize their own coverage. What is worse is that communities are not even informed when they have no coverage. It is clear that the Liberal government is not doing enough work to recruit and retain volunteers or address any of the growing gaps in EMS coverage.

When will this Liberal government stop ignoring rural Yukon and stop reducing services to our communities?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, again, I am very pleased to rise for the purposes of talking to Yukoners about the important service that is provided by our emergency medical services, both here in Whitehorse and in the communities. Yukon Emergency Medical Services staff and community responders are dedicated to providing Yukoners with timely and high-quality health care services across the country. In addition to their dedication, we are dedicated to supporting the services that they provide.

Increased pressures have resulted from the local, national, and global shortage of health care providers and do continue to be a challenge and are mitigated by those dedicated individuals through a variety of approaches to reduce patient and staff impacts and to prioritize critical care. As part of our work to implement the *Putting People First* report, we are taking steps to align health services across the territory. We have done so by

transitioning Yukon EMS from Community Services to Health and Social Services so that our streamlined service to Yukoners can be improved. This transfer is an organizational change, but it is intended to align health services across the territory in a way that enables care to be more person-centred and more effectively integrated to promote seamless care transitions.

Mr. Hassard: Throughout the summer, we have heard a steady stream of concerns about the reduction of services and gaps in rural health care. Here's a quote from the *Yukon News*: "Since May, Pelly Crossing, Destruction Bay, Mayo, Teslin, Beaver Creek and Ross River health centres have been closed or had services reduced — for weeks at a time in some cases."

First Nation leaders and municipal and community leaders have all spoken up and called for solutions. Here is what one municipal leader said in October — and I'll quote: "The government does not seem to understand that it's just not acceptable or right to have entire communities without immediate access to health-care for very extended periods of time..."

I will quote again: "We're getting no progress." And then: "We need to see actual action..."

Why should rural Yukon have any faith in this government when they refuse to act on something so important?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to be able to note for the members opposite that there is money in this particular budget to assist Health and Social Services going forward with improved services at the Yukon Hospital Corporation and improved services through EMS, through our nursing stations, and through our opportunities to provide health care in communities, which I note that the member opposite is speaking about.

I encourage them to support this government — to support these community workers by supporting that budget this afternoon as we go forward. Like the rest of Canada and around the world, Yukon is impacted by the health human resource shortage. To mitigate the impact on Yukoners, the government continues to work to recruit and retain health care providers, including those who work with emergency medical services and with community health centres.

In March of this year, we launched a health human resource steering committee. It was led jointly by the Government of Yukon and the Yukon Hospital Corporation. It has representatives from the Yukon Medical Association, the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, the Yukon Medical Council, the Yukon Employees' Union, Yukon University, Kwanlin Dün First Nation, and the Council of Yukon First Nations. Mr. Speaker, this is unprecedented work.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, I'll encourage the minister to actually stop ignoring rural Yukon. As important as health care is, the cuts to rural Yukon go even beyond that. The government continues to use the umbrella of regionalization to roll back the availability of solid-waste services to rural Yukon and is planning to close several transfer stations.

Affected communities continue to say that they are willing to work with the government to find solutions, but it has been made clear to them that the minister's mind is made up.

Yesterday, the only rural Cabinet minister said that these closures had budgetary advantages. Even smaller services like highway rest stops are being closed because the Liberals say that they are too costly to maintain. In a \$2-billion budget, the Liberals are choosing to save money by closing outhouses.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, in our Standing Orders, we say that members may ask questions and then supplementary questions. The first question that I heard and the second question were about our rural EMS. This question is about our rural transfer stations. These are completely different topics. If it's a new question, then I think it belongs to the Third Party.

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

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, these questions are all about cuts to rural services in the Yukon. If the members opposite choose to listen to them, they can respond accordingly, but these are clearly questions related to cuts to services for rural Yukoners.

Speaker's ruling

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

Please continue.

Mr. Hassard: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, in a \$2-billion budget, the Liberals are choosing to save money by closing outhouses. It's pretty clear to anyone paying attention that rural Yukon is not a priority to —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, I have to start this response by saying that the member opposite is frankly wrong. We hear this again and again and again with the opposition trying to weave a narrative that is simply not true. There are no cuts to rural Yukon when it comes to transfer stations. As a matter of fact, the Yukon government is investing in our regional landfills to make sure that we serve rural Yukoners better. We are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars to improve landfills so that we have a better result and encourage people to reduce the amount of garbage that they are producing.

These are important investments for the entire territory. Municipalities across the territory are signing on to the regional landfill initiative. We look forward to helping our rural Yukon communities into the future with significant investments in infrastructure, in housing, in social services, in education, and in health care, and we are going to continue to do that, as we have for the last seven years.

Question re: Health care services

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, we started this Sitting after a summer of closures and service reductions at health centres across the territory. This government responded to the

substance use health emergency with a toothless strategy with no timelines and no budget.

Blood infusion services were dropped at the Dawson hospital; doctors said that the hospitalist program at Whitehorse General Hospital was headed for collapse in January, and the Health and Social Services minister can pretend everything is fine and that no one has the right facts when they tell her that her health care is in dire straits under her government, but here we are staring down critical failures in government services that Yukoners depend on. When this government fails, it is Yukoners who pay the price.

What actions will the minister take to fix this broken system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the opportunity to stand yet again to talk about the importance of health care here in the Yukon. I am puzzled by the approach to these questions, but nonetheless, I understand that the opposition thinks that it is their job to just tell everyone in the Yukon how terrible things are.

I do not support that. I am very proud of the work that is being done by Health and Social Services and of the relationships we have built with the Yukon Medical Association, the relationships that we have built with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the Yukon nurses association, with the nurses and doctors who work at the hospital and on the front lines, with the nurses at Community Services — and support their front-line services where sometimes they are the only person whom someone can reach out to in a community here in the territory for help.

What the others hear is my approach to being positive; I think it is an important aspect of leadership here in the territory. I think it is at no time improperly characterized as something where we do not understand the issues, where we do not understand the problems. We are recognizing each and every one of those problems, and we are responding in a way that Yukoners have asked us to do.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, because the minister always loves to say that we don't have the facts about health care, but Yukon doctors are tweeting the facts for everyone to see. The former president of the Yukon Medical Association recently tweeted that health care in the territory is — and I'm quoting — on the “down slide and crashing.” Another tweeted that his only alternative to burnout was — and I'm quoting again — “... a longer delay to diagnosis and that leads to a worse or sometimes fatal outcome.” A survey of Yukon hospital workers said that staff don't feel safe at work and they don't see efforts to prevent workplace violence.

The minister can deny the facts, but her brand of health care is hurting the health professionals we need the most. How can this government deliver on health care if the minister can't give health care workers decent working conditions?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I know that what the members heard, if they were listening the other day when the Yukon Hospital Corporation was here, was reality about the challenges that are existing here in the Hospital Corporation with Yukon government's partnership in making sure that work is done in a way that is safe and supportive of Yukoners' health.

I know that they also are aware — presumably, if they have been listening — that we have supported the mental wellness, the health and support for Yukon nurses in Yukon nursing communities, in our health centres across the territory, for the purpose of making sure that they are provided with support, recognizing that burnout is real and that there are pressing issues in Yukon communities.

We have to support all of our health care providers who have sacrificed so much of their personal lives and their time to their jobs over the last few years, particularly in our community health centres. They work tirelessly on behalf of Yukoners. I see it every day through the work that I am honoured to do, through the work that I am doing with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, through the work that Health and Social Services does across the territory for the purposes of supporting Yukoners through what are unprecedented times here in the territory.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, the minister continues to insist that no one else has the facts, but Yukoners see and feel them everywhere. Yukoners feel the impacts of the failures in the health care system every day. They get sicker when they can't see doctors on time or don't have a doctor at all. People spend hours in the emergency room waiting for simple prescription renewals or wasting their time and putting undue strain on an emergency service. Eighteen Yukoners have died of opioid-related overdoses so far this year and four of them in the month of October.

People who use drugs still can't get the supports that they need when and where they need them. The facts are that the Yukon is facing a critical health care crunch — Yukoners can't find doctors, they live in pain while waiting for surgeries, and sometimes whole communities go without health care at all.

Can the minister tell us what she will do between now and March to get health care under control?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that, yet again, if I challenge a particular fact in a question, all of a sudden, I am not listening to the questions or I don't understand what Yukoners are facing as a reality.

I truly understand what they are facing as a reality. Every single day, the team at Health and Social Services, the team at the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and the teams at community health centres are top of mind — are top of the priorities for this government — and we work diligently with each and every one of them, including the Yukon Medical Association and the Yukon Registered Nurses Association, with new and improved relationships to let us work together, because those relationships were broken; those relationships didn't exist before in a positive way.

We heard from the witnesses who were here the other day — much to the chagrin of the Yukon Party, I think — that the very best relationship they have had as a hospital corporation with the Department of Health and Social Services exists right now. That will let us get work done — positive work — on behalf of Yukoners. We are putting Yukoners at the centre of each and every decision in the Yukon health care system, and that is not something that was done before. It is something that

we learned from Yukoners and from experts across the field in *Putting People First*, and that is our road map forward.

Question re: Affordable housing and land development

Ms. Clarke: The state of housing in the Yukon is widely recognized as being in crisis. There is a lack of available housing, and what is available is increasingly unaffordable. To begin with, the Yukon government is just not getting enough residential lots out to keep up with our growing population. Since the 2021 election, they have only been able to release 240 lots. During the same time, Yukon's population has grown by almost 2,000 people.

When will the Liberal government start releasing enough lots to keep up with our growing population?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, frankly, I am not going to take housing advice from the members opposite. This government came in with a deficit, and yes, we are well aware of the number of new people coming to the territory, because for many reasons, this is a great place for people to come. So, on the one hand, they are saying that life is terrible, and on the other hand, we have more people coming to the territory than we have ever seen. Why is that? Because we have the best economy with the best social services, and we are having to deal with the housing situation, and to do that, we are going to build 1,000 lots or more over the five years of our mandate.

I encourage the members opposite, if they really care about these issues — if they really care for Yukoners — I encourage the member opposite to vote for the budget this afternoon, because that will demonstrate that they actually care and they are not just giving crocodile tears.

Ms. Clarke: The fact that not enough houses are being built is directly due to the lack of available land. Owning a home has become unattainable for so many Yukoners. So many of them are looking at the rental market. Unfortunately, the Liberals' experiment with rent control has failed, and the rental market is suffering. Rents continue to skyrocket, and there are just not enough new rental units coming into the market to keep up with our population growth. We continue to hear from landlords that they would rather remove their rental units from the market than to try to deal with this government's failed rent control policies.

How bad does the rental market need to get before the Liberals will admit that their policies have failed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, first off, we did hear from the Yukon Party earlier in the session that we were seeing a decrease in investment today. Of course, I had an opportunity to table a motion that showed direct contravention to their understanding of what is happening in our building sector. Both in commercial and residential, we are seeing a very significant increase, almost over 25 percent I believe, in total build spend.

When it does come to the rental market, what I heard yesterday from the members opposite — specifically I think from the member opposite — was that we were seeing that rents were too high. Today, the concern is that we are actually putting some mechanisms in place to control those rents.

What we are seeing is an increase year over year — really significant investment from the private sector, both in rental and strata and in new houses. We think that is the trend that we need to keep seeing.

We'll continue to put lots out. We will continue to have announcements throughout this year and next year around opportunities for partnership for new affordable housing. When we look back over the last five years, the facts are that this is the biggest investment in affordable housing and in affordable partnership that the Yukon has ever seen. We know that previously it just wasn't done for whatever reasons — either it was the set of values or the inability to get the money out the door.

Ms. Clarke: In the face of all this, the Liberals' budget decisions have been telling.

Earlier this year, many Yukon communities raised concerns about their cuts to rural land development. Now the supplementary budget includes a \$6-million cut to the Yukon Housing Corporation's capital budget. Even the NDP have correctly pointed out massive flaws with some of their current housing programs like the home ownership loan program.

Why is the Liberal government cutting funding for housing instead of trying to fix the flaws in their current housing policies?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, through our debate in Committee of the Whole, we clearly identified the fact that we were moving funds from this fiscal year into the next fiscal year. There are a number of partners who we have talked a lot about here in the House — whether it be Vimy, Safe at Home, or others — that are shifting the timeline of their projects. We think it's important to continue to work alongside their timelines. I think that all Yukoners would like to see some of these projects built quicker, but we also will continue to be good partners.

I think that it's good to see a change in the view from the Yukon Party. One of our most significant opportunities has been to partner with Kwanlin Dün First Nation Chu Níikwän. There seemed to be some resistance from the Yukon Party to support that land development, but we did see members from the Yukon Party there this year and we were happy to see Kwanlin Dün break ground.

Not only are we building lots, but for the first time ever in the City of Whitehorse, we are seeing very innovative work where now self-governing First Nations are building lots and we are helping to de-risk those projects.

Again, when it comes to the budget today, Yukoners are watching. We think it is very important. Many questions today about health and our support for health — we have \$17.1 million for health. We have money in place to support all of our construction. Please, Yukon Party, support that work and support Yukoners today.

Question re: Cost of living

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, this government is out of touch with Yukoners.

Despite all the problems facing Yukoners as a result of this Liberal government, the most pressing concern that we

continue to hear from Yukoners is the cost of living. We have offered many solutions. We said to cut the fuel tax; the Liberals said no. We said to double the pioneer utility grant for seniors; the Liberals said no. We said to cut the carbon tax for home heating fuel; even Justin Trudeau, of all people, said yes. But despite even the Prime Minister of Canada recognizing that Yukoners need a break on home heating this winter, the Liberals here still say no. In fact, they are pretty much the only government left in the country that still wants to see the carbon tax put back on home heating oil.

Governments across the country, including the federal Liberals, recognize that people are struggling and need a break. Why do the Yukon Liberals insist on putting the carbon tax back on home heating fuel?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, that was quite a scattershot of things there. I think the question started off being about inflation. What I can say is that we sat as a team, we looked at the information that was in front of us, we looked at where we saw the potential trend of inflation, and we sat with a budget in the spring and identified what we thought would be key times throughout the year to make sure that we were helping Yukoners. We thought that we would see inflation trend down. What we saw this week was 2.8 percent for the Yukon. We are below the national average. We believe that the mechanisms that we have put in place — ensuring that Yukoners have the funds in place to reduce their cost when it came to their heating bill — again, for the more vulnerable Yukoners, a chance to get a bit more in their pockets to get the things that they need.

All of those mechanisms were in place. They are working, and what we are seeing is a significant reduction in inflation, even though we are here in the Yukon and really at the end of a significant supply chain. We think that is good. We are not out of touch with Yukoners. I can tell you this: What we are doing is that we have listened to groups of Yukoners who haven't been listened to for decades by the previous government, and so we are making sure that all of those individuals who weren't part of one little clique of people all now have representation in this Yukon. We will continue to do the work that we have to do.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, if my position was indefensible, I would dodge the question too, which is what the Premier has just done.

Since the federal government announced the cut of the carbon tax on home heating fuels, the Liberals have been clinging to the idea that Yukoners actually benefit from the carbon tax. This is despite the fact that just about everyone, including the Parliamentary Budget Officer, has recognized that the carbon tax disproportionately affects rural and northern communities. Even the Prime Minister of Canada now recognizes it. Even Justin Trudeau seems like he's more in touch with Yukoners than this Premier.

Can the Premier explain to Yukoners why he is the only Premier left in the country who wants to see his citizens pay more to heat their home this winter?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, well, no, I think that first what we've done — I just touched on the fact that we have put

funds in our budget to ensure that individuals across the Yukon have cheaper electric bills. We did that in two different tranches. We did one in the spring and, as we go into the deeper part of the winter, we will see individuals get \$50 a month off of their electric bill, which most Yukoners pay.

We thought it was appropriate to make sure that our inflationary reduction tools had the biggest impact to the most Yukoners. We think that is good public policy.

When we look at the fires and we look at the floods, we listen to Yukoners across this territory. We hear youth come up and say: Please, make sure you are doing something; you cannot stand here and not do anything. These are real issues that are happening within our territory and within our country. Make the tough decisions. You will have to make some sacrifices, but please do this for us and the next generations.

We think that's the right thing to do. I haven't heard any plan whatsoever from the members opposite. Maybe we will when he gets back up.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, the biggest challenge that Yukoners face today is the cost of living, but the Yukon Liberals think that they should pay more. Our health care system is, to borrow the president of the YMA's words, on a "down slide and crashing". The Yukon Liberals think that everything is fine.

Housing is unaffordable and unattainable, yet the Liberals refuse to adjust their housing programs and cut the budget. Services across rural Yukon have been cut, reduced, or ended altogether, and the Liberals say that communities should be thankful. It's clear that this government and this Premier are out of touch and out of steam, and not a single Yukoner cast a vote for him to be Premier, so why should Yukoners have confidence in this failing government and this failing Premier?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I was thinking we would finally get the true colours out today on the tone. I didn't hear a lot throughout the session from the Leader of the Yukon Party, but what I can say is this: We have seen unprecedented investment when it comes to housing. We heard a narrative from the Yukon Party which was absolutely obliterated when the CEO of the hospital came in and talked about the relationship in place and also about the supports that are here.

We have heard over and over again that there needs to be more financial resources put in place for the hospital at this particular time. We see \$17.1 million today — an opportunity to vote for it, the biggest opportunity right now for the Yukon Party to show that they are supporting the health system.

My question is: Will they stand up or will they play politics? Will they support Yukoners or will they play politics?

Do you know what? That vote today will be indicative of everything that we heard this afternoon in Question Period. It's all about politics and it's not about actually helping people who are on the ground who need the help. That's what we are going to see today from them.

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

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 211: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I'm just looking forward to further questions. I did manage to get one legislative return in. I know that the team was working to get the mineral development strategy list, and I have a list of numbers, but I don't have the mineral development strategy that has the numbers in them.

I would just like to welcome officials back to the Assembly. Today, we have two assistant deputy ministers: Stephen Mead and Patricia Randell. I look forward to questions from members opposite.

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, I too would like to echo the minister's welcome to Ms. Randell and Mr. Mead for attending today to provide support.

I do have a number of questions with respect to forestry and lands, but I intend to write the minister, since today is the final day of the Fall Sitting and we have some other business that we would like to get on to. I have no questions at this point and we are ready to move on and clear Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, I thank the member opposite for that indication and I will look forward to those questions on forestry and lands.

I thank the opposition members for their questions over the time of our debate.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources?

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

Mr. Kent: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Copperbelt South has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$33,074,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$33,074,000 agreed to

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to extend the recess by 10 minutes to allow members to be here?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to extend the recess by 10 minutes to allow officials to arrive in the House?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Economic Development — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, I look forward to the opportunity to extend our discussion about the Department of Economic Development for a little bit. I would like to begin by thanking the officials who have joined us today.

I would like to turn to one aspect of the department that we haven't touched on recently, and that is, of course, the government's policy with regard to trade. I would like to ask about internal trade in particular. Are there any initiatives that the Yukon government has advanced through the RCT, which is the table in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* which deals with regulatory collaboration and identification of areas where trade can be enhanced between provinces?

Can the minister tell us if any particular priorities have been identified by Yukon in advance of the RCT?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I will just give a bit of background for Yukoners. I know that the member opposite has a deep understanding of this topic from previous work in the department. For folks who are not as up to date on trade issues, the Yukon is a party to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*, ensuring that Yukon businesses have access to markets and procurement and investment opportunities across Canada. We are creating opportunities for Yukon businesses to expand beyond our territory while utilizing the Yukon's exceptions to increase local employment, support small businesses, and strengthen our regional economies.

In December 2022, the Yukon chaired the annual meeting of the Committee on Internal Trade and advanced key decisions related to the movement of goods, services, investments, and labour within Canada. We look forward to continuing to see this work and the progress that was made last year as the role of chair now transitions to Saskatchewan this year and then next year to Prince Edward Island.

To promote greater transparency on doing business in the Yukon and to demonstrate our support for the liberalizing of interprovincial trade within Canada, our government — I'm very proud of the work of the department or they should be very proud of their work, I should say — removed five of Yukon's

exceptions to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* in 2022 based on a technical review that identified those exceptions as being items that had no effect. That was the biggest amount of red tape removal of any jurisdiction in one tranche — one particular year in the country. I do want to thank Bryce for his work, if he is listening today. He did a tremendous amount of work in our department and has been leading a lot of this work for us. I should make sure I don't forget Brian. I just want to make sure that I get all of our folks who worked so hard on that and helped us set up the work for the event.

The following five exceptions were removed. It's not only about making sure that we enact, but it's about reducing barriers. First, I will say that one government procurement exception with a transitional timeline that we removed — three exceptions for authorizations relating to agriculture, grazing, and forestry respectively. There was one exception for recycling services that was removed. To be fair, a lot of this was redone in policy and was stuff that was there but needed to be cleaned up and removed. The team there was happy to do it.

As well, during the 2022 Committee on Internal Trade meeting that the Yukon chaired, a number of key decisions were taken to drive the internal trade agenda moving forward.

Ministers declared that negotiations to cover trade in non-medical cannabis under the rules of the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* have been successfully completed. Ministers agreed on a path forward to complete negotiations toward a financial services chapter for inclusion in the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement*. That was outstanding for quite a while and it was good to get that in place. Ministers recommended renewing initiatives to increase economic opportunities in the territories related to growing, harvesting, and processing healthy food.

We continue to work with our provincial, territorial, and federal colleagues at the Regulatory Reconciliation and Cooperation Table to answer questions — some of the key work that has been done to identify and address non-tariff barriers to trade within Canada. This table has completed 14 reconciliation agreements and two regulatory cooperation items to date, and the Yukon has signed on to all agreements for which it has relevant measures. I do want to say that — just so I don't miss anybody — Bryce Aubrey, of course, has done a lot of our trade work, but Brian Park too helped lead a tremendous amount of that work and Andy Gaule has been key for us as well.

In September, the department wrote to Global Affairs Canada to acknowledge Canada's agreement on the mutual recognition of architects with the European Union. When it came across — this was something that we certainly had a role to speak to and we wanted to ensure that our voice was at the table, but it was really that the recognition does not diminish Yukon's ability to regulate architects in the future. It's not something that we are doing right now, but it is something that was probably one of the newest pieces of conversation that has come across my desk over the fall of 2023.

Again, going back to the reconciliation agreements that I was touching on, those agreements help to streamline the interprovincial regulatory requirements in areas such as health and safety, transportation, and construction to the benefit of

Yukon businesses and consumers. The other thing that I would just mention is that we are trying to make sure that there are as many opportunities as possible for folks in the Yukon in the business sector to work in other jurisdictions.

So, some of that work — and we have gotten into some political back-and-forth on a few things that we have tried to work on. But putting sort of the political tone aside, I do think that some of the things — like the work that we have done with Ontario and some of the work that we are doing in British Columbia, which I can expand on in the future — are things that will give even more opportunities for interprovincial collaboration in our private sector.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate that. I would like to move on to the nominee program. I am sure that we will discuss the recent press release eventually, but I would like to ask a specific question first.

We understand that the nominee program is prioritizing applications for people whose work permit is expiring, but I have a question about visitor visa permits. We have heard from an individual who has such a visa and we are wondering if we should encourage the potential applicant to apply for a visitor visa too so that their application might be prioritized by the YNP.

Can the Premier provide some advice about this situation and whether or not someone with a visitor visa should indeed apply to YNP? Will visitor visas be prioritized by the YNP?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I think that it would probably be best — I wouldn't speak to the specifics — for the individual to work through our office to make sure that they get the right supports if the member opposite or one of the member opposite's colleagues wants to send that information through the office or directly to the department.

These applications come in from businesses for the Yukon nominee program. That is the key. If it is an individual driving it, I'm not sure, but I know that we could certainly help in that manner.

The Government of Yukon provides economic immigration programs to help businesses across the territory meet their labour needs. That is really the driving force. The Department of Economic Development administers the two immigration programs in partnership with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada — the Yukon business nominee program and the Yukon nominee program.

In 2020, the department launched a new stream, which was the Yukon community program, and that was really driven by an interest by our Yukon communities. Specifically, I know of some of the input and conversations that happened in Carmacks and I believe in Haines Junction. I know of a Carmacks rural driver who had multiple businesses that wanted to have nominees, but they couldn't provide a total of 40 hours for one business. It gave individuals an opportunity to work between a few different businesses in the same community.

As was alluded to, there was a press release put out. I'm very happy to see that we actually got an allocation for the Yukon nominee program within this fiscal year. It's something that we've requested over the years and there was a reallocation.

The ministers of immigration met last week. We had representatives there. I wasn't able to attend; we were here. They did reallocate 150 allocations to the Yukon, which is something that we haven't seen before.

Some of the other territories — for instance, I think Northwest Territories — were way under the numbers that they had projected. They did look across the country and reallocate. That's important because Yukon businesses applied for all of the allocations that we had at the start of the year. I think that — probably within the first three months but definitely four months of this year — all of the allocations that had been provided by IRCC were used.

It's something that we were looking — a lot of Yukon businesses — I have spoken to many Yukon business owners, some just in the last month and a half — many Yukon businesses that do great work in our communities, do a lot of corporate social responsibility, businesses that are well known to all of us and that were really waiting to get more support to have folks come. Those folks, of course, have been identified. They are ready to make that transition here to the Yukon.

As well, what we have tried to do in these cases is make sure that, where possible, either the employer is providing a housing solution or there are family members here and they are actually supporting their family members to come here so that there is a housing solution. We're very cognizant of the fact that we have tremendous housing pressures, specifically in the rental market.

We're trying to ensure that our business community can run at the pace that they want to, that they have the individuals they need to run their businesses, that they have the opportunity to provide the services that are required and needed by Yukoners, but at the same time, we are in a position where we are putting the least amount of pressure on other areas of our housing continuum.

At the end of the day, it is good news about the Yukon nominee program, and then we will have a sense to see, going into 2024-25, what the allotments will be for the Yukon.

Mr. Dixon: With the allocation for Yukon for the Yukon nominee program, my question is: How are those prioritized? The Premier seemed to indicate that one aspect of prioritization could be whether or not a business can offer housing or whether or not the individual has family here already.

Is it correct then that businesses with housing in place and family members in place are prioritized?

The second thing that I did ask earlier — people coming in who have a visitor visa, are they prioritized in the YNP as well?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Because of the high number of applications received this year, which was projected to exceed the Yukon's allotment, the Yukon nominee program introduced a temporary system to prioritize applications for visa-holders already within Canada and those with current work permits. This was communicated to employers via e-mail and posted on our website in July.

The officials here have just shared with me that we are now back to the standard process of "first come, first served" into the queue.

Look, I think that the member opposite brings up some interesting points. How do we contemplate moving forward? What are the housing solutions that are potentially tied to individuals and applications? I think that is a good point.

At the table two years ago, ministers across the country did have a discussion about how we ensure that data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation could be integrated into allotments and allocations across the country so that we would know that we were not putting undue pressure in place.

What we have heard across the country has really been about student visas. There are hundreds of thousands of student visas being allotted across this country. We don't see that as much. The Yukon University does have a thriving international student population but nowhere near the numbers that we are seeing in British Columbia, Ontario, Québec, and other jurisdictions.

Some good points today I think that we can contemplate in those questions, and please let us know if we can put some information through that will help the individual who wants to see what the best route possible is, and if they, in some cases, need to be matched with an employer, I know that we do have employers from time to time reaching out to us.

Thank you for the questions, and I will grab a seat as we move to the NDP.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for carrying us through, and I did just let the media know that they wanted to scrum all three people who were going to talk about the same department, and it was very awkward. So, I apologize to the minister and his officials and, of course, welcome back to them. If I ask a question that has been asked, just let me know, and I will read it in Hansard later on.

One of the things that we were told initially, before the mechanisms of the program were announced, was about the temporary landlord assistance program. Can the minister let me know how many applications have been received and how much of that million dollars has made its way into the pockets of landlords?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There has been — I had even more up-to-date numbers here. I just did this in the scrum, but I think that we are at — as of November 15 — I will give you the November 15 numbers — there were 130 applications received, which included 1,271 units, representing \$429,598 currently being assessed by the department. Let me give you the numbers as of yesterday. Some of those weren't accepted. As of the end of day yesterday, there were 155 applications received.

What I want to touch on with that is — there has been a lot of criticism to the implementation of this program, for many different reasons. What I will say is that we committed to doing this — I committed to doing this — and I thought that it was important to follow through and deliver on the program, with the support of my colleagues, and I thank them for that. I would say that this program now has supported 1,311 units, representing \$440,076. That is what is being assessed. In Whitehorse, there are 1,287 units, in Dawson, there are 12 units, and there are 12 in other communities.

What it does show is, if you look at the housing ecosystem and the rental sector, what you will find is that there are some rental owners who have a small portfolio. We don't have — this isn't a jurisdiction like the other territories where we have seen significant investment from real estate investment groups — or REITs — coming in and doing larger acquisition investment. But what we've seen for the most part is — SME — small- and medium-sized enterprise corporations and businesses, and we are seeing predominantly Yukoners who in many cases have gone out and invested in a unit or two units. That was the goal: to ensure that those folks could offset their costs.

Even though we have kind of gotten into a back-and-forth about individuals who maybe have 10 or 20 units, when you take into consideration the costs that it takes to oversee your O&M for these buildings, the 338 was a number that we looked at as making up that delta between the consumer price index and the rent cap. That's how the program is to be used, so we're about a little under half so far, but it seems that the scope of the program has stretched to touch many Yukoners so far.

Ms. White: Just based on the 1,311 units and the 155 applicants — so, on average, that would be eight and a half units per owner would be my guess, and I know that isn't the case — can the minister let me know of the most units per application and, for example, the number of one-unit applicants?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't have exact — I can tell you that, in the one to 10 rental unit category, we have had 141 applications, so 91 percent of our applications are those individuals with one to 10 units. In the 11 to 100 units, we have had 11 applications, so that is seven percent. In those bigger 100-plus units, we have had three applications — so, two percent of the total program usage.

Ms. White: Just for clarification purposes, there have been three applications that have had more than 100 units? If that is the case, can the minister give me a bit more of an idea of how many more than 100 — so, is it 101, 152, or 112?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What we can confirm is that there are three applications for 100 units or more, but we don't have the breakdown to say that there is one for 200 units, there is one for 150, but we can come back with that information. I will make a commitment today that we will come back with the breakdown of those particular applications — any information that we can share.

Ms. White: Knowing that today is the last day of the legislative Sitting, I would prefer not to find out in the spring, so if the minister is happy to send me and I'm sure someone from the Yukon Party a letter, I would appreciate that.

It seems that knowing that it is 100-plus and not knowing if it's 200 or 150 — like, I'm curious about that, so I thank the minister for that.

I went to the downtown safety meeting on — maybe it was Tuesday night; I think it was Tuesday night — that was held at the MacBride Museum. During that meeting, I found out that it is the Department of Economic Development that is paying for the security services that are operating between — I believe it is Strickland and Black Street and 3rd and 6th Avenue.

Can the minister just either affirm or not if that is the case? Then can he let me know what the cost of that is?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, 405 Alexander Street — just a little bit of background for folks about this situation and the security that has been deployed. 405 Alexander Street provides essential life-saving services for members of our community. Why do I say that? There have been 40 individuals who have received life-saving procedures at 405 Alexander Street, and I think it is just important that we continue to remember that there is a tremendous number of vulnerable folks who are there and who continually need those supports.

Our government is taking action, again, to address immediate safety and security concerns of businesses and citizens in the area surrounding 405 Alexander Street.

For Yukoners, the member opposite is just discussing that IRP, a local organization in a multi-tiered consultation that's happening — did host a conversation at the MacBride Museum this week. It was really giving a chance for downtown residents, in a non-political environment, to come and just voice their concerns, their thoughts, and their challenges and if they thought of any good ideas they could bring to the table as well. I heard there was a bit of all of those things that occurred.

One of these actions that we are looking at is contracting a private security service to patrol the area immediately surrounding 405 Alexander by providing a visible deterrent to behaviours and incidents that have created insecurity and safety issues in the neighbourhood. It's — initially, it's a two-month pilot project, and it will also gather valuable information on behaviours and incidents that create insecurity and safety issues, helping government agencies and community partners continue to develop medium- and longer term solutions.

A local company, Sirius Security, will patrol the area of Black Street to Strickland Street, including alleys between 3rd Avenue and 5th Avenue. Patrols have been operating since November 1 until December 31 — so it's a two-month contract — Sunday to Thursday from 6:00 p.m. until 2:00 a.m. and Friday and Saturday from 7:00 p.m. until 3:00 a.m.

Patrol guards are encouraged to interact with individuals during their tours in a friendly manner but not in an enforcement capacity. Patrol guards will be actively observing for signs of trespassers, illegal drug use, and building emergency and security issues. In addressing any situations involving individuals, patrol guards will respond with non-violent interventions informed by the company's social safety mandate and Yukon-specific non-violent conflict resolution training.

The cost is \$50,000 for the contract, and it is being paid by Economic Development. We are working hand in hand with Health and Social Services in the coordination of this work and in deploying the contract.

Ms. White: Is that \$50,000 in the supplementary budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, it is not part of the supplementary budget, but it is out of our contract line item for the Department of Economic Development.

Ms. White: My thanks to the minister for bringing back Economic Development, because he made the commitment

when we were having the conversation in Executive Council Office that he would bring it back so that we could talk about the ore dock. So, now that he has his officials here, I am glad to see that.

I have questions about the ore dock, and it was never going to work in Question Period because there has to be a back-and-forth. We know that the timeline for Yukon to access the existing dock in Skagway is not new. We knew that there was an impending closure. What I want to know is: When did work begin on the government side to find alternatives or a solution to secure long-term access to tidewater — when did that process start?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to come back and take a look — I want to give a very accurate number to this conversation, but you know, I will say this: I think that retired Assistant Deputy Minister Steve Rose is in the gallery today, and I think that he was probably working on it when I got to Economic Development. This has been going on for a long time. Good to see you, Mr. Rose. This has been going on for a long time. Through most of the tenure that I have had at Economic Development, this has been a discussion. I think that when it really became significant was at a time when EDA — which is really an economic crown corporation in Alaska — knew that their relationship with the ore terminal was coming to an end. The community of the borough of Skagway was showing interest in taking over that infrastructure, and I think that the Yukon Chamber of Mines, the private sector, the Yukon Producers Group, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Economic Development — everyone was trying to ensure that there was an appropriate solution moving forward.

EDA was there as well as the owners of White Pass, which is Carrix, which is a holding company — they have since been acquired, but at that time, it was a stand-alone with I think Carnival Cruise Line, which were owners of White Pass. Everybody was in the room together trying to figure out what the pathway forward is.

The reason I'm sharing this is because I think that the root of the question is: Is this a decision that has been made in a brisk way? Is this a decision that has been made without looking at all the options?

If there was a solution that was a US solution, a made-in-Alaska solution, we would be very happy to see that. This is not an area or a field that we feel that we want to occupy, but after looking at absolutely all of the potential options that were in front of us and the lack of interest from other entities at the time, we feel that we did have a role to play and we are really concerned. I have shared with opposition members. We went out and had conversations with the ambassador of the US to Canada, Ambassador Cohen. We met with the consul general in Vancouver — multiple consul generals. My predecessor — the Minister of Finance but in the role of Premier — started this conversation and did a lot of this really important work — and as well from a bilateral conversation between the Yukon and Alaska governments. We also went and met directly with the crown corporation — with EDA — from the Yukon Economic Development department to see if we could partner or have

them come in to do the work that we are looking at doing now, and really, down every avenue, there was no interest. What we did see in front of us was the potential for a real bottleneck for Yukon goods and Yukon commodities. We also saw — which is a real challenge, and I'm not shy to say it in the House — an increase in activity in the tourism sector in Skagway.

I sat on Monday night next to the head of the Skagway port authority and got an update on where they are when it comes to their tourism season. There were 1.19 million visitors in Skagway. When it comes to tourism, it's great, because it did help revitalize our Southern Lakes tourism industry and drove traffic into Whitehorse and Dawson and, in some cases because of fire, into Kluane and other regions this summer.

But it also makes it difficult, because there is a long-lasting legacy from activity that happened in that community from Faro. Why is that important? It's important because what I'm trying to illustrate today to Yukoners and those listening is that it's extremely critical — it's imperative — that we as Yukoners have access in partnership or on our own to tidewater.

We just came through a Yukon geoscience conference and we're seeing a number of companies going out to raise dollars. We heard of some today that went out and went to raise funds and got full subscription to the money that they're trying to raise. We have seen major companies from around the world looking to partner. We're seeing potential First Nation partnerships with mining entities like we've never seen before. But it all comes down to: Do you have the ability to move that commodity?

So, it has been years. I hope this extensive response to that question illustrates that we have talked to everybody, but we do find ourselves at this time in a position where we have had to take a leadership role. I will say to Yukoners that we have hired legal representation, both from a firm in the US and in Canada, to guide us. That doesn't mean that we're not going to continue to look for partnership, whether it be at the State of Alaska, the borough, or from the private sector.

Ms. White: In the eight-minute response, I got what I needed at the beginning, which was a long time ago. I was just trying to get a sense of when this conversation started, partially because trying to understand why this wasn't in the main spring budget and why there wasn't an anticipation of — why didn't we put money in the spring budget? The minister just gave me a lot of answers about all the consultation, but he didn't talk about the conversations with the Government of Canada. He didn't talk about the conversations with the government of Alaska or the United States about paying for it or about whether or not he has approached First Nation development corporations.

I just want to know: When he talks about going on our own, what other levels of government has he spoken to and what have they said? I am looking to find out if everything has been explored. He often says that proper due diligence is required. That has been used a lot around Vimy, but we've been told that this is an approximately \$44million project which we will build but we won't operate.

Can the minister tell me more about the other levels of government that he has spoken to, about other funding streams, and just where that has gone as far as cost-sharing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, good question — and I'm happy to share some of the undertakings that we had when it comes to due diligence and our seeking of partnership on the project.

I will start with Canada. The view of the Yukon government is that we would love to see the Canadian government playing a substantial role in the development of this piece of infrastructure. I look at how the US has partnered with the Yukon on things like Shakwak and I look at how the Canadian government deploys funds for humanitarian military supports across the world.

It has been a real challenge, I think, on this project. We have a bilateral agreement between Canada and the US when it comes to critical minerals, yet we have this great opportunity — what a shining example of partnership that could happen between the US and Canada by having this infrastructure paid for by the US or by the federal government in Canada doing a partnership with the US.

We had asked the Alaska state government, through their crown corporation, if they would build this. Once they said they wouldn't and they weren't looking to cost-share, they weren't looking to partner, and they weren't looking to build it, we started looking inward in Canada. This is something that my predecessor and I have brought to a number of ministerial-level discussions.

I started with Minister Ng, head of Export Development Canada, who leads a lot of the trade files — all of the trade files, really — for Canada and had a number of discussions, reaching out to their officials and directly to Minister Mary Ng and requesting support and help more than once.

We also collaborated through our Cabinet Office to speak with Minister LeBlanc — in the role of not just as head of intergovernmental affairs for Canada but also as minister responsible for infrastructure at the time — and had those discussions. Previous to that — and I want to make sure that I am giving accurate information — there may have been earlier discussions with previous — there were two previous ministers responsible for infrastructure, but the conversations definitely would have happened with Minister LeBlanc.

We had discussions with Minister Champagne because of the work that he was leading, really sort of the economic development files in the country. This need was flagged, I believe, to the PMO — to staffers. The official is just reminding me that NRCan — Minister Wilkinson — on a number of occasions and as well Minister Vandal at CanNor — truly, any minister who we felt was a stakeholder in this discussion across the federal government, we went to and said: We need you to help support this financially and we feel you have a role.

What we continued to hear from Canada was: We don't pay for infrastructure outside of Canada. I would challenge that.

The other thing that happened was that we went to the Canada Infrastructure Bank and sat with the chief executive officer, and what we did get in that conversation was: Pending on the solution that is decided upon to move concentrate from the marine services platform onto a ship — and the discussion

is: Is it a conveyor system? That is what is there now and there are folks in the community who feel that is not going to be environmentally sound. We're trying to share information with the borough that there is a very modern system that can do that work.

Either way, the infrastructure bank has been open to helping offset the costs for that. At that point, we felt there could be an opportunity to work with development corporations or the local private sector businesses in the Yukon to help run that. That's still work and conversations that are happening, as we move forward.

Yes, we have talked to the federal government. We have talked to the State of Alaska. We have talked to entities that represent economic infrastructure investment in Canada to the point where we have even had some discussions at a high level with organizations — organizations that deal with port development. We have tried to look at all areas. You are right. That is something that I would think is appropriate, and that is the work that our teams have undertaken.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

We can go back to when I first started asking questions, and the minister had indicated — and I do appreciate it, because I went back and had a conversation with the previous NDP ministers at the time — where he said: Well, the NDP government supported the ore dock back in the day. Again, I don't disagree. I disagree with the supplementary budget.

So, I went back and I had a conversation with Trevor Harding about how that conversation went and what was done. It was interesting, because what the NDP before did is they had an option to actually own the land. It was down the Dyea Road, and it got them access, but they would have owned the land. So, they had this option, and what it did is it actually forced the hand, which is why the dock that was there at the time stayed open.

It was really interesting, because Trevor also pointed out to me that it was actually under the previous Liberal government that the land option was — probably quite possibly from the Member for Copperbelt South now actually that we're having this conversation.

The land option was purchased by the Yukon NDP; then it was dropped by the Yukon Liberals previously. So, I did; I went back and had conversations, and there were a lot of things to learn from there. So, what other options did the minister look at? What other opportunities? Is it only — did we only look at the current situation? Were there options to buy land so that we would actually own the land that the dock was on? What other options did the minister look at?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that it was pretty visionary — the acquisition or the down payment on the land originally. You will have to talk to the Member for Copperbelt South. I don't know that —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: It wasn't in Cabinet. I don't know the story of what happened, but what I will say is that it was smart; it was pretty innovative to do that, and it did give a bit of leverage on the conversation. We did speak with officials to see if there was any land that we could acquire that would have

been appropriate. Officials are letting me know that, in that due diligence, there wasn't an option.

We also looked at Haines, Alaska, and looked if there was an opportunity there. There is an area in Haines, Alaska, where there needs to be, I believe, some remediation and rebuild, but there did not seem to be a viable option in Haines. As well, you are looking at a more substantial length of time that you are going to have to drive and some challenges there, as well, but there was a Haines option.

So, people were looking at a multitude of options. I will open it up this way. Our officials have been looking at what we believe is a strong scope of due diligence. If there are things that the member opposite thinks that we may have missed or, in my response, I might have missed, we are open to other concepts and ideas. We feel that there is necessary involvement and leadership from the Yukon government on this file. We think that it is imperative, and I spent — I'm sure that the member opposite spent time speaking with mining leaders this week. I am sure that everybody in the Legislative Assembly — many of us did — and what you are going to hear — from many of the organizations that are looking to build, the ongoing conversation is power, ports, and people — power, ports, and people.

We think that the early work on a grid connection is really important — structuring the model is important. Making sure that we see our ability to engage with Yukoners who are not in — they maybe are looking for different opportunities or to be fully employed — are going to be important.

Of course, there is a subset to this, which is housing and infrastructure — roads and other things — but the big pieces are: Can you move the commodity? Do you have the right power source? Are there people to do it? So, we think that this is really key to the future of an industry that is the biggest contributor from the private sector to our economy.

Ms. White: The minister again just referenced speaking to law firms. I am going to quote — this is from previous in the Sitting, coming from Hansard: "In our due diligence on this project, we hired a law firm both in Canada and in the US because we were working internationally. In the advice that we received, if we were receiving ... any revenue from the asset in Skagway, it also was going to expose us to any potential liability that was occurring on that project, so part of our decision has been to ensure that we safeguard the Yukon government in the activities that are happening there and that we're not operating a project Outside. That has been the advice that we have received."

Can the minister tell me more about the "potential liability" in that quote?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will give a little bit of a response to this. I want to make sure that we can give a more thorough answer from our policy team.

What we are speaking about is that, under Alaska law, the operation — anything that can happen within the operation — there would then be the potential of ensuring that the Yukon government had a connection to liability, because the Yukon government would be the operator. That is the tough part. We are in a position where we are helping to finance this piece of

infrastructure, which we know is what unlocks the ability for ore to get to tidewater, but that's why we're stepping back to say that the ownership model would be, of course, in partnership — or not in partnership but with the borough, and the operations would be done through the borough as well.

That's the advice that we have received, so for the Yukon government to operate an industrial undertaking in another country would open us to serious liabilities. Again, yes, we are looking at it. We are trying to future-proof liability, but it's also a set of hypotheticals that we're talking about here with the member opposite.

I am not going to put together a series of things that may or may not happen. I am just taking the advice from the law firm that we have received and then, of course, the department has received, and that is the advice that I shared with the House. We can get a more thorough description of that from the information that we have received from the law firm and then, of course, the analysis that we have had in our policy shop at the department.

Ms. White: Can the minister help me understand then — is there a plan to recoup the \$44 million-plus to build it? Part of the reason why the questions I was asking before around if we were going to be able to collect fees or if there was going to be a cost-sharing or a profit-sharing was the idea that if you were going to invest \$44 million, would something come back?

Can the minister help me understand if there is a way that the \$44 million will be offset? I am not looking for "mining in the Yukon". I am looking for a direct — will there be money specifically coming in to offset that \$44 million — specifically, not in general terms — specifically for that \$44 million?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There is not a fee that will be derived from the operation in the borough that will come into the Government of Yukon. I understand the comment: Don't give me what is going to happen in the Yukon. But that is the crux of this — the \$150 million or \$160 million being spent on exploration or the hundreds of millions of dollars that are being created through an industry and going into our neighbour's salaries, the sponsorships.

Tonight, we are going to walk out of here and we are going to go up and we are going to hear that Newmont is sponsoring and donating money to the Yukon Hospital Foundation. These things are all connected to our ability to have the right infrastructure in place. That is why we believe that this is an important investment. It is complex. I think that there are lots of areas that we would like to see our officials spending time on. I would love to see an Alaskan solution — again, I will say that — but it is about all the things that are happening on this side of the border and in this territory.

So, to close, I want to be respectful of the question — no, there is not a direct — we are not seeing a direct fee coming from the use of that marine services platform that will be provided to us. The legal analysis was that if we are receiving funds through a fee directly from there, then any liability that would potentially occur during that operation could be connected to the Government of Yukon. Therefore, we are not undertaking operation, and because we are not undertaking

operation, we are not part of the revenue stream that would come from that activity or from the operator.

Ms. White: I think then what I will do is I will tell the minister that I wasn't looking quite so narrowly. So, he is talking about necessarily fees from the ore dock itself in Skagway. The Yukon government is the one that permits large mines, and in their plan, they'll say that they are going to ship ore concentrate or they are going to ship whatever they are going to ship via a dock in Skagway. Are we looking at putting a cost on that? Are we going to say: Great, we're glad that this is your future plan; this is the cost; this is part of it; this is how we're going to recoup some of that cost? Are we looking at any other way? Or is it just that we are going to put in a \$44million asset in a community outside of Canada without looking at recouping any of that money?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What I can say is that we are deep into the modernization of the quartz and placer mining legislation. There are working groups that are representing both the Yukon government and First Nations. We heard loudly from industry as well over the last week about their interest in providing views and advice into the work that is being created. I don't want to predetermine the outcome of that work; I want to leave that work to be identified by the working group. When it comes to royalties and fees, there are deep discussions that are ongoing on those topics. I will say that discussions around having a fee connected to the granting of a QML — it's not something that I have been briefed on. We can certainly make known to the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources that, in the Legislative Assembly, the Leader of the NDP has identified this as a potential option, and I'll see if this is something that could be looked at.

Then, of course, that would be based — is it a volume? Is it a one-time fee? How do you do that?

Certainly, we will bring that forward. It's not something that has been contemplated in my discussions, but if it is something that has not been contemplated, we will bring that forward on behalf of the member opposite.

Ms. White: I do appreciate that from the minister. The truth of the matter is we are talking about building an ore dock or a dock that has access to tidewater for future mining projects. This should be a conversation around — from the government side anyway — on the discussions around the new mineral legislation, in my mind, if we are looking at making this investment for those future mines, similar to how each of us here pay taxes that pay for the assets that we use. That's just part of it. I hope that it does go.

So, now knowing that this has been in the works for a long time, there has been lots of discussion, there has been lots of investigation, why was this budgeted in the supplementary budget? I ask this because we have a budget where \$21 million has come from other departments where projects have been deferred to future dates; right? We have seen it all sorts of times. We have seen projects — large money projects — be budgeted for, and we have come back at later dates to be told that something didn't line up and we are not going forward with this. We are not spending this \$50 million; we're not spending

this \$20 million. We are going to wait because it was the wrong time, so we are just going to hold off on that.

Here's an example of \$21 million in a supplementary budget to build something that wasn't planned for in the spring, but it doesn't sound like this was a last-minute thing. We knew that work was being done at Skagway. The minister said at different times that the work was being done. We knew that they were going to come forward with an idea, with a project. It's not the full price, so it's not like we are paying for the entire thing, so why wasn't money budgeted in the spring budget? Why wasn't this money in the spring budget? Why is it in the supplementary budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Having an opportunity to confer with officials — there are a couple of points that were made. One is that we were still in the middle of a negotiation process at that time, and we weren't in a position to completely understand what the responsibility was going to look like for the Yukon government. We were also looking to try to get a sense, at that time, of what the costs were from the market. It is a complex project. We are working, again, across an international line. We are working with a municipal government and with the borough of Skagway.

So, those are the reasons that we didn't have it in the spring main budget. That is why we brought it forward in our supplementary budget.

I do just want to take a step back and touch on a few other points. It's important, as the member opposite said, when you look at justification and some of those pieces. When you look at mining in the Yukon, it remains an extremely important part of this economy. In 2021, it constituted 13.9 percent of the gross domestic product and provided significant indirect benefits to other sectors. In 2021, for example, 5.1 percent of gross revenue of Yukon's retail sector was attributed to mining.

Reliable access to the Skagway port will, again, help to attract investment, support mine development, and encourage mineral exploration in the Yukon. It will give you a sense of what that looks like. Of course, many of the other projects that are happening or looking to happen in the territory still feel that it's a worthy investment, based on the fact that we are looking to invest in this way. We feel that there could be significant benefits lost if we did not take on this responsibility. The department estimates that the nominal economic impact from the work that we see is extremely impactful.

I will say again that, from officials who have done great work on a complex file — it's not something that we would normally task our officials with. In these discussions, they weren't in a position in the spring or in the first quarter of last year to have the appropriate information to put it in the budget. I think that goes for everything that we do. If there's a change or we're not ready to do that work but we do know that this is something that has some time restraints, we will continue. I will say this to the House: We will continue — if there is room for us to tweak components of a project, look at a different price, if there are ways for us to stretch this out, the build out of it, we will, but right now, with the information that we have, with the obligations that are being contemplated from the borough, with

all of the factors that we have in front of us, this is the best set of decisions that we can look at.

I have sat down with our lead officials; I have requested them to look for maximum opportunity to fine-tune our pricing and numbers — you know, is there a way for us to — could we go out and — again, we don't want to lose the access to tidewater, but can we refine the numbers in some way? All of these things are discussions that we have every day to make sure that we get the best value for the dollars that are being deployed.

Again, I get the point about not being in the mains, but, you know, I am forwarding the information that our officials — who have done incredible work, by the way — incredible work. This is a group of people who I have had the honour to work next to since 2016. We have spent a lot of time together through some very difficult scenarios. This group of individuals who are giving me advice on this decision is the same group of individuals who have put together groundbreaking programs, like our sick leave program. This is the same group of individuals who led the country from development of public policy in response to COVID. This is an agile group of individuals who are extremely innovative. They come up with strong decision-making matrixes, and they are doing great work.

Look, when you have gone through this many different decisions together and they continue to make the right — put the right advice in front of you — in this case again, that is the advice you are going to look to take.

Ms. White: So, this is not a criticism to the officials within the department; this is solely on the shoulders of the minister whose budget it is and who has brought it forward. Again, I question — we had a tens —of millions of dollars emergency contingency fund in this spring budget, as an example. There could easily have been an infrastructure contingency budget for \$20 million. If you didn't want to signal to the contractors in the United States that you had this money set aside for them — it could have been named something different. It is not in the five-year capital plan — it started in 2022 — unless someone can me point toward where it is.

Again, my point is that, if this has been such a long time coming, it shouldn't be the surprise of a supplementary budget. So, that's my criticism. It's not about access to tidewater. It's about how the funding is coming and how it's in a supplementary budget, because it's a significant investment, and from everything the minister has said and all the due diligence of the department and in all the conversations, we knew it was coming, but it came in a supplementary budget. That is the criticism that I have. I would have preferred to see it in the spring. I would have preferred to see a number that was there that said it was a placeholder that we were expecting and that announcements were going to come later. Instead, it showed up in a supplementary budget, and it had not been spoken about; it hadn't been indicated that it was coming. It's not in the five-year capital plan. That is the problem that I have.

I look forward to learning more. I look forward to the minister getting back the information that we discussed. At one point in time, I'm probably going to reach out and ask for a

briefing on it, because I would love to hear all of those things. I would love to understand “how come” and the timing. I wouldn't ask “how come” or about the timing with the officials, because that's not them; that's the minister — but I'm interested. I want to know, and I want to know what options we looked at. Again, I understand, but what I don't understand is the timing.

With that, I'm going to share the floor back to my colleague.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to thank the officials. It's the first time for our director of finance coming in. Mr. McAllister, thank you. Great preparation and great job today. Thank you for having all that key information at your fingertips. As well, I want to thank our deputy minister, Mr. Prochazka, for all the work over 2023; I asked a lot of him. As well, the rest of the officials, the 52, 53, or 54 folks who keep that organization moving and continuing — I guess probably even more now — 63 with our labour unit and labour market folks. Again, thank you to all of those individuals for all of the work that they are doing and all the preparation for the supplementary budget.

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

Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line. Please turn to page 7-4 in the estimates booklet.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

On Corporate Services

Corporate Services in the amount of \$181,000 agreed to On Operations

Mr. Dixon: Earlier this Sitting, the minister told us that this is the line where we would see the landlord program. I am just wondering if the Premier could confirm that. Earlier, he also told us that the amount for that program is \$1,014,000. Can he just confirm those amounts, please?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, that is correct. In our Operations line item where it states the number \$1,629,000, the temporary landlord assistance program is budgeted at \$1,014,000 within that number.

Mr. Dixon: I hope it goes without saying that we disagree with this expenditure and this program which provides funding to landlords. We have indicated that we don't think that's the right approach. We think that something more along the lines of what the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce housing committee has proposed, such as deregulating the housing rental market, would be more appropriate.

Amendment proposed

Mr. Dixon: With that in mind, Madam Chair, I move:

THAT the estimates pertaining to Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be amended in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, by reducing the line item Operations on page 7-4 in the Operation and Maintenance estimates by \$1,014,000; and

THAT the clauses and schedules of the bill be amended accordingly.

Chair: The amendment is in order.

It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North:

THAT the estimates pertaining to Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be amended in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, by reducing the line item Operations on page 7-4 in the Operation and Maintenance estimates by \$1,014,000; and

THAT the clauses and schedules of the bill be amended accordingly.

Is there any debate on the amendment?

Are you prepared for the question on the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Count.

Count

Chair: A count has been called.

The Chair will ring the bells and conduct a count.

Bells

Chair: All those in favour, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: All members opposed, please rise.

Members rise

Chair: The results are eight yea, nine nay.

I declare the amendment defeated.

Amendment to line item Operations negated

Chair: Is there any further debate on Operations in the amount of \$1,629,000?

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

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

Chair: The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all remaining lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,810,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$20,461,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$22,271,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The matter now before Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public

Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Highways and Public Works — *continued*

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin had some time, but I am just wondering whether he or the Member for Whitehorse Centre have any questions.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Sorry; thank you. I didn't have the floor, but thank you.

Madam Chair, it's good to be back in Committee of the Whole for Department of Highways and Public Works' supplementary budget, fall 2023. To my right, I have Deputy Minister Harwood and to her right is Assistant Deputy Minister Richard Gorczyca assisting me today.

Mr. Hassard: I, too, would like to thank these officials for being here today to once again help us weave our way through this world of Highways and Public Works.

My first question today for the minister is regarding advertising in the local newspapers. We have recently heard from both of the local newspapers — the *Whitehorse Star* and the *Yukon News* — that Highways and Public Works has moved away from advertising projects in the local newspapers. I'm wondering if the minister could explain to the Legislature why Highways and Public Works has chosen to make that move. Hopefully, we can get some understanding on that.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I do have some information here. If it requires some follow-up, I can certainly provide that.

In any event, the Government of Yukon is focused on responsibly using taxpayer funds to communicate with Yukoners on platforms they read, listen to, and seek out. The Yukon government advertises bids and tenders using the Yukon Bids and Tenders platform. The Yukon government does not pay to advertise tenders on Google or Meta. I think that might have been a question early in the session — that there may have been a concern that the government was paying. My information is that the government does not pay to advertise tenders on Google or Meta. Potential bidders who are registered with the Bids and Tenders platform receive an automatic e-mail about upcoming tender opportunities. The Yukon government does primarily use newspaper and radio advertisements to communicate issues directly to members of the general public.

In fact, in the Friday, November 3 edition — I guess we did a bit of a snapshot at the time because that was further to

questions that were asked in Question Period, I believe, or perhaps in Committee of the Whole — it's all a blur. In any event, in the *Yukon News*, the Government of Yukon had advertisements on nine of 31 pages. The ads were on a variety of topics, including the Reverse Trade Show, the Yukon Transportation Hall of Fame awards, hiring school wellness specialists, COVID-19 and flu vaccines, a call for donations for the traditional foods program, opportunities to serve on government boards, upcoming information sessions on the importance of making a will, and even some procurement opportunities.

We can also use local newspapers for other types of advertising and communication for a variety of purposes such as road safety campaigns, public engagements, public health updates, and job postings. I have met with at least some members of the media on this topic and I am open to meeting further. There is a bit of a transition happening. Just to say once again that the Government of Yukon is focused on responsibly using taxpayer funds to communicate with Yukoners on platforms that they do read, listen to, and seek out. But when I asked officials to go away and do a bit of a snapshot, it is evident that there is a reasonable amount of newspaper use.

The estimate that I have here — and I can confirm this — is that Highways and Public Works alone — not all of government, just Highways and Public Works — spends approximately \$60,000 per year advertising through local newspaper companies. I am open to continuing to have meetings with the two newspaper outlets, but it must be said, of course, that we are in a bit of a disruptive phase right now. I know, for instance, that Facebook is not necessarily the medium for communication in some of the bigger metropolitan centres, I'm told — like Vancouver, Toronto, Edmonton, or Calgary — but in the mid-size cities and curiously the Yukon in general, Facebook is very popular and it is actually a pretty effective medium to announce public community events.

I know that, for instance, going back to Riverdale North, the Riverdale Community Association has a very active page and I know that the MLAs for the various areas of Whitehorse have various pages as well on Facebook.

It is a balancing act, but it cannot be characterized that Highways and Public Works and the Government of Yukon in general have completely walked away from newsprint at all. There actually is still a fair bit of usage.

I will just speak to one of my officials as to whether there is any other update.

I'm done for now.

Mr. Hassard: I'm not afraid to admit that I'm one of the few people left on the planet probably who doesn't have Facebook, but I do know that in rural Yukon, the *Yukon News* is still delivered every week and a lot of people in the communities use it as a very valuable source of information. I think it is something that is valued by rural Yukon.

I'm wondering if the minister could provide us with an idea of how much he anticipates that Highways and Public Works will save in a year by not advertising with the newspapers for those projects.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I've been advised that those calculations have been made in the past and that officials are in a position to generate them. Certainly, my officials have heard this request and we will add this to the response that we have undertaken to provide to the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin by December 20.

Mr. Hassard: Another Christmas present — I appreciate that.

I have a few questions that are just kind of general questions. I am wondering if the government would consider providing additional dust suppression to Old Crow to allow the sprayer to be used to treat the roads as well as the runway just to help with the excessive dust in the community. I know that when we were there last September, it was certainly brought to our attention. I will just throw that out there to the minister and see if he has any comments on that as well.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite relating to dust suppression in Old Crow. First, I wanted to confirm that it is the responsibility of Highways and Public Works and my officials believe that it is.

I am advised that Highways and Public Works is happy to work with the community to understand their additional needs. I am also advised that Highways and Public Works meets with the Vuntut Gwitchin Government on a regular basis and they will add this agenda item to the meeting that is scheduled for next month.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the minister's commitment to that. I have a couple of questions in regard to the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* with the exemptions. We know that we have 10 projects valued up to \$1 million a year that can stay local. I am wondering if the minister can provide us with an update on where we are with those 10 projects and what they are.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon government is helping to boost economic development across the territory through trade agreement exceptions. The exceptions allow us to restrict procurement competitions exclusively to invited, qualified Yukon businesses for up to 10 projects per year in order to keep government dollars in the territory and support local businesses.

Over the past six years, manufacturing, construction, and consulting contracts have been awarded for work in communities across the Yukon. Since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 55 Yukon-exclusive government contracts worth \$28 million.

Thus far, for the fiscal year 2023-24, we have awarded two projects to Yukon businesses, totalling \$1.2 million. Two more contracts will be tendered in November. The Yukon government does strive to maximize its allocation of 10 projects every year. I will certainly encourage Highways and Public Works to try to meet that allocation by the end of the fiscal year, but it might be a challenge. We post details of awarded contracts on yukon.ca.

When selecting regional economic development exceptions, we consider many factors, including the dollar value of economic opportunities created in the Yukon and whether the project supports the territory's industries and suppliers.

At the end of a project, suppliers are now required to report on the total dollar value spent on Yukon labour and Yukon materials to quantify the direct, positive impact that these projects have on Yukoners. Since the new reporting requirements came into effect, suppliers have reported on 14 completed contracts. Eight of these projects used 100-percent Yukon labour and Yukon materials. I would say that's a good news story.

These reports also confirm that over \$1.1 million was spent on employing Yukoners through those 14 projects.

The following two contracts —

Chair: Order.

Mr. Hassard: I think it's a little bit disturbing that the minister talks about this being a good news story. It's great that we can do these 10 projects a year. I agree that it's great. That's why it was fought for with the federal government so that we could do this.

The minister stands here now today and says that we should encourage the department to get the other six projects out. I would hope that, as he is the minister, he wouldn't be encouraging the Department of Highways and Public Works but that he would be directing Highways and Public Works to ensure that we got maximum benefit for this, rather than just say: Well, that doesn't look very good; we might only get four this year.

The minister went on to say that it's a challenge to get 10 projects out this year. I guess I would hope that the minister could provide some clarification as to why this year it's a challenge. I don't believe that we have missed the deadline any other year. I could be corrected, but I'm pretty certain that we've managed to do more than four every other year. I'll just give the minister an opportunity to give some clarification and maybe tell us what the challenge is.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Just for the record and to confirm, since 2018, Yukon businesses have competed for and secured 55 exclusive Yukon government contracts worth \$28 million, so certainly, this exemption has been used extensively — I believe in contradistinction to the prior Yukon Party government.

The following contracts were awarded for the 2023-24 fiscal year: the Village of Carmacks-Rowlinson/Prospector lot development, and the northern digital message sign realignment along the north Klondike Highway and Dempster Highway. In total, that contract is \$1.2 million. Two contracts will be tendered in November 2023, including the Ghùch Tlâ Community School asbestos containment material abatement.

To answer the member opposite's question, it can be challenging to find tenders to maximize the use of these exemptions. Issues such as inflation, supply chain shortages, and a tight labour market can impact the use of the exemptions.

It should be noted that over this six-year period, there have been significant changes to the project landscape and fewer projects fall under the \$1-million threshold. Highways and Public Works continues to work alongside departments to find projects that are suitable for the exemption.

As an example of how significant the capital budget delivery has been, just between April 1 and October 1, 2023,

the Yukon government spent \$522.1 million on procurement contracts. In 2022-23, 752 tenders were published, 569 were requests for bids that were price-driven, 122 were requests for proposals that were value-driven, and 61 were market research or pre-qualification processes. Currently, 8,196 suppliers are currently registered in Yukon Bids and Tenders, and over 120 Yukon First Nation businesses are verified and listed on the Yukon First Nation business registry.

There are a lot of big projects that exceed the \$1million threshold, and they are all over the Yukon. As I have indicated a few times in answering questions in Question Period — and I believe it is now confirmed in Public Accounts, but the bottom line is that on an all-of-government basis for 2022-23, we got out \$504 million of capital expenditures. The all-of-government budget was \$546 million, resulting in approximately a 92percent expenditure.

On an all-of-government basis — and just with respect to Highways and Public Works on our capital expenditure, we spent 99 percent of our budget. We are getting lots of projects out the door and there are a lot of opportunities for many Yukoners in many communities — for many large contractors, intermediate contractors, and small contractors.

Just briefly, while we are getting to the end of the Fall Sitting here — just to confirm — in Old Crow, we are finishing the 10-unit mixed-use housing, the health and wellness centre replacement, and the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation elders complex.

In Carmacks, we are in the process of finishing the Carmacks bypass.

In Burwash Landing, the Kêts'ádañ Kù School had a land clearing and we are pushing forward with significant capital investment for this upcoming year for a modern, environmentally friendly facility, which the Kluane First Nation has been requesting for more than 100 years. We are certainly very happy to be in ongoing discussions with the Kluane First Nation and proceeding with that infrastructure project.

What else have we done? Lots of things — the member opposite obviously knows that there is the Nisutlin Bay bridge project and the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport, and both are \$160-million contracts. The parallel runway is close to completion and will be the primary runway for Whitehorse in the spring and summer of next year when Flatiron and its subcontractors get on with the work of replacing the main runway, which has aggregate underneath it and which, in some cases, dates back to 1942. I think it's difficult to argue that it wasn't time for that infrastructure to be replaced. There is lighting there. There is drainage improvement at the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport. The list goes on.

The mental health unit at the hospital will be completed shortly. We are building a gymnastics and climbing facility for the Polarettes and the very active climbing community in Whitehorse and the Yukon — and not even to mention the fact that Whistle Bend Elementary School is well on its way and looks forward to welcoming its first cohort of elementary school students in the fall of 2024.

There is lots of capital investment. We are moving the Yukon forward.

Mr. Hassard: The minister has on a few occasions now talked about the aggregate at the Whitehorse airport being from 1942 and has even gone so far as to criticize the Yukon Party for having that old gravel there. I am wondering: Is there a best-before date on aggregate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to that question. The Government of Yukon is making crucial investments to the Yukon's infrastructure to provide Yukoners with safe and reliable aviation infrastructure for years to come. A number of improvements to the aero side of the Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport are needed to replace aging infrastructure and to keep the airport up to current standards. This work will support current and future airport operations. Improvements completed to date include upgrades to the parallel runway, the taxiways, apron panels, and developing airport land for institutional and commercial uses.

The previous apron project, completed in 2014, has been the subject of legal proceedings between the Yukon government and a constructor, Norcope Enterprises, since 2017. As members in the House will know, it is now before the court of appeal.

On November 14, 2022, the Supreme Court of Yukon released its decision that Norcope has been ordered to pay the Yukon government \$2.3 million in damages. Norcope Enterprises appealed the November 14, 2022 decision. The appeal was argued on November 20 and 21, 2023 — just recently — and the court of appeal has reserved its decision.

With respect to the main runway construction, the \$160.7-million contract to reconstruct the main runway was awarded to Flatiron Constructors Canada on May 19, 2023. The proposed work schedule is for 2023, 2024, and 2025, for those construction seasons, and we anticipate that it will be completed by 2026. While this is a large project, we do expect there to be minimal disruptions overall for the travelling public. We will be working closely with aviation stakeholders to minimize impacts on their operations during the construction period.

This year's work involved preparation for the main runway reconstruction, including airfield drainage improvements, water and sanitary line extensions, fencing to secure the work site, and construction of two access roads to the parallel runway in preparation for next year's construction season. In the following years, major reconstruction work will begin on the main runway. This will include fully replacing the main runway and adding additional features, such as increased lighting.

On August 3, we held an information session for aviation stakeholders about the project. Also, on September 28, HPW held an information session for tourism stakeholders about the project. As well, in the long term, the Government of Yukon will be evaluating how Erik Nielsen Whitehorse International Airport could support larger aircraft.

In order to increase the service level at the Whitehorse airport from an AGN IV to an AGN V, there are a number of program and infrastructure investments that would need to be made. These additional investments would include increasing

aircraft rescue and firefighting resources, aircraft maneuvering surfaces, space and processing capacity for Canada Border Services, and passenger processing and screening facilities. While additional investments are required to support this category change, the length and width of the existing and new main runway will not limit the Whitehorse airport from supporting the larger AGN V aircraft.

Just to be clear to Yukoners and anybody else who may be listening this afternoon, the main runway is sufficient to accommodate the larger aircraft, which is somewhat supported by the fact that we've had three diversions from Anchorage over the course of the last month or so of 747 freighter aircraft.

With respect to community development agreements, we have entered into two community development agreements for work on the main runway, one with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and one with the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council. Both agreements are tailored to maximize socio-economic benefits that are important to each community, such as employment, subcontracting, training, and workforce and business development. An example of implementation of these agreements is subcontracting work performed by First Nation businesses. Additionally, the contractor held a job fair this past August targeted at employment for First Nation citizens. Another job fair will be held prior to next season's start-up.

Community development agreements are government-to-government agreements, and the content is confidential. However, the framework for these agreements was developed as part of the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, and we are working closely with both First Nation governments to implement these two agreements.

With respect to the parallel runway upgrades, the construction tender to upgrade the parallel runway was awarded to Terus Construction Limited and Skookum Asphalt, for approximately \$21 million. Construction began in the spring of 2022. To meet Transport Canada regulations, this summer, we extended the runway safety area of the parallel runway. This required an infill of some of the Puckett's Gulch area, which involved relocating the airport fence line, clearing trees, and removing some vegetation to build a stable slope. We had fruitful discussions with the City of Whitehorse in that regard over the course of the last year. A shout-out to the City of Whitehorse mayor and council with respect to their welcome cooperation in order to ensure safe and secure and predictable air transport to Whitehorse for the foreseeable future.

The parallel runway was closed in September 2023 in order to allow the contractor for the main runway replacement to complete site preparation work for the main runway project in the vicinity. The final runway work includes grooving, painting — that is now complete — and some electrical work, which we expect will be finished at the end of November.

Condor — during reconstruction of the main runway, the parallel runway will be used as the primary runway. The parallel runway will be limited to Boeing 737 aircraft or smaller. In the meantime, as well, Condor has announced that it is changing aircraft in 2024 to the larger A330 models. For the two construction years, Air North, Yukon's airline, has secured interline agreements with Condor that allows travellers

to connect to the Yukon through Edmonton, Calgary, or Vancouver.

With respect to taxiway and tenant lease area upgrades, the construction tender for the realignment, paving, and lighting of taxiway G and associated improvements to lease parcel servicing was awarded, and the work started in the spring. These improvements are ongoing and expected to be substantially complete this fall. During this construction, Highways and Public Works continue to communicate with airport stakeholders.

Mr. Hassard: I guess the minister didn't have a note on that aggregate, so we will move on.

I would like to ask a few questions about the Contractors Association and their funding. I know that they used to get \$50,000 a year; they have requested more. So, I am curious as to where we are these days with the funding for the Contractors Association.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised by my officials that conversations are ongoing and that Highways and Public Works is currently finalizing the transfer payment agreement with the Yukon contractors agreement for this year, and we should be in a position to provide details on that in the near future. I would just like to take the opportunity to thank all Yukon contractors. As I have indicated in my prior answers with respect to the territory over the course of the last two or three years, it has been an unprecedentedly busy time in the territory, based on the capital spends that have occurred.

In the final minutes, I would just provide a bit of a shout-out to contractors, to Yukoners in general, and to Highways and Public Works for the great work that they have done while I have had the honour of being in this position. At Highways and Public Works, our core mission is to make a meaningful and positive impact on the lives of Yukoners. Over the past few years, we have made significant progress on projects that will not only improve the well-being of residents but will set up our territory for success in the future.

Highways and Public Works is responsible for 29 commitments in *Our Clean Future*. Since May 2021, we have completed many *Our Clean Future* initiatives, including reducing work travel by installing new teleconferencing systems in 48 boardrooms and implementing a new remote work policy; investing \$38 million toward building energy retrofits and renewable energy projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Government of Yukon buildings — and in prior Committee of the Whole answers, I provided the entire list of those buildings in the last two fiscal years, and it is quite impressive; and completed energy assessments for 81 Government of Yukon buildings in Whitehorse and in Yukon communities. The tender to conduct the energy assessments for the remaining 35 sites with high-emitting Yukon government buildings opened on November 15, 2023 and will close on December 13, 2023.

HPW has completed a total of 23 energy retrofits to Government of Yukon buildings, which reduce greenhouse gas emissions from these buildings by approximately 150 tonnes per year. We have completed renewable energy feasibility studies for 35 buildings. We have constructed one biomass

energy system at Elijah Smith Elementary School to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 180 tonnes per year.

I had the privilege and honour of attending the community of Teslin and met with Deputy Chief Oakley. We entered into a purchase agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council to begin heating the Khàtinásh Community School with biomass heat, which will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 106 tonnes per year. We have completed five climate risk assessments for major construction projects across the Yukon, and we have invested \$1.5 million in electrifying Government of Yukon's fleet, including two battery electric cars, 12 plug-in hybrid electric SUVs, two battery electric vans — which are in use by the hard-working HPW staff at the mailroom — and 13 gas hybrid electric pickup trucks. There is an order for an additional 30 battery electric vehicles in this fiscal year.

Our department recognizes the importance of investing in infrastructure that supports and connects Yukoners, including our buildings, roads, and airports. We are working with the Department of Education to build new schools in the territory. We are making sure that they reflect a modern learning environment and meet the needs of their communities. In Whistle Bend, the new elementary school is well underway and it is expected to welcome students next fall. As well, in Burwash Landing, we are beginning substantial work on the Kêts'ádań Kù —

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Deputy Chair (MLA Tedger): Order, please.

The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 28th sitting day of the 2023 Fall 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 appropriation bill 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 Standing Order 76, 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: Deputy Chair, the government directs that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 211: Second Appropriation Act 2023-24 — continued

Deputy Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*. 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: Deputy Chair, I move that all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that all clauses, schedules, the preamble, and the title of Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$132,709,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$132,709,000 agreed to

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A and B agreed to

Preamble agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Deputy Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, without amendment.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, 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 government 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

MLA Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, 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 the Committee of the Whole, shall:

"(d) with respect to each appropriation 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."

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. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 211: Second Appropriation Act 2023-24 — Third Reading

Clerk: Third Reading, Bill No. 211, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by Minister of Finance that Bill No. 211, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24*, 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. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: 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.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, eight nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 211 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 211 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 the bill which has passed this House.

Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied 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: *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bill as enumerated by the Clerk.

Good afternoon, everyone. It is good to be here again. I just wanted to take a few minutes to say a few words. I thank you for your work during this Fall Sitting. I hope that you will be able to now spend some time with your family and friends to relax a little bit during the holiday season.

I am coming up to my six-month anniversary in this position as Commissioner, and I would like to thank you for your support since the start of my term. I look forward to working with you in the coming years.

My office is currently preparing for the return of the in-person Commissioner's Levee. It will be held next year on January 13, 2024. After a very busy holiday season, this will be something to chase away the January blahs. At this event, we will present the 2023 Order of Yukon inductees, the Bravery Award, the Public Volunteer Service Award, and the Governor General's academic awards and introduce the new Story Laureate.

We are also working on bringing back the Commissioner's Ball in Dawson City and we are planning it for June 1, 2024. We're trying something new in 2024. Instead of the Commissioner's Tea, we will be planning a Commissioner's Community Barbecue with games for the whole family. I feel that it is important to involve family in these events. I think it's really important.

I look forward to welcoming all of you to these events that I have noted and look forward to many more interesting things

that will be happening. I just wanted to say Günilschish; thank you.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Before I adjourn the Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments. I would like to extend my thanks on behalf of myself, as Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, 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 Justin Gorczyca, operations manager Warren Pearson, finance and operations clerk Lyndsey Amundson, as well as Sergeant-at-Arms Karina Watson and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms Joe Mewett, who have all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for us all to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners.

As well, I would like to take the opportunity to thank the skilled team at Hansard for their timely and accurate service and all of the background staff and contractors who keep this Legislative Assembly operating. I would also like to thank Chris Rodgers and his team who are camera operators for the Assembly. I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who deliver service to Yukoners and support to all of us as members in our work.

I wish Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best for the coming holidays. I hope that all of us can look forward to the holidays with family and friends in the great Yukon outdoors.

Thank you very much.

As the House has, pursuant to Standing Order 75(4), reached the maximum numbers of sitting days permitted for this Fall Sitting and that 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 5:15 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled November 23, 2023:

35-1-141

Yukon state of the environment report 2023 (Clarke, N.)

The following legislative returns were tabled November 23, 2023:

35-1-118

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Pelly Crossing runway lights (Clarke, N.)

35-1-119

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — printing contracts (Clarke, N.)

35-1-120

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with MLA Tredger related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Government of Yukon CO2 emissions (Clarke, N.)

35-1-21

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Hassard related to general debate on Vote 55, Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 211, *Second Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Ten Mile Creek gravel pit (Clarke, N.)

35-1-122

Response to Written Question No. 35 re: Emergency Medical Services coverage (Mostyn)

35-1-123

Response to oral question from Mr. Kent re: mineral exploration industry (Strecker)

35-1-124

Response to Written Question No. 14 re: Aging in Place Seniors Advisory Committee (McPhee)

35-1-125

Response to Written Question No. 25 re: health care in rural Yukon communities (McPhee)

35-1-126

Response to Written Question No. 26 re: mental health services (McPhee)

35-1-127

Response to Written Question No. 27 re: home care in communities (McPhee)

35-1-128

Response to Written Question No. 31 re: Whitehorse Correctional Centre substance use issues and supports (McPhee)

The following document was filed November 23, 2023:

35-1-169

Yukon Type 1 Diabetes Strategy, letter re (dated November 23, 2023) from Marney Paradis, Yukon T1D Support Network, to the Hon. Tracy-Anne McPhee, Minister of Health and Social Services (Dixon)

The following written questions were tabled November 23, 2023:

Written Question No. 41

Re: micro-generation program (MLA Tredger)

Written Question No. 42

Re: power generation (MLA Tredger)

Written Question No. 43

Re: *Substance Use Health Emergency Strategy* (Blake)

Written Question No. 44

Re: safe supply program (Blake)

Written Question No. 45

Re: *Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act* (Blake)

Written Question No. 46

Re: health transformation advisory committee (Blake)

Written Question No. 47

Re: managed alcohol program (Blake)