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BLUES

Thursday, April 25, 2024 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

NOTE

This document, referred to as the "Blues", is the preliminary issue of the Hansard of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and has not been edited fully. It may be used as a reference only with the understanding that it will be superseded by the final, edited version, entitled "Hansard", at a later time.

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, April 25, 2024 — 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. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of people here for the Day of Mourning tribute in a few minutes. I would like to introduce this afternoon Mark Pike, who is the chair of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board. We have Kurt Dieckmann, who is the president of the Workers' Safety and Compensation Board. We have Heather Avery and Teresa Acheson, who is the president of the Yukon Federation of Labour. We also have Catherine Jones with us today. We have Dianne Williams. We have Donna-Marie Haughton, who is the Yukon Federation of Labour's equity director. We have Deborah Gray and Vivian Eze, who is the director with the Yukon Employees' Union. We have Antoinette GreenOliph. We have Inge Petri. Austin Turner-Davis is with us this afternoon. We have Sharon Small and Lisa Keenan, who is the president of the Local Y010, and we also have Diane Williams — if you could all join me in welcoming them to the House.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleagues to help me welcome a number of guests today who are registered nurses at the Whitehorse Health Centre. We have with us today: Ann Chapman, Shilo Ouellette, Angie Bartelen, Jennie Hynes, and Heather Cattet. We also have April Goulin, who is an immunization practice consultant.

Thank you for being here.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have the honour of welcoming the grade 12 class from St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Secondary School to the Assembly. We have Anneke Aasman, Vhince Acosta, Malakai Alanti, Glorie Alfonso, Josef Bagaslao, Isiah Cabiso, Pier De Leon, Steven Domingo, Ysa Flores, Elsa Gleason, Takura Kawonza, Charlotte Munro, Arghelene Oliquiano, Birttony Pagobo, Miguel Portea, Kurt An-Ray Rubio, Kaysen Thomas, and Olivia Vangel.

I would also take this opportunity to introduce my wife, Janet Clarke, who is the social justice teacher.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the National Day of Mourning

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to remember and honour Canadians who have died simply because they went to work.

This Sunday, April 28 is Canada's Day of Mourning for those we have lost. Tragically, we have already seen one workplace fatality in the Yukon this year. A firefighter recently succumbed to an occupational disease. Mr. Speaker, I extend my deepest condolences to their family, friends, and colleagues.

That workplace death — any workplace death — is too many. No one should die simply because they went to work. That's why we gather on the Day of Mourning: to commit that we will act to prevent further deaths through workplace injuries or occupational disease.

We must reflect on those injured or who become seriously ill simply because they went to work. Last year, 687 Yukon workers were injured on the job, 380 seriously enough to force them off work.

To hear these statistics in the Yukon — these statistics represent people we know. These injuries reach beyond the workplace. They are our families, our friends, and our neighbours. We honour those injured, those who have become ill, and those we lost through action. We do everything that we can to prevent future tragedies. I challenge every Yukoner to assess their workplace and to ask: What can I do to make it safer? Start small, be sure that you wear personal protective equipment and that it is in good order, and look for hazards before performing new tasks. No action is too small and no potential injury insignificant. Your attention to prevention honours those lost and injured.

Our community can effect positive change. When you are ready and equipped to work safely, you safeguard your colleagues as much as yourself. So, ask questions, make recommendations, refuse unsafe work, know your rights, and speak up.

Yukon employers and workers should recognize the amazing work done to make our workplaces safer. The robust safety culture sets an example for youth and new workers who are particularly at risk. The goal is zero injuries. To strive for anything less is an admission of defeat. I want everybody to look around them today and ask whom you would sacrifice to death, injury, or illness. I think that the answer is clear.

Join us for the Day of Mourning on Sunday at 2:00 p.m. at the workers memorial in Shipyards Park. For those who can't attend, the event will be livestreamed on the Yukon Federation of Labour's Facebook page.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April 28 as the National Day of Mourning. We stand together to remember those who have been injured or lost their lives as a result of workplace injury or incident. We stand beside those who were injured or fell ill on the job. This year, Yukoners will gather at the Yukon

workers memorial in Shipyards Park to honour and reflect upon those workers.

As we stand to reflect on the importance of workplace safety, remember that every injury or death is entirely preventable. Accidents do happen and mistakes are made, but making safety a priority in the workplace is key to prevention.

The numbers on the tracking board outside the WCB building on 4th Avenue serve as a reminder to all of us, but as that number rises, remember that every number represents a person and every injury affects a family, an organization, and, in turn, entire communities.

On Sunday, we commit once again to creating safer work environments to help end workplace injuries and tragedies. We reflect, we remember, and we commit to doing better.

Applause

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to honour Canada's National Day of Mourning. Every time I do this tribute, I think that I will make it through, and I don't. I want people to know that having feelings like this publicly is hard, but I'm not the only one who feels this way.

April 28 is a day of remembrance. It is a day of mourning for workers who have suffered long-term illness, disability, or death due to workplace-related hazards or incidents. It is a day of recognition that, for each worker killed on the job or who dies from a work-related illness, there is a family, there are friends, and there is a community left to mourn. There are countless people across the country who feel the ache of loss not just at the end of April but all year long. This day is one of deep contemplation, of sadness, and of regret.

Despite the changing of the season and the return of the light, I feel a deep sense of loss near the end of April. I remember my friend Jean-Francois, Paul, and Steve who each needlessly lost their lives at work. Across the country, there are new people who will be joining these important ceremonies for the first time — those who, in the last year, have been touched by the lives that were lost or impacted by workplace injuries and accidents. For many like myself, we go to the ceremonies to remember and to honour those we have lost. Going to the ceremony becomes part of the ritual of remembering.

This year, April brings a special sadness to the Yukon as our community feels the loss of a firefighter who succumbed to occupational cancer. I was asked to say his name and I was asked to say it loudly — Paul Gray. Paul Gray — he left this world on April 18, 2024 after a two-year battle with a work-related injury common to firefighters — pancreatic cancer. His commitment to safeguarding the community extended beyond his official duties, embodying the spirit of a true protector both in service and in his personal life. He thrived on the complex challenges that the fire service presented, always ready with innovative solutions. He served the Whitehorse Fire Department with valour and dedication since 2003.

Since his passing, the memories that are being shared of Paul paint the picture of a man of many facets: stoic, kind, goofy, calm, generous, and with perfect comedic timing. He loved his family, he loved his wife, and he loved his community.

In the days before his admission to hospice, his friends from the Whitehorse Fire Department organized a tribute parade, and the day he died, the City of Whitehorse lowered their flags to half-mast.

Paul's impact on the community was profound. We extend our thoughts and our hearts to all of those newly living with his absence. We are truly sorry for your loss and wish that the right words existed to bring you comfort, but I know that they don't.

Paul's death is an important reminder of the responsibility that we have as legislators and members of the Assembly. We are ultimately responsible for the legislation that protects workers from injury or death and that supports them and their families when they are in need. I am reminded today of the important changes that were made here in this Assembly to the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act*. Although the changes could not protect Paul, his name will now rightfully be added to the Canadian Firefighters Memorial wall in Ottawa and ensure that his family will be supported. Those changes were important, but there is always more work to do.

As much as April 28 is a day to honour the dead, it is also a day that reminds us of the need to protect and fight for the living. There is no room for complacency. Every workplace death is a tragedy that could be and should have been prevented.

On Sunday at the Day of Mourning ceremony, participants will be asked to place a flower on the memorial — a white, yellow, or pink flower signifying remembrance or a red flower for someone who has been injured or killed on the job. This year, like all of those since 2007, I will place a red flower, and as we pledge to fight for the living, in the hearts of those left behind, the mourning never ceases.

Applause

In recognition of National Immunization Awareness Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize National Immunization Awareness Week.

Vaccines play a critical role in maintaining public health here in the Yukon and across Canada and the world. Vaccination is one of the most effective ways to prevent disease and protect our communities. It safeguards not only our health but also protects the health of our most vulnerable citizens, including infants, seniors, elders, and those with chronic health conditions.

Our government strives to ensure that all communities have access to vaccines. This commitment has enabled us to combat diseases that were once common threats to our well-being. Diseases such as measles, polio, and diphtheria are now rare, thanks to widespread immunization efforts, and we must also acknowledge the incredible effort of our health care professionals and the commitment of thousands of Yukoners to get COVID vaccines and to keep the territory safe and free from the tragic impact of the pandemic that was seen in many other places.

Our public health programs are designed to educate and facilitate easy access to immunizations. From school-based vaccine programs to community health centres offering year-

round immunization services, our approach ensures that every Yukoner, from infants to seniors, is protected. Our immunization programs are backed by rigorous safety standards. Vaccines available in our communities go through extensive testing and monitoring, ensuring that they meet the highest safety and efficacy standards. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization and Health Canada continuously review and monitor vaccine safety, ensuring that all Yukoners receive safe and effective care. We encourage all Yukoners to participate in our immunization programs, and please know that if your child misses a school-based vaccine, local health centres across the Yukon Territory provide catch-up opportunities — as a reminder also for families that are new to the Yukon to please update your children’s immunization records with your local health care provider and ensure continuity of care.

As we observe National Immunization Awareness Week, we celebrate the health care professionals, some of whom are here today with us, community health nurses, and all of the public health workers whose dedication makes our immunization programs successful. Their hard work is vital in maintaining the health and safety of our communities. We urge all Yukoners to stay informed about their vaccines and to keep their family’s immunizations up to date. Whether they are routine childhood vaccines, seasonal flu shots, or COVID-19 vaccines, every shot administered contributes to a healthier Yukon. The Yukon immunization program offers a wealth of resources on yukonimmunization.ca to help you to determine the appropriate vaccines for you and your family and how to access them.

Thank you to everyone in the Yukon for your continued commitment to health and safety through immunization.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to help raise awareness about National Immunization Week and World Immunization Week, usually the last week of April. The theme is “Humanly Possible: Immunization for all”.

For those of us of a certain age, we all most likely have a round, puckered scar on our upper arm from our smallpox vaccine. It was one of the world’s most horrific contagious diseases and certain death that has been eradicated through vaccines. Move along a few years and we got immunizations for numerous other diseases that were able to give children and adults alike a better, healthier, and longer life.

These diseases ran through the north, and again, when polio hit the Yukon, some died and it left many with physical disabilities. One can actually see an iron lung at the Binet House in Mayo, Yukon that was used for polio patients. It was a scary time. Diphtheria, hepatitis, tetanus, and the list goes on — but taking a shot or, in the case of polio, a small drink will prevent the risk of your children having to live through the pain or disabilities of these diseases.

Do you realize that the campaign is for everyone, from birth for a lifetime? Check with your doctor to see if you need boosters and if you are up to date. Shingles is a fear for older people, and now there is a vaccine that might not prevent the

disease, but it will lessen the impacts of symptoms should one contract the by-product virus of chickenpox.

For 50 years, the World Health Organization’s expanded program on immunization has covered many Third World countries and continues the good work of prevention. So, don’t hesitate; we do not want to see polio or measles take over and hurt the next generation. If we have learned anything from history, it is that these medications and vaccines work.

Thank you to all of our health providers, public health nurses, and those who advocate for the immunization programs.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling today a news release from the Government of Canada entitled “Little Gold Creek port of entry summer season extended by four weeks”.

Mr. Dixon: Mr. Speaker, I have for tabling a piece of correspondence addressed to the Minister of Education from the Yukon Association of Education Professionals, cc’d to myself.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?
Are there any petitions to be presented?
Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 38: *Health Authority Act* — Reprinted version tabled

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the April 24, 2024 Order of Committee of the Whole, I have for tabling a reprinted version of Bill No. 38, entitled *Health Authority Act*. The reprinted version incorporates the amendments agreed to in Committee of the Whole. This bill also contains what I believe to be a true translation into French of the English text of the amendment to clause 12.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the announcement by the United States government to provide \$61 billion USD in much-needed security assistance and military aid to Ukraine to support their resistance against illegal and unjustifiable aggression by the Putin regime and the Russian Federation.

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

THAT this House looks forward to welcoming visitors through the Little Gold Creek port of entry for an additional four weeks this summer.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to introduce amendments to the *Workers' Safety and Compensation Act* to include presumptive cancer coverage for wildland firefighters.

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

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Health care system

Mr. Cathers: Yukon's health care crisis continues to get worse under this Liberal government. A recent survey of Yukon doctors done on behalf of the Yukon Medical Association shows even more problems as well as lack of confidence in the current Liberal government.

The survey of local doctors found that just seven percent — quote: “Feel the current government supports and values physicians' contributions to the health-care system”. It also states: “There is considerable pessimism among Yukon physicians about feeling adequately supported — both to provide patients with care and by the current government.” “The bulk of members disagree that the current government supports and values physicians' contributions...”

This is another damning indictment of the Liberal government's mismanagement of health care. How does the government expect to attract more doctors to move to the Yukon when only seven percent of local doctors feel the current Liberal government supports and values physicians' contributions to the health care system?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, the Government of Yukon is committed to increasing access to primary health care services and to working with and supporting our physician partners. As usual, I will challenge the information, the way in which it's packaged, in the preamble to this question. A healthy and strong community of primary health care providers is absolutely critical to ensuring Yukoners have access to excellent primary health care services.

In 2022, we negotiated a new memorandum of understanding with the Yukon Medical Association to help increase Yukoners' access to primary health care services and to foster a strong physician community relationship through a series of innovative initiatives that will be in effect until March 31, 2025. We have worked closely with the Yukon Medical Association and individual physicians, taking many steps to support them, particularly primary health care services being provided to Yukoners. We will continue to do so, and we look forward to the opportunity as we work closely with them moving forward.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, I'm quoting the YMA's report. The survey of Yukon doctors found — quote: “Members' practice intentions over the next five years are

concerning, with nearly one-half planning on reducing their hours, leaving the territory for work, or retiring.”

Almost one in five local family doctors plan to close their practice in one to two years and 41 percent of doctors with family practices plan to close their practice in the next five years. Of those planning to close a practice, only 11 percent believe they will be able to recruit another doctor to take on patients when they leave or retire. The growing crisis in our health care system is at risk of growing much worse.

When will the minister of health and her colleagues recognize that urgent action is needed and that it begins with showing doctors and other health professionals respect and actually listening to what they have to say about the problems in the health care system and the solutions to those problems?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I am always pleased to be able to rise to reiterate our government's commitment to the relationships that have been built with our health care professionals throughout the last number of years while we have been here in government since 2016.

The concept of working together is absolutely critical to making sure that Yukoners have the health care that they need. Our government remains committed to building healthy, vibrant, sustainable communities using a person-centred approach to wellness and to help Yukoners thrive. A key element of that is working with our physician community as well as other health care professionals.

We undertook last year the work to build a health human resources strategy. There was basically unheard of participation from all sectors of health care professionals, including physicians, including nurses, Yukon University, the unions, the Hospital Corporation, and the Department of Health and Social Services. A steering committee was jointly held and work was done last summer and ultimately released the *Health Human Resources Strategy*. We have budgeted \$2.8 million during the 2024-25 fiscal year for the implementation of that strategy.

I hope our friends across the way will support it.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, the minister knows very well that we pushed them for years to develop a health human resources strategy.

The survey's finding about well-being of local doctors is further confirmation of the Yukon's worsening health care crisis. Over half of Yukon doctors say their practice is currently at risk due to the level of burnout they are experiencing.

Under the heading “Physician Well-Being”, the YMA's report says “Members most commonly identify dispute resolution with the Yukon Government as a critically important outcome of physician well-being.” A whopping 69 percent identified improving dispute resolution with the government as a priority and 64 percent called for improved funding for locum support. A mere seven percent of Yukon doctors feel that the current Liberal government supports and values doctors' contributions to the health care system. This is a damning indictment of the Liberals' neglect of health care, the repeated failure to pay doctors on time, and the almost complete lack of confidence doctors have in this government.

When will the minister recognize that the system is in crisis and start working with health professionals instead of sidelining

them, picking fights with them, and then trying to blame everyone else for —

Speaker: Order.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, it won't surprise anyone that I very much disagree with the preamble to that question, and I am not even sure that there was a question. But nonetheless, I think that the relationship that we have worked to build with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, with the Yukon Medical Association, and with individual practitioners — the support that we have brought to them through a new and enhanced innovative MOU, the work that we continue to do with them — and they have the opportunity to work with us to bring forward issues, and we work to resolve them together — is a far better approach than anything the member opposite ever did as minister of health.

What I can indicate to the rest of this Legislative Assembly and to Yukoners is that perhaps they might want to look at an article written back in 2007 regarding the minister at the time where doctors were repeatedly asking for support from the member, for support from the then-minister, to even meet with the then-minister, who refused to do so, refused to meet with media, and ignored the problems that were happening then.

That is not the approach that we are taking, and it is not the approach we are going to take.

Question re: Education-related reports and recommendations

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, in the Minister of Education's press release on EA allocations that went out last night, she claimed that she had shared the report that the group of stakeholders had requested on April 22, 2024, which, of course, was earlier this week. As we pointed out on Tuesday, that was done an hour after the minister was pressured into sharing it during Question Period. However, we have now learned that what the minister provided to the group was not even what they had asked for. Rather than sharing the full, unredacted copy of the EnGauge Consulting report, they shared a sanitized, shorter version.

Why did the minister say that she had shared the information the groups were asking for when that does not appear to be the case?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, just to build some context around this, what we are talking about today are supports for children, supports that we have been working on to provide change to our education system through reimagining inclusive and special education. From the initiation of this work, the department has committed that the outcome of the fall 2023 conversations will be shared. Staff have not wavered from that commitment. With this kind of report — as we can all I think appreciate — there are standard internal review processes that are followed as part of normal operations and ensure movement forward in the best way.

In addition to the commitment that is indeed being followed through on, the full report is now shared publicly, which was always the intent. Sharing the report publicly will address the request for the final report that is in line with ATIPP guidelines. The draft earlier versions of the report were working

documents. There is only one final report that is dated April 2024, which has been released to our partners and now released publicly.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, it was not lost on the stakeholder groups that what the minister shared on Tuesday was not, in fact, what they had asked for. This morning, this was pointed out to the minister, and those e-mails were tabled earlier today by my colleague.

I will put to the minister a question that was emailed to her department directly by these groups: What good reasons and justification does the minister have for drafting and preparing an April 2024 version of the report instead of sharing the December 2023 and January 2024 versions of EnGauge Consulting reports and recommendations?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, what we are talking about are important changes to education regarding the EA allocation for children who are in need of these services. We have committed since the beginning to work with our partners, stakeholders, and contributors to education, and we have done that work.

The commitment to work toward this change started long ago. We engaged with an Outside contractor in the fall of 2023, and we committed all the way through that the conversations would be shared. We now have a final report which has been released. We have also been clear that the conversations and the subsequent report would be released. Again, this is a long-term effort of the Department of Education, along with all of our partners, that we would work together. Transformation does not happen overnight.

We certainly appreciate that we are in a time of change and that can be challenging, but we are very optimistic about the future of education.

Mr. Kent: Mr. Speaker, to recap for the minister, these stakeholder groups have been asking for these reports since they initially raised this concern with her back on March 6. The minister refused to share those reports for seven weeks, and it wasn't until we raised it in Question Period on April 22 that they changed their tune. The only problem is that the minister provided a new sanitized document that was developed after the original March 6 letter. Now the groups have caught on that the minister isn't being as forthcoming as we thought. The meeting that was meant to clear the air — there is a meeting scheduled that was meant to clear the air on this whole issue.

Will the minister agree to release all of the reports, recommendations, and information that these education stakeholders have asked for before the next meeting?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Mr. Speaker, again, sharing the report publicly, which we have done this week, certainly meets the ATIPP guidelines; a draft and earlier versions of the report were working documents. There is now one final document which is dated April 2024; that has been released.

I think that the member certainly knows and probably can hopefully appreciate that, with this kind of report, there are standard internal review processes that are followed as part of normal operations to ensure moving forward in the best way. The Department of Education has now fully released the final report and certainly looking forward to continuing to do this

really good work on behalf of Yukoners and ultimately, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of those children in our education system who need additional supports. That is what we are talking about here.

Our government is committed to reshaping education and doing the work in the best way that we can, working with all of our partners and our stakeholders, and ensuring that we have the best outcomes for our young Yukoners.

Question re: Wildland firefighters occupational health coverage

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, study after study across Canada and the US have shown that toxic chemicals and carcinogens from wildfires contribute to illness. Wildfire smoke and fire ground dust contain various cancer-causing chemicals. Exposure to extreme heat can damage DNA and increase the risk of cancer. Wildland firefighters may also be exposed to other chemicals, including pesticides and herbicides, that can increase cancer risks. There is also increasing evidence that absorption of carcinogens through the skin is a major route of exposure, yet wildland firefighters can go days or weeks without being able to wash this from their skin.

Wildland firefighters have reported having to go on long-term disability to manage work-related illnesses like cancer, breathing difficulties, PTSD, or heart disease. Is this government tracking the incidence in the Yukon of cancer, PTSD, other illnesses, or long-term disabilities in wildland firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important topic. I want to begin by telling the House that, at my request and following the deep conversation we had passing our nation-leading workers' compensation legislation here in the territory, I have asked and tasked the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board to monitor the research regarding the link between cancers and wildland firefighters. That work is ongoing.

I will also say that any worker who contracts cancer on the job is eligible for compensation. The presumption doesn't make you eligible; you are eligible if you are injured on the job or contract any illness while on the job. If you are injured or contract an illness on the job, you are covered by the Yukon Workers' Safety and Compensation Board — full stop.

What we have to be turning our attention to, Mr. Speaker, is prevention. We don't want people to get sick at all — not at all, which is why I tried to bring a ministerial statement to the floor of the House to discuss measures to prevent injury in the first place — a statement that was turned away by the NDP and the Yukon Party.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, I was going to say something nice, but I changed my mind.

Increasingly, being a wildland firefighter means fighting fires at wildland/urban interfaces, yet their gear consists of a pair of boots, a hardhat, and coveralls made from Nomex. While Nomex protects firefighters from high temperatures, it also off-gases to produce toxic chemicals. Most agencies provide special wash instructions to manage this toxicity, but

here in the Yukon, there is no provision for this. Wildland firefighters also spend long parts of the season deep in woods with no escape from the thick smoke. They breathe smoke, they inhale ash, and they are covered in soot for weeks at a time. Because wildfire work involves long deployments in remote areas, wildland firefighters don't have the same access to personal protective equipment that they would if they were working on a burning building.

What additional support is this government doing to provide supports for wildland firefighters with illnesses resulting from the physical dangers of their work?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, prevention has to be our number-one focus because we do not want anybody — no Yukoner, no Canadian — injured on the job. That means we have to have good personal protective equipment.

Just three weeks ago, I was down in Richmond, BC with all ministers of labour from across the country, and we discussed these issues at length. We actually had a compelling presentation by a series of people about personal protective equipment and how a lot of it isn't up to snuff in Canada, and we need to do new manufacturing to make sure that they get equipment that not only suits the job but also suits their physique — the size of their hands, the size of their feet, the size of their head. We don't have that currently in this country, which is why it is so important that we put time and energy into helping manufacturers produce the type of personal protective equipment for Canadians to keep them safe on the job.

We do not want any Yukoners injured on the job; we don't want any Canadians injured on the job. The goal is zero, Mr. Speaker, just like I said a few moments ago.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, despite overwhelming evidence linking wildfire exposure to higher cancer risk, wildland firefighters in the Yukon are excluded from presumptive coverage that recognizes cancer as an occupational disease.

When will this government follow the leadership of British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Québec, and Nova Scotia and provide presumptive coverage and compensation for wildland firefighters?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Mr. Speaker, we've been talking about this for a long time and I will say again that they're not analogous. The Yukon wildland firefighters do not perform the same tasks as those who operate in BC and other places. That said, I have tasked the board to make sure that they track the research and that they look at what we can do to make sure that our workers in the territory — in this case, wildland firefighters — are safer, and we are doing that work.

As a matter of fact, when I was down in Richmond, BC, I spoke with my colleague from Québec. Québec has a great database on cancers and workplaces, and we have agreed to work together on that. Currently, I believe that Québec has seven presumptive cancers. They are wondering why there are so many more in the country. I think we have 19 — we do have 19 in the territory. So, we're going to work with Québec, which has a great database on workplace cancers that involve all sectors of the economy, including firefighters. We're going to

work with them. The board is actually looking at this in the future. We're going to have evidence-based decision-making. I know that this is an important topic and we're going to continue to do that good work.

I still regret the fact that the members opposite didn't want to hear the results of the meetings that we had down in Richmond.

Question re: Staff housing in rural Yukon

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, a lack of housing for Yukon government staff in rural communities continues to be a barrier for recruitment and retention. We've heard many stories from across the territory about the lack of supply and poor conditions in staff housing. The Finance minister didn't mention staff housing in his Budget Address.

Can the Premier tell us how much money is in this year's budget to build or renovate staff housing units in rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, yes, today we actually had a ministerial statement on the housing initiatives fund, which was our seventh fund, and there are projects throughout Yukon communities that are supporting the private sector to provide housing. It is important to note that, when it comes to staff housing, we think that having the private sector provide options as well as working with First Nation development corporations as well as partnering with the Yukon Housing Corporation is the way to move forward.

Once we get into debate this spring on housing, we will have an opportunity to talk about the great work that is happening in our communities. I am happy to be going to Watson Lake later this year to check on the new tenplex, one of the most substantial investments in Watson Lake that we have seen when it comes to housing. Of course, last year, we had an opportunity to put housing in place in Mayo and in Carmacks, housing moving forward in Faro, and then a very significant project — the biggest of its kind that we have ever seen — moving into the community of Dawson City. Later this year, we will have an opportunity to celebrate an opening in Old Crow.

As you can see, there is a tremendous amount of investment coming from Yukon Housing. I will just note again that the housing initiatives fund has been putting millions of dollars into communities and I would love an opportunity to talk about that and to show the great work of the private sector, which is providing housing —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Van Bibber: In a letter from January 13, 2024, the J.V. Clark School Council in Mayo raised the issue of housing for teachers in that community. It said — quote: "JV Clark School Council has raised the issue of staff housing with the Department of Education for over 6 years to no satisfying response. Staff housing continues to be the biggest barrier facing JV Clark School, effecting staff retention. To date, we have seen no progress from the Department of Education or Yukon Housing to help address this issue."

What action has been taken in Mayo since this letter was received to address the concerns raised by their school council?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will go back just to give Yukoners a sense of what we are looking at from staff housing. In many cases, I know that we have tried to remedy things very quickly when it has come to requests for staff housing. As of the end of March 2024, there have been only seven employees in the entire Yukon who are on our wait-list, distributed across various communities.

On the wait-list right now are: in the community of Carmacks, zero; Dawson City, just one person but, again, with a project coming; Faro, one person, project coming; Haines Junction, one, and I know that we have been moving on a number of options in Haines Junction — whether it be lots for new development or other projects; Mayo, just one individual, so again, I would challenge the current status of the situation there; in Ross River, of course, we will have an agreement that we will be talking about publicly very soon, but I had the opportunity to work directly on emergency housing; and, again, work moving on Teslin with the community, just working with the municipality on some site challenges but, again, looking at a multi-unit there; of course, in Watson Lake, we talked about the biggest significant investment that we have seen by Yukon Housing. That project is underway and looking to conclude. So, only a total, again, of seven in the entire Yukon.

I look forward to question 3.

Ms. Van Bibber: Mr. Speaker, the J.V. Clark School Council provided some ideas to the government in their letter. It stated — quote: "We have asked that Yukon Housing Corporation and the Department of Education work together to provide housing to teachers, like how Yukon Housing works with Health and Social services to provide housing to community nurses."

What arrangement does Yukon Housing have with Health and Social Services to house community nurses that would work for teachers?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I will just reflect back on the information that I have provided the House. Again, only seven individuals in the entire Yukon are on our wait-list at this particular time. What we do try to do — in communities such as Mayo, you get great entrepreneurs, like Joella Hogan who has invested in Yukon Soaps, but also being able to de-risk and put units there.

I think it is really important that we don't always go down the road where the Yukon Housing Corporation is the sole provider of housing. To hear that from the Yukon Party — I think they should look at a bigger scope. I think it's important to have the private sector play a role.

I don't think that the Yukon government and the Yukon Housing Corporation can meet all of the housing needs for individuals across the Yukon. I think that what we want to do is make sure that we provide a good foundation for those individuals. They invest in those communities, they make a long-term community commitment, and they look to build. That's why it's important to have lots available, which has been a focus, but also, moreover, that we support the private sector so that they can provide units. Again, it helps to diversify our economy and not just have the government building the only housing in the Yukon.

Question re: Government transparency and accountability

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, over the course of the winter, we saw multiple cases of the government rejecting the recommendations of inquiry reports from the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

On February 8, 2024, the *Yukon News* reported that the government — quote: “... failed ‘its burden of proof to establish a reasonable possibility of harm’ in certain circumstances...” In another report, the IPC determined that certain records be released, but the government rejected those recommendations outright. Overall, there seems to be a trend of the Yukon government deferring to a position of secrecy instead of openness and transparency.

Why is the Liberal government becoming more and more secretive instead of more open and transparent?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, in 2018, our government introduced an amended *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. In 2021, both the act and regulations came into force. As part of our commitment to increase government transparency, this legislation represents one of the strongest access-to-information regimes in the country. As we work through ATIPP requests, both the departments and ATIPP officers are always balancing privacy with access to information and transparency. This is a particularly relevant balancing act in a small jurisdiction like ours.

Mr. Speaker, the ATIPP office handles on average 660 access-to-information requests each year. While the data for 2023-24 is still being compiled, I can say that in 2022-23, 97 percent of access requests paid no fee for access to information and 95 percent of access requests in 2022-23 were completed within the legislated deadline.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to more answers on these questions.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Information and Privacy Commissioner takes a different position than the Liberals. Following the case of a Dawson business that was seeking documents from the Department of Highways and Public Works, the IPC said this in a public statement on February 19 — quote: “IPC is seeing a pattern of rejections without sufficient reasons from public bodies. We made 33 recommendations on this review complaint and the HPW rejected them all.”

Mr. Speaker, from time to time, there could be good reason to reject a certain recommendation of the IPC, but it is concerning when the IPC says that there is a pattern developing. Why has the Liberal government developed a pattern of secrecy when they promised openness and transparency?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you very much for the question from the member opposite. The member opposite well knows that I am not going to address a specific file on the floor of the Legislature today. However, Mr. Speaker, if an applicant has a concern about an ATIPP response or anything related to it, they can exercise their right to make a complaint to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner — the IPC — and the IPC will launch an informal investigation and resolution process with the department involved.

The Yukon government releases all unredacted records responsive to the ATIPP request and complaint to the IPC for their review. The government’s access and privacy office and the departmental access officer meet with the IPC to answer any questions that they may have.

Mr. Speaker, if the resolution process with the Information and Privacy Commissioner does not resolve the concern, it can be escalated by IPC to a formal investigation process which results in the IPC making formal recommendations to the department. Those recommendations are reviewed by the departmental access officer and senior management in the appropriate department. Often, these recommendations include recommendations to release some of that which has been redacted. The IPC does not always have the same context and understanding of the information that senior management has within their responsibilities in running the department.

Ms. McLeod: Mr. Speaker, in their 2016 platform, the Liberals had a whole chapter devoted to government transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, like so many of their commitments — like the promise that Yukoners would be heard — those promises have not been met with action. Instead, we now have the Information and Privacy Commissioner raising a red flag about this government’s tendency to secrecy.

The IPC has said that there’s a pattern emerging of the Liberals shutting down requests for government information to be made public. Over the past year, the vast majority of recommendations from the IPC to release information have been rejected. So, why has this Liberal government become so secretive?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the question is that we brought in legislation that absolutely improved matters from the prior Yukon Party government, which was the height of secrecy. In any event, of note, in early 2024, *The Globe and Mail* did an investigation into governments and departments around the country in order to understand how they handle access requests — 2024, Mr. Speaker. The project is called “Secret Canada”.

The investigation found that Yukon was in the top three of all provinces and territories in terms of the percentage of records released, which indicates a high level of transparency. According to the investigation, the Yukon released 78 percent of its records in response to access-to-information requests. Only the Northwest Territories and British Columbia had higher response rates.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, we are not going to take lessons from the members opposite about accountability and transparency. We are doing the good work, and the departmental staff at the access to information and privacy office at HPW continue to do the great work on a daily basis.

Speaker: The time for Question Period has now elapsed. Introduction of visitors outside proceedings.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I will ask my colleagues to help me to welcome a number of visitors who

have come today to see the continued work of this Legislative Assembly. We have with us Chief Pauline Frost of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and chair of the Chiefs Committee on Health; Chief Amanda Leas, who is the Chief of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council; Stephen Mills, the co-chair of the Health Transformation Advisory Committee; Diane Strand and Doris Bill, Health Transformation Advisory Committee members; and we have, from the Council of Yukon First Nations health team, Kristeen McTavish, Ryan Moyer, Kareena Joshi, Shirin Nuesslein, and Olivia Done.

From Health and Social Services, we have Deputy Minister Tiffany Boyd; Deputy Minister Ed van Randen; we have the executive assistant to the deputy ministers, Donna Milne; we also have Assistant Deputy Minister Jennifer Gehmair; Assistant Deputy Minister Paul Payne; the director of legislation and partnerships, Jenny Imbeau; and Angela Salé-Roche, the project coordinator. In addition, we have a number of people from behind the scenes at Health and Social Services. We have: Alex Taylor, senior policy advisor; Jacob Rohloff, a policy analyst; Jessica Hall, a junior policy analyst — probably lots of work for her; Misty Ticiniski, project coordinator; Dave Anderson, a labour relations advisor; and we have with us Jim Bishop, legal counsel.

Thank you all for being here.

Applause

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 60(2), I request the unanimous consent of the House to proceed to third reading of Bill No. 38, entitled *Health Authority Act*.

Unanimous consent re proceeding to third reading of Bill No. 38

Speaker: The Minister of Health and Social Services has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3 and notwithstanding Standing Order 60(2), requested the unanimous consent of the House to proceed to third reading of Bill No. 38, entitled *Health Authority Act*.

Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: Disagreed.

Speaker: Unanimous consent has not been granted.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 36: *Exemptions Act* — Third Reading

Acting Deputy Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 36, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 36, entitled *Exemptions Act*, before the Legislative Assembly has passed Committee. I now will just take a few moments to provide some context of the key changes that are being proposed in Bill No. 36, which I hope will pass this Legislative Assembly directly this afternoon.

Bill No. 36 repeals and replaces the *Exemptions Act* with a modernized legislative framework to address exemptions. The *Exemptions Act* has not been amended since it was enacted in 1954, and the dollar values and exempted items are woefully out of date. The Government of Yukon is committed to modernizing this act as well as making the necessary amendments to the *Garnishee Act*, which has also not been amended in over four decades.

Of the major changes that have taken place since the *Exemptions Act* was last debated or revised is the introduction under the federal *Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act* of licensed insolvency trustees. Licensed insolvency trustees are federally regulated professionals who provide services to individuals with serious debt problems, and they are the only professionals who are authorized to administer government-regulated insolvency proceedings such as consumer proposals to creditors and bankruptcies.

Anyone in Canada needing this level of debt solution must engage a licensed insolvency trustee, whose fees are regulated and typically paid from the money recovered during the proceedings. The trustee serves as a mediator between debtors and creditors, immediately reducing the potential conflict during the proceedings and ensuring that all federal and territorial laws are applied equally to both.

The Department of Justice engagements with the 16 trustees licensed to practise in the Yukon began back in February 2024, and their response was enthusiastic and informed. The act here today impacts their clients, truly, on a daily basis.

The trustees' input is crucial to helping us determine the maximum prescribed dollar values for exempted items, such as cars, and houses, and tools of the trade, which will be established in regulation. The trustees routinely calculate how much of their property debtors can retain. This input is instrumental in identifying the tipping points at which most debtors will possibly lose their home or their vehicle or the equipment that allows them to be self-employed. Yukoners earning a living in this way will still need to be able to recover the money for creditors that they are legally entitled to but must also be able to maintain a standard of living. These tipping points inform how we will set the maximum amounts exempted for items in regulation so that as many Yukoners as possible stay in their homes and keep a vehicle.

During engagement, the Department of Justice asked the trustees what they wanted lawmakers to know, and we debated this during the bill. Their answers were focused on two primary issues. The first is to be mindful of the reality of a realizable value. Most people's possessions are often worth much less to anyone else except for themselves. They often equated the sale of possessions to sort of garage-sale levels of returns, and that is not necessarily fair. They point out that the cost to debtors of

having to replace things like beds or couches and other furniture items greatly exceeds whatever money may be gained from seizing or selling those items.

This legislation is an attempt to level the playing field, to bring it to a modern opportunity for Yukoners, and to make sure that we have modern and appropriate legislation.

The second issue noted by the trustees that they hope we all keep in mind is the integrity of the proceedings. All insolvency proceedings rely on the assumption of an honest and unfortunate debtor, and most debtors are exactly that. The trustees have done work with this bill and the engagement to provide necessary due diligence that the law allows to ensure that the list is correct, and the work they have done with us on this proposed bill has been invaluable.

The proposed bill notes that establishing whether items have sentimental value was also something that was addressed by the Uniform Law Conference of Canada, and that is an important item and topic for individuals who are needing to declare bankruptcy as well. This legislation that we debated in this House — and perhaps will be debated longer today — has very real consequences for those who are impacted. The current act is harming Yukoners. We need to replace it as quickly as possible, but we have a similar obligation to get it right and to be fair to all stakeholders. We spoke about this during the debate.

We are working now to address remaining issues that should more appropriately be addressed in the regulations to help keep specific values up to date over time, to be fair to both debtors and creditors, and to make a modern piece of legislation.

Mr. Cathers: While we do agree that it needs to be modernized, we are seeing with this legislation the same issue that has come up far too often with this Liberal government, which is a failure to consult with people impacted by their legislation. As my colleague the Member for Watson Lake noted earlier, their penchant for secrecy is being called out even by the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

What occurred in this particular case? The minister noted that they only consulted with 16 people about this legislation. In a debtor/creditor situation, there is a need to balance the rights of both debtors and creditors, and it is important to recognize that someone who doesn't pay a debt that they owe to another person or small business may drive that person or small business into financial difficulty themselves, but the government had a one-sided consultation. There was no consultation with the business community or the local legal community. As I noted, they only consulted with 16 people, so because of the Liberal government failing to consult people affected by their legislation again, we will not be supporting this at third reading.

Ms. White: Mr. Speaker, just to assure the House that this indeed is going to pass, the NDP will be voting in favour of this legislation.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, this is a wildly disappointing outcome and actually maybe even a little bit unexpected. This piece of legislation needs to be modernized. It has not been touched virtually since 1954. This is work that needs to support Yukoners who are currently in financial difficulties and need to have the ability to hang on to some of their property, to much of their property, to maintain a home, to maintain perhaps a vehicle, and to maintain working items for a personal business.

It is completely unfathomable that the Yukon Party would not support this legislation at this time. Presumably, they didn't think that the work ever needed to be done. They didn't touch it; they never thought about touching it. In 14 years in government, it didn't get any attention from them, and now that we have done the work and brought it here to support and provide a modern piece of legislation for Yukoners and to provide real change to a law that is currently harming Yukoners, several of them, perhaps many of them — I am happy to get a number as to how many people declared bankruptcy in the territory last year or the year before that, but they will refuse to support those individuals for what is absolutely an unfathomable reason to me. Perhaps they don't want to do the work; we have done it for them. We are here to modernize this piece of legislation.

I appreciate the support coming from the Third Party, and I assure you that Yukoners who are facing these very real problems — financial and otherwise — will support and appreciate the support from the individuals of this Legislative Assembly who vote to support this absolutely incredibly important piece of legislation for a particular group of individuals. They will also, I assure you, note where they did not get support.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Madam Acting Deputy 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.

Acting Deputy Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
 I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 36 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 36 has passed this House.

Bill No. 37: *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024* — Third Reading

Acting Deputy Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 37, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 37, entitled *Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, ensuring that the integrity of Yukon legislation is solid is part of my role as Minister of Justice and my responsibility. As a lawyer, I take this one particularly seriously. Bringing updates, corrections, and other minor administrative edits to the Chamber through miscellaneous statute law amendment acts is part of the process to ensure that our laws are accurate.

Bill No. 37 proposes editorial fixes to a number of misspellings or mistranslations. There is the adding of some omitted words. There is the fixing of some awkward phrasing. There are changes to outdated names of legislation and to such other revisions to strengthen the form of existing law without changing its substance. That is what distinguishes this routine kind of bill from other acts that make substantive changes with policy implications.

I would truly like to thank all the departments across Government of Yukon for working together to identify the items for this bill. I would also like to thank the Department of Justice and in particular the legislative counsel office for supporting this work and bringing it to the floor of the House for us to consider.

I certainly hope that the members opposite will support this bill.

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: Madam Acting Deputy 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.

Acting Deputy Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 18 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.
 I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 37 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 37 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon to grant assent to the bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Webber enters the Chamber accompanied by the Sergeant-at-Arms

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.

Acting Deputy Clerk: *Act to Amend the Education Act; Exemptions Act; Miscellaneous Statute Law Amendment Act, 2024.*

Commissioner: I hereby assent to the bills as enumerated by the Acting Deputy Clerk.

Have a wonderful afternoon.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: Order, please.

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 now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

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.

Bill No. 213: *First Appropriation Act 2024-25* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Women and Gender Equity Directorate

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to, of course, welcome our officials first: the deputy minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate Sierra VanDerMeer; and Sarah Crane, who has just finished an acting director position and is now in a policy analyst position. Welcome to the Legislature and happy to have you here.

It is my pleasure to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate budget for 2024-25. This upcoming fiscal year will mark another significant year for the directorate, which is leading and partnering on several major initiatives, including: the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* in partnership with the Government of Canada; advancing the work of the sexual assault response team, also known as SART; the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan*; and, of course, Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people strategy and implementation plan.

These initiatives, as well as the directorate's ongoing policy work, all support equity for women and gender-diverse people. This work seems especially important now that we see many jurisdictions in Canada and internationally taking steps backward on gender equity.

Here in the Yukon, we strive to build a society where everyone enjoys equal status and access to opportunities. Gender equity is a matter of personal safety and human rights for women and gender-diverse people. Gender equity is also one of the most effective ways to ensure that we are building healthy and prosperous communities for all Yukoners.

Gender equity is an indispensable building block of a robust economy and a healthy, thriving society. There are several new initiatives in the Women and Gender Equity Directorate budget that will create a lasting change and have a positive impact on the lives of all Yukoners. In 2024-25, Yukon's Women and Gender Equity Directorate's total budget is \$5.475 million.

The directorate's work is focused on three main areas. First, the branch provides strategic leadership to other departments and partner organizations on major equity-related initiatives. This work includes such initiatives as the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, the sexualized assault response unit, or SART, the implementation of the *LGBTQ2S+ Inclusion Action Plan*, and Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy and implementation plan. Secondly, the branch advances equity in the territory through its funding and equality-seeking community organizations. Finally, the directorate's staff research and analyze issues related to gender equity. This includes advising on key policy issues and developing legislation. It also includes leading the integration of gender-inclusive diversity analysis within the work of all Yukon government departments.

I am excited now to highlight some of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's work for you. This fiscal year, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate has \$3.36 million in funding for gender-equity-seeking organizations in both operational and project funding. This includes \$150,000 to continue to support the crisis hotline, which is fully recoverable from Canada, and \$1.916 million to continue supporting the NGOs we work with, including funding for Queer Yukon Society. The directorate continues to fund Queer Yukon at current levels and has entered into a transfer payment agreement with them for \$375,000. We are working internally to find partners to ensure that Queer Yukon's funding continues to be consistent and predictable and to streamline agreements reducing administrative burden. We are grateful for the work that all equity-seeking organizations do in the Yukon to reduce gender-based violence and build safer communities.

In 2022-23, Yukon signed a bilateral agreement with Canada to support the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. \$1.87 million will go to the Women and Gender Equity Directorate for the implementation of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. These funds are fully recoverable from Canada. This includes \$1.24 million to support NGOs with prevention initiatives and to support victims as part of Yukon's implementation plan to end gender-based violence, including \$60,000 for the Yukon Women's Coalition. We are in the process of working with our partners to design the next two years of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* implantation plan and

working together to identify gaps and opportunities for investment.

This investment will support our shared goals to strengthen the prevention of and respond to gender-based violence in the territory. It will help address the intersectional needs of diverse populations, including those experiencing gender-based violence in rural and remote communities.

This coming year, we will continue to focus work on addressing the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ people. We are approaching this work in the spirit of decolonization and in partnership with Yukon First Nations and Indigenous women's organizations. As the work within the MMIWG2S+ strategy moves from planning to implementation, the Yukon advisory committee and the Yukon government are adapting our existing structures to focus on implementing the actions and milestones proposed while remaining accountable to families and survivors.

The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the next stages of this work and has dedicated two full-time positions to MMIWG2S+. This year, the following has been allocated to support Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy: \$217,000 for the annual accountability forum on MMIWG2S+ and technical gathering for partners and contributors to the strategy; \$63,000 to continue supporting the Yukon advisory committee and their important work; and \$600,000 to support Indigenous women's organizations through the Indigenous women's equity fund.

Work is underway within the Government of Yukon to take coordinated action on MMIWG2S+ implementation plan actions. At least 38 items of this 15-year plan are already ongoing or underway. We continue to work with our partners to track progress on the first annual report on Yukon's MMIWG2S+ implementation plan, which will be released in 2024.

This year, we have dedicated \$46,500 to support the Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity, formerly known as the "Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues". In the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*, the government committed to restructuring the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues to include matters related to the Yukon's two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual+ communities, also known as 2SLGBTQIA+. We confirmed this in the 2022 Spring Sitting. The council was renamed as the "Minister's Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity" and its mandate and membership criteria were updated to include gender-diverse people.

We have received several applications for new members, which are currently with the boards and committees officials. The new council will hold their first meeting once new members have been appointed. I look forward to the new committee beginning its work to ensure that gender equity is considered at more opportunities across government.

We are committed to the vision of the Yukon as a place where everyone feels safe, welcome, valued, and celebrated, including 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. In addition to the funding that we provide Queer Yukon, directorate staff are

continuing to lead work on the implementation of the government-wide LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. This plan is focused on making government programs and services more inclusive and accessible to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit+ communities. Since the release of the plan in 2021, we have made progress in several areas, continuing the path forward for 2SLGBTQIA+ equity in programs and services.

In early 2023, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate hired a dedicated 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion coordinator who is helping to realize the plan across the Government of Yukon and engaging the 2SLGBTQIA+ community members. In September 2023, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate released an online survey to check in with the community on the Yukon government's progress on the five-year LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. The directorate will use the results of the survey to draft a summary of progress to date and a "what we heard" document to be released this spring. This will provide valuable feedback and help us to understand perspectives in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. It will also help us to target areas of ongoing or emerging concerns.

Another important item that the directorate has been involved with is support of the implementation of the expansion of the sexualized assault response team or SART program. The statistics are grim. Of course, we have had a lot of time to talk about this in the Legislative Assembly. Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. SART is based on the core principles of victim's choice, dignity and respect, preventing system re-traumatization, cultural safety, and access, equity, and inclusion.

We are committed to expanding sexualized assault response team, or SART, services to Yukon communities. The Department of Justice is leading this work with support from the directorate and the Department of Health and Social Services. Our staff remains committed to working closely with all partners to help support victims so that they can access the services they need and want.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss some of the highlights of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate budget with you. With that, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to thank the officials for joining us here today and for the briefing that they provided.

I have a few questions regarding the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. There is an increase of \$1.3 million in transfer payments for the national action plan.

Can the minister explain who will receive this funding and how this was decided?

Hon. Ms. McLean: I am just trying to decide how to go through this just to make sure that I am giving the full information. I am going to go through each recipient for the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* project funding.

There are other sources of funding that are over and above this funding, so just to be clear, I am going to just give the numbers on the national action plan.

The Liard Aboriginal Women's Society — this is an Indigenous women's organization — in 2023-24, there was \$122,910, and for this year, 2024-25, there is \$126,000. The total, including carry-overs — because we have allowed for dollars that were unable to be spent in 2023-24 to be carried over — the two-year total is \$248,910. For the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council for 2023-24, there is \$138,000, and for 2024-25, there is \$126,000, for a total of \$264,000. The Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, for 2023-24, received \$36,577, and in 2024-25, they will receive \$111,000, for a total of \$147,577. The Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre received \$138,000 for 2023-24, and in 2024-25, they will receive \$126,000, for a total of \$264,000. The Yukon Status of Women Council received \$138,000 in 2023-24 and \$126,000 for 2024-25, for a total of \$264,000. Yukon Women in Trades and Technology received \$33,340 in 2023-24 and \$63,000 in 2024-25, for a total of \$96,340. Les Essentielles received, for 2023-24, \$110,449 and \$124,600 in 2024-25, for a total of \$235,049. Queer Yukon received a total of \$131,970 for 2023-24 and \$126,000 in 2024-25, for a total of \$257,970. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition received \$69,364 in 2023-24 and, in 2024-25, \$126,000, for a total of \$195,364. Skookum Jim Friendship Centre, for the programs that they provide, received \$138,000 in 2023-24 and, in 2024-25, \$126,000, for a total of \$264,000. That is it for those. They were proposal-driven.

I would like to just note that we are working very closely with the equality-seeking organizations on a path forward to work together to identify the gaps and to do that work collaboratively for years 3 and 4.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that information.

In the briefing with officials, it was mentioned that there will be a program review of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*. Does the minister have a timeline for when this review will be conducted and completed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Where we are at with the review is that we are absolutely doing this work collaboratively. What you will see is a subcommittee from the coalition and the equality-seeking groups that will include members of the equality-seeking groups and Women and Gender Equity. We intend to do this collaboratively. We would like to have the work definitely started within a short time — within the next month or so — and have it wrapped up fairly quickly. We want to get to the identified gaps and have some certainty going forward. It is certainly an area of priority for Women and Gender Equity and, of course, the equality-seeking groups that we work directly with.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. I would like to follow up on questions that I asked last October about the national action plan funding and how the Yukon government was involving local women's groups represented by the Yukon Women's Coalition. One of the key requests that the groups that make up the Yukon Women's Coalition have requested is an increase and for predictable and consistent core funding. So, while we know that there is program funding available through the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, it doesn't seem to include core funding.

Can the minister tell us if her government has provided consistent and predictable multi-year core funding increases to these groups?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Women and Gender Equity Directorate prioritized getting funding to organizations after signing the bilateral agreement with Canada last year. This funding was provided through a closed call for two years to provide greater financial certainty for organizations as we complete a review that will help us understand opportunities and gaps in the sector. We know that increased demands for services and rising costs are creating challenges for NGOs. We have heard their requests for sustainable, long-term operational funding. We are committed to working with the community partners to consider an appropriate substantial long-term approach to funding so that they can continue to do the good work that they do in the community.

As I just talked about, the collaboration that is happening right now with Women and Gender Equity and the equality- and equity-seeking groups is on track to do that work together and to then work toward — that is one of the key questions. I mean, that's the crux of it: to get to a place where we are providing adequate core funding through the resources that we have available to us and also maybe even leveraging some of that for other partnerships to ensure that we have the resources needed and to meet the longevity of the work that we are doing in our communities.

Ms. Clarke: I have one more question and then I will give it over to the Third Party.

Following the Yukon Women's Coalition's letter in February 2023, the coalition sent another letter on March 6 of this year requesting a more substantive role in the development and implementation of the Yukon's implementation plan.

Can the minister explain the Yukon Women's Coalition's involvement in implementing this plan, and will the minister review their concerns and consider offering more input from these groups on this implementation plan?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, of course, I was in receipt of that letter that the member is referencing. We have had several meetings with the Yukon Women's Coalition through the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and directly with the deputy minister herself to work through in detail the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.

I then followed up with the coalition personally and spent time hearing the concerns. By that point, we had already worked to a place of solution, to a path going forward. As I just described today, this includes working collaboratively — and as I referenced moments ago about a subcommittee that will work directly on the review of the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and to then come up with solutions and recommendations that I can then bring back into our process, which will, of course, include — if there are substantial changes — Management Board and other Cabinet committees for review of that work, so work is happening.

We are very committed to our partnerships. Again, while I am on my feet talking about this particular area, I want to hold my hands up to all of the equality- and equity-seeking groups who have done tremendous work and continue to support

Yukoners. We absolutely hold up the work of all, and I want to thank the Women and Gender Equity Directorate for the hard work that they did to work directly with the coalition to again chart that path forward and find collaborative solutions — and that is where we are at.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the officials for being here and to the minister for answering questions today.

I am going to follow up with some questions on the NAP to End GBV. Maybe I'll start there, since we are on the topic.

I am looking at the bilateral agreement between Canada and the Yukon, section 5, which is "Allocation and conditions". It says that the allocation is \$4,043,000 for 2023, \$4,118,000 for 2024, and so forth, but there's only \$22,020,000 in this budget — sorry, I'm looking at the wrong line item. There's only \$1,870,000 this year, and I believe that last year, there was \$1,895,000. Is that because there are portions going to other departments? Could the minister expand on that?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The member is correct in terms of the numbers that we — when I was talking earlier answering questions from the member for the Yukon Party, I was speaking directly about the funds that are with the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. We do have a number of other initiatives, so the other part of this money includes \$1.598 million that is allocated for initiatives that are being led by Justice and \$650,000 for Health and Social Services. That money is going directly to the three women's shelters — one in Dawson, one in Whitehorse, and one in Watson Lake. That is where the \$650,000 is going.

I will just give an example of one of the initiatives under Justice — the integrated case assessment team for high-risk intimate-partner violence cases. This team will work together to collaborate on preventing reoccurrences of gender-based violence. The partnership of local agencies — such as Victim Services, Corrections, police, child protection, Health and Social Services, and other agencies — will work together to respond to referrals of suspected highest risk cases of domestic violence, with a goal of increasing safety and supporting those involved, including enhanced supports for victims, monitoring, intervention management, and support for perpetrators as well.

The dollars that were allocated under that particular action on year 1 was \$50,000, so that would have been 2023-24 and then \$150,000 for year 2 — which is the year that we are talking about today in the mains — of \$150,000. That will also include a carry-over of the \$50,000 from 2023-24, so there will be the allocation plus the carry-over.

As we did with the equality- and equity-seeking groups, we worked with Canada to allow dollars, because the dollars came late in the year. If dollars were not spent, we were able to carry them over to this current year that we are talking about in the mains.

That, again, is significant work I think for sure that Women and Gender Equity did to work with our partner, Canada, to ensure that unspent dollars were carried over. As you will recall, all of those agreements came late in the last fiscal year. We needed to get the money out the door and allocated in order to receive them. By doing that, we also knew that there may be areas where the dollars would not be able to be spent, but we

were able to carry them over with that agreement so that we wouldn't lose them.

MLA Tredger: That actually answers a different question of mine, because we had talked about the carry-over in the briefing, but at that point, it wasn't confirmed.

Can the minister confirm how much of that funding other partner organizations were allowed to carry over? Was it all of it that was unspent, or was there a limit?

Hon. Ms. McLean: All of the dollars that were not spent in 2023-24 that were identified in the transfer payment agreements or allocated to other departments for these important initiatives were allowed to be carried over fully.

MLA Tredger: That is great news. I am sure that was a real help to a lot of people.

I just want to confirm — I was trying to add up the numbers as the minister was talking, but does that mean that the Yukon has either spent or is planning to spend as a carry-over the full amounts that are available to them from Canada?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, that is correct.

MLA Tredger: That's great.

I know that there is a report that is due on July 31 this year on last year's spending. I am wondering if that report is going to be released publicly.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Madam Chair, thank you for the question. We will follow up with our partner, with Canada, around that. I don't have that information with me today, but we can return that.

MLA Tredger: That would be great. I'm less concerned about some of the financial details because those will be in the budget — and more about the reports on which of the actions have happened. I actually want to ask about that now. I'm just going to pull up the right section of the bilateral agreement because there is a list of year 1 action tables which I think, since year 1 is done now, would be expected to be complete.

One of the ones I noticed — this is in "Table 3: Pillar 2 — Prevention" — is a media literacy action that is: "A primary prevention activity to counteract the effects of harmful misinformation that perpetuates gender-based violence including against 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and racialized groups."

Can the minister tell me about what that action looked like and what happened?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you for the question. I think it's a great question, and again, it's complicated. There are lots of moving pieces here and a lot of really great actions. The one that the member is referencing under "Media literacy" is an action that is being led by the Department of Justice — so a primary prevention activity to counteract the effects of harmful misinformation that perpetuates gender-based violence, including against 2SLGBTQIA+ people and racialized groups.

The year 1 allocation for this important action was \$505,002, and year 2 was \$275,000. So, the carry-over for this — because to stand up the action and have substantial work happening because of the lateness of the signing of the agreement and then moving into actually actioning this was rather late.

This is another area where we will have carry-over. So, we have \$400,099 carrying over into the 2024-25 year. But what is substantial about that — and this will be true for all that are carrying over substantial amounts of funding — is that the reporting will shift to September 30 for these initiatives to have the time to have the action move forward in a substantial way.

MLA Tredger: Yes, that would make sense about the reporting date. Thank you.

Another item is integrated case assessment teams for high-risk intimate partner violence cases, and it talks about a team collaborating to prevent reoccurrences of gender-based violence and it names a number of local agencies, including some under Health and Social Services and some under Justice and some that are outside of YG altogether.

Can the minister give me an update on that team?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is an action that is being led by the Department of Justice and the allocation under this item in year 1 was \$50,000 and then \$150,000 for year 2, and the full first year was carried over. Again, this is an area that is directly led by Justice, and certainly we are monitoring and working with them, but it is an area that will have to have these questions answered by the Department of Justice.

MLA Tredger: I guess I will save the rest of them for Justice because I suspect that will be the case for a number that I was going to ask about. I also appreciate that this work is starting and is probably not complete by now but will be soon.

I will skip to one that I believe is being led by this department under table 5, pillar 4. It talks about the missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit+ strategy. I was excited to see this action because my understanding of the implementation plan of this strategy is that there are pieces that belong to many, many organizations in the Yukon — some Government of Yukon, some not — and this action says that the Government of Yukon will develop a plan in order to identify items that require YG participation as well as related work.

I think that it is this department that is leading that work. Can the minister update me on where the work is at to create a plan? I am assuming that it would identify all the pieces of that implementation strategy that belong to YG and a plan for monitoring how they are happening within the many different departments that would be involved.

Hon. Ms. McLean: When I opened up with some of the opening comments, I talked about some aspects of where we are at with advancing the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls strategy and implementation plan. Since the release of the overall implementation plan in June of last year, we are, as I mentioned, working on a new structure for the advisory committee on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. We will have more to say about that. We are still working with our partners on some of those details and those aspects.

Part of our commitment and responsibility is, as I have mentioned, funding in 2024-25 the accountability forum. It will be the third one this year, including what we've started working with now, which is a technical forum that is more action-based

—really getting down to the work and having all of the partners at the table. That will be funded through that allocation as well.

We are also preparing an annual report, so we are populating that from all of the work within government and with other contributing partners and contributors to the strategy and the implementation plan. On YG's part, we have 108 of the milestones that we were directly involved in. Out of those, there are 38 that are underway or ongoing. As you can well imagine, that is a huge task to bring all of the voices together. This will get stronger and stronger as we go forward in terms of how we report for the Yukon and how we advance the actions and the implementation plan milestones.

As I stated in my opening comments, we have an allocation directly for the implementation of the MMIWG2S+ work.

I will just restate some of that. This year, we have been allocated \$217,000 — maybe I will just back up a bit. The Government of Yukon is now committed to supporting the next stages of the work and has dedicated two full-time positions to MMIWG. This year, we have additionally allocated \$217,000 for the annual accountability forum on MMIWG2S+ and the technical gathering for partners and contributors. There is \$63,000 to continue supporting the Yukon advisory committee and their important work. Again, there is \$600,000 to support Indigenous women's organizations through the Indigenous women's equity fund.

As we work through these important areas that are connected, absolutely, to the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*, we are also working to then leverage the resources that we have in the territory through partners and through other contributors' access to other resources that are directly related to the implementation of overall MMIWG2S+ actions and strategies throughout Canada.

Canada has included a significant contribution that — most of that, the Government of Yukon does not have access to, but our partners and contributors do. So, that is part of the uniqueness, and it is complex. I think that I have offered to do a technical briefing at one point for folks who would like to go through this, because it does get complicated because we have these two streams and two national plans that are working together, and the Yukon is unique in the way that we have structured our plan. Most of the pillar on the implementation of Indigenous-led approaches has been informed by our strategy and implementation plan on MMIWG2S+.

Again, there is a lot more to come around this as we work with the reshaping of the advisory committee. We hope to have that work done in the very near future and to be able to communicate that broadly so that folks know what the new structure will look like, how it will be funded, what the opportunities are for Yukoners to access more of the federal funding, and how the national action plan supports that.

MLA Tredger: I did actually take the minister up on that technical briefing, and it was very helpful. I really appreciated it, and it informed a lot of the questions that I'm asking today, which I think are better questions than if I hadn't attended that technical briefing — at least I hope so.

I know that the primary place for the Government of Yukon to be accountable on this strategy is at the accountability

forums, and I think that is as it should be, but I wonder if the government is planning to release the report on those 108 actions and the 38 that are underway more broadly. I think there would be use in that. Like, I do think that they should go to the accountability forum first, but I also think that there is a place either for people who aren't able to attend that or people like myself who are very interested but should not be the priority for attendance at those gatherings. So, I'm wondering if there is a plan to release that report more widely.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This report will be released publicly. It is part of Yukon's report card, and we will be working with all jurisdictions in Canada to ensure that the work of the national action plan is upheld. The Yukon will contribute to that national dialogue as well, but yes, we will release it publicly. It will be connected to the accountability forum.

I am certainly happy to hear that the member participated. I wasn't aware of that, so I apologize that it had taken place. As we go forward, I am happy to offer to continue to do technical briefings as things change and as they evolve, especially when we have the new structure in place, because I think that will be very important for folks to understand and ask questions about in a way where we can have an actual full conversation about it.

I am looking forward to releasing that on an annual basis and working with our partners to really populate it. We have our section that we know for sure we are directly linked to, and then we have other actions and milestones within the implementation plan where we may not have any involvement, but there will still be the intent to report on it and be able to tell the whole story about the work that is happening in the Yukon that contributes to *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice* for our Indigenous women and girls.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I look very much forward to reading it, and I'm sure it's a complicated thing to figure out a new structure, and I wish them the best as they do that.

I have one more question I want to ask, just going back to the NAP to End GBV and the first-year actions, which I understand may not be complete yet. Under Table 6: Pillar 5, there is an action around transportation between Yukon communities for victims of gender-based violence. It talks about the "Development of safe, consistent and confidential transportation for victims of gender-based violence living in northern, rural and remote communities to flee their community, access shelters and/or medical services as required." I suspect that this action doesn't live solely with this department, but I think it probably spans many departments. I am hoping that this department can speak to where that action is at. To the best of my knowledge, the only thing that is available to victims of gender-based violence right now who do need to travel to another community, either to flee violence or to access services, is the reimbursement of gas money, which — we have actually talked about this in the House already. It is just not adequate in so many ways, so I am wondering what work is happening on that item.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, this is a high priority, and I know that the member opposite is very interested in knowing

more about this. Certainly, I know that — I hear directly as well from Yukoners, particularly women, that this is a gap. It will be an area that requires full collaboration. It is being led in the action plan by Justice but definitely with close collaboration with Women and Gender Equity. We also have other organizations that are directly related to SART and that whole team — a partner approach — who are looking at this.

In year 1, there was \$20,000 that was spent out of the \$53,968 that was allocated for year 1, so carrying over is \$33,968. For this year, in the mains, there is \$300,000 allocated for this item. There is a lot more work to be done around this, but we certainly know that we will be working with all community partners wherever we can. We were very happy to hear, for instance, of a new transportation option from the Kluane area that we can take advantage of and work with and hopefully create some partnership with them.

We know that we have other options in different communities, but then there are some communities without any options, and that is something that we recognize. We heard it in the "what we heard" report around sexual assault response team expansion to Yukon communities that this is a barrier and a gap for victims who are fleeing violence. I know; I worked many years at the front line in communities and know that this was a barrier and an issue then, and it is today, so we know that we have work to do to fill that gap.

When I talked earlier about the work that we will do with our equity-seeking and equality-seeking organizations, we already know that this is an area that will be identified as a gap, as well as communication. Communication is a huge barrier for a lot of folks who are facing gender-based violence directly in their home or their community. I am very committed to advancing this action, and that is why we were so pleased to enter into the agreement on the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.

MLA Tredger: I look forward to hearing more about that in our next conversation in the next Sitting, as by then, I imagine that more of that money will have been spent and there will be more work to talk about.

I wish the departments well on spending that money and doing all the really important work there. The rest of my questions about the NAPEGBV have been answered already in response to questions from my colleague the Member for Porter Creek Centre.

I am going to move on now to another action plan — the LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. I want to ask about some of the items and timelines and how those are going. This came out in 2021, so I would expect that the things they say are going to be done in the first year or in the next two years — that would be by 2023, so I would expect those to be done by now. The first one I wanted to ask about is on page 7 of that plan. It says: "Provide training to Health and Social Services' employees and health care providers focusing on anti-racism and the intersectional realities of Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary individuals."

I am wondering what that training is and if it's available just to YG employees or if it has been provided to non-YG health care employees, as is suggested to me by this item, what

it looks like, is it mandatory for Health and Social Services employees or health care providers within YG? I would love to hear more information about that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I'm suspecting that we are going to go on a deep dive here into some of the areas, and I know that this is an area that is certainly well underway. It sits with Health and Social Services, and I do not have all of the details with me today. This is another area where I would be happy to have the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, through our new full-time policy analyst — who we are thrilled to have in the directorate — work to coordinate a technical briefing that could include all of the departments that are working on this particular action plan. I think that may be helpful to then just unpack the areas and go deeper into the areas that may not be started and why. I do have a graph by department and what is happening throughout, but that contains a lot of data that I do not have all of the details for today. I know that sometimes there are a lot of other pressing questions when these departments are being debated in Committee of the Whole, so you may not have a chance to get all of the questions posed and then answered. So, I would be happy to set up a technical briefing on this as well because I would like the member to have the answers.

MLA Tredger: I think that is a great idea because I do think that it would take a very long time to go through all of them, and I think that is better done in a technical briefing. So, I will follow up with the minister and her department about that. That would be great.

There is one piece that I want to ask about — because it came up in the SOGI policy — that was identified in this plan and wasn't yet in the SOGI policy. It was around sports in schools and how that was going to be handled in particular for trans students. I was wondering if there are any updates on the work on that.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is a huge priority for the Department of Education. I know that I am here as the Minister responsible for Women and Gender Equity Directorate today, and we will be coming up for another session of debate next week, so I would be happy to bring a bit more information there. That being said, the Department of Education did an update on the SOGI policy recently. We are now working toward further work to continue to work on the updates that are required for the SOGI policy, and I believe that it would be one of the areas that we would be looking at — in sport. I can bring more information back. I am just trying to see if I have some of it here. I may not have all of the information here.

There is more information that I can bring forward. This note is not fully up to date, but as part of our continued SOGI policy review, we will look to the best ways to support schools to implement the policy in schools, including the development of templates for school-based procedures and guidelines to support the implementation of the SOGI policy.

Again, we are working with partners and doing consultation around further changes that are required for the SOGI policy. This certainly is one of those areas. Again, as I said in my earlier comments, when we have jurisdictions that are dialling back supports and inclusion policies, particularly in schools, we really want to make sure that we're addressing the

pressures that our young people face in schools and also support education professionals to have the right tools.

We are working with the ARC Foundation, which is a charitable foundation supporting SOGI inclusion educational practices in K to 12 settings and has been established to implement the tools and resources of the SOGI 1 2 3 program to help bring awareness to the practice and to create more inclusive schools for students and student educators to implement the SOGI policy. We certainly also recognize the need to work and support parents, guardians, and caregivers. That is all part of the work that is underway right now to help to support the current SOGI policy, but we're working to also continue to do the review.

MLA Tredger: I am glad that there is work happening on that. I did read very closely the updated SOGI policy when it came out. There were lots of things in there that I was very happy to see. In general, I was really supportive of that policy, but a notable gap to me was gender-identity inclusion in sports as it's put in the action plan. In the action plan, it says that it will happen in the next year — that the SOGI policy will be updated to specifically address gender-identity inclusion in sports. That was in 2021. I imagine being, say, a grade 9 student in 2021 and thinking: Okay, next year, I will know what is going to happen for me in sports. 2022 rolls around and you are in grade 10; it doesn't happen. 2023 rolls around and you are in grade 11; it doesn't happen. The SOGI policy comes out and it is still not addressed in 2024. Now you are in grade 12 and you may really be missing out on your chance to ever participate in school sports, and that is really sad.

I do really hope that this can be done soon and urgently — I mean, the timeline has been missed by quite a bit — but as soon as possible because that is something that has real impacts on the lives of students. I won't ask any more detailed questions about this right now; I will wait for the technical briefing.

On a related note, though, I understand that Health and Social Services is conducting a review right now of gender-affirming care and what will be covered and what won't. Is this department involved in that review in any way?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is an important shift that our government made in support of LGBTQ2S+ health care. Yukon is a lead in the country in advancing access to gender-affirming surgery and non-surgical procedures and services so that Yukoners can access the care that they need and that all people are deserving of.

Yukoners who are enrolled in the Yukon health care insurance plan are eligible for coverage for gender-affirming care. Gender-affirming care and surgeries are unique for each patient. As a result of their individual journeys, requests and timelines vary significantly from each other. People are sometimes referred for surgery in Vancouver — Vancouver General — and also definitely to Montréal. We have had a number of Yukoners referred there, some of whom I am directly involved with in terms of my own personal life around families whom I am close with. So, it varies, and one of the supports under health is the health care navigator who is with Queer Yukon for information and support for individuals who are navigating that — health services in general.

As I stated at the beginning of my comments, we now have a full-time LGBTQ2S+ policy analyst who is working with — because one of our roles is to support departments as a directorate on policy and development, that policy analyst works with many departments, including Health and Social Services, so that would be an area that individual would be involved in.

Also, I think one of the other areas that I wanted to bring forward is — you know, we are bringing online soon the Minister’s Advisory Council on Women and Gender Equity. This will be an area that could be looked at from — through me, as the minister responsible for women and gender equity, Health and Social Services can bring areas that they would like to have that advisory committee look at, so this is another area where that can happen. It will bring some unique and different perspectives there.

Definitely an important aspect of the work under the SOGI policy and also I think — you know, I just brought up — because we’re talking about gender identity and health, within the Education portfolio, it is a top priority to support healthy, active, safe, and caring learning environments in schools. The Yukon’s physical and health education curriculum includes age-appropriate learning as well as standards on physical literacy, health and active living, social and community health, and mental well-being.

We work with educators, health experts, and community members to ensure we use up-to-date practices to create an inclusive school environment. There are a number of areas within the curriculum for age-appropriate — for instance, in grades 4 to 7, we have Better to Know resources, previously known as SHARE.

We previously reviewed and revised the resources that were available to teachers beginning in the 2022-23 school year. There are a number of really good examples, so I would be happy to bring some of that information back as well around the curriculum that is being taught in schools that pertain to physical and health education curriculum that is directly related to SOGI.

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Is there any further general debate?

MLA Tredger: The last thing that I want to ask about today — in her opening remarks, the minister talked about Queer Yukon’s funding, and she said that they were looking to support them to find other sources of funding to make their funding more sustainable. Those weren’t the exact words, but that is, I think, the idea.

I am wondering if the minister can expand on what she meant by that, because when I hear that, I start worrying that it sounds like funding is potentially going to be cut in the future. While we are talking about Queer Yukon funding, in this budget, there is a reduction of \$175,000 from last year, and I understand from the briefing that is expected to come — \$175,000 more is expected to come in the supplementary. I am wondering if the minister can confirm that.

Then, finally, I understand that they have a one-year funding agreement that they have either signed or are in the process of signing, and I am wondering why it is a one-year agreement and not three, as has been done in the past.

Hon. Ms. McLean: The work that Queer Yukon does is very important and is invaluable to our community. We recently entered into a transfer payment agreement for this year with Queer Yukon for the full \$375,000. We will be working with them to find those ways of ensuring that the core funding remains whole for them. It may be through other partnerships or other sources, even perhaps within Government of Yukon. I know that there was some concern that the health navigator position was within that \$375,000. That is not the case. That is still funded directly through Health and Social Services, so part of the work that we want to do going forward is to work with our colleagues within government to bring all of the contributions into one transfer payment agreement that could then reduce the administrative burden of the organization.

Specific to the question, we are working with Queer Yukon to work toward future funding and how we can continue to keep their organization doing the important work that they do on behalf of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

MLA Tredger: I can understand why the government might prefer for it to be funded from other sources. If they are not successful in finding other sources of equivalent funding, will this government commit to continuing to fund Queer Yukon?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we will be working closely with Queer Yukon over this year. As we move into our next budgeting cycle, we have a process within government to determine the budget for all departments, and we will work within that process to, of course, bring any pressures that may be out there to that process, but our goal is to work with Queer Yukon to work with the funding that we have in front of us right now and work to ensure that we are able to determine other funding sources to assist them in continuing to have the amount of resources that they need to operate their organization.

MLA Tredger: That sounds like a no — the minister has not committed to doing that. That’s a concern, and we will be watching that very closely going forward, because that is a pretty important organization. It’s fine to hope that there are other sources of funding for them, but if that is the plan and there is no backup plan, that’s a real worry.

Anyway, that’s my last question for today. I thank the officials very much for being here. Thank you to the minister for the conversation, and thank you to all of the other folks in the department who are doing all the background work. I really appreciate it. That is all from me today.

Hon. Ms. McLean: I thank the member for the questions — both parties today. Thank you for the debate. I wanted to just give one last answer around Queer Yukon. When I answered the questions from the Member for Porter Creek Centre, I went over in detail the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* funding, and Queer Yukon is a recipient of those funds as well — a total over 2023-24 and 2024-25 of \$257,970. We certainly see this organization as being very important and we will continue to work with them. That's over and above the dollars that we are talking about here for core funding.

If you bring those funds together — I'm not speaking on behalf of any organization, but that is in place over this next year, and they were able to carry over funds that may not have been able to be spent. I don't have exactly that detail, but the total again is \$257,970.

Thank you again for the questions today. This is an important — small but mighty — part of our government. I really appreciate the work that the department does on behalf of Yukoners each and every day — and just the dedication and compassionate leadership that we continue to see from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate.

I just very much thank the officials — Sierra van der Meer and Sarah Crane — for assisting us today. I'm sure that folks from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate have been listening in on this debate, and I hold them up for the work that they do.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate?

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

Ms. Clarke: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Porter Creek Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$5,475,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$5,475,000 agreed to

Women and Gender Equity Directorate agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

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 now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*.

Department of Community Services — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have with me this afternoon Phil MacDonald and Matt King yet again.

I think that where we last left off, we had a question from the Member for Watson Lake. I will reiterate my comments from last time. I am out of time.

Ms. McLeod: I have a couple of questions about the recycling funding that the government announced for the City of Whitehorse. As we know, of course, the government offered up \$2.4 million for curbside recycling to the city, which was on the table until the EPR comes into force.

Can the minister tell us what would happen if EPR was delayed for a year, and is there a final date at which this funding would run out?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Deputy Chair, our commitment is to bridge the gap between the closure of Raven and the beginning of EPR. We have committed \$2.4 million. That is a commitment that has made it through Cabinet and Management Board. We have no intention — and we don't see any reason why EPR would be delayed. So, this is a hypothetical question.

Really, I think that what we should talk about today is the fact that we have put \$2.4 million on the table to help the City of Whitehorse because we know how important recycling is to the citizens of this town and we want to make sure that we are doing our part to make sure that Whitehorse residents have a place to recycle material here in Whitehorse. We know how important that is. We want to make sure that there is a place that they can go. I am looking forward to hearing how the City of Whitehorse deals with the proposal.

I hope that the City of Whitehorse actually steps up and fills the gap in terms of providing a recycling alternative to its citizens with the withdrawal of Raven. At this point, I am not going to speculate on what happens if EPR — it's hypothetical. We have no indication that EPR is going to be delayed, so we will deal with anything when it comes, but at this time, there is nothing on the horizon to suggest that.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that response.

I am going to move on to the green streets area of uptown. We know that construction was completed last year and we understand that it was too late in the season to complete the landscaping, so can the minister tell us when the landscaping will be complete?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The green streets landscaping project is expected to be done this summer. It's a priority and we will work on it as soon as we possibly can and get it done.

Ms. McLeod: Does the minister anticipate that the landscaping will address the issue of drainage in the area? If not, is there other work contemplated with regard to the utility pedestals? If so, again, what will the cost be for that work, and when does the minister anticipate that it will be complete?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: This winter, Community Services staff in the Land Development branch were contacted by a resident living on Iditarod Lane. They experienced water coming through a utility conduit into their basement. Staff assessed the design of the catch basins and culverts in the area and confirmed with engineers and specialists in the field that the design is to specification and the change in the area is built to design. Staff also coordinated with partners at the city and Northwestel to further investigate the installation of a utility corridor on private property. We understand that the utility provider took action to resolve the issue this winter. To date, no other specific concerns have been reported related to the utility conduit.

As we go forward with the landscaping, we are going to work as well with our partners and make sure that everything remains as good as it is today.

Ms. McLeod: If I understand what the minister is telling us, it's that this work will also be done this summer when the rest of the landscaping is complete. Is this part of an original tender, or are there additional costs here?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. As I said last time, it's always great having these conversations with the member opposite.

The landscaping work was tendered last year, and they ran out of time, so they have to get it done this year; it's part of an original tender. The total cost to construct the green streets, including surface construction, modification, and landscaping work, is approximately \$1.9 million — say \$2 million — which is on budget. Subsurface civil works were part of phases 4 and 5 construction costs. It goes back to — we are now currently working on phase 7 and beyond — so, it goes back a number of years. We're glad to have tendered this thing — the green streets landscaping — last year. Contractors lined up to get the work done.

As far as the work, we are going to work with the utilities to make sure that the utility infrastructure is up to snuff and that the grades are maintained. We are very optimistic that this is going to be completed this year.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you for that. We have heard some concerns from the neighbourhood about the state of the landscaping, particularly along the boulevards — and I'm talking about Whistle Bend generally. Can the minister confirm who has the contract for that landscaping, and does that contract include a warranty that

spans over multiple seasons to determine if it's going to hold up?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The landscaping is warranted for several years, so there is that. The jurisdiction for maintenance and whatnot of the landscaping depends on where it is in the subdivision. When the city signs off on the work, they take responsibility for it, so it just depends on where it is in the subdivision. If the member opposite has more detail about the geography, I am certain I can get more information for the member opposite, but generally speaking, the work is warranted, and then once the city accepts that the work has been completed to spec, they take it on, and it becomes a city responsibility.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that.

We have had a bit of a discussion about this before, and I'm going to reference the minister's letter to the city about the water treatment facility that has prompted some interest. I would like to follow up a wee bit.

Can the minister confirm that the Yukon government does not intend to provide any financial support for the development of a water treatment plant for Whitehorse?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question this afternoon. We have had a lot of conversations with the City of Whitehorse. They are a good partner, and we worked with them on securing infrastructure money from the federal government. As we all know, the federal infrastructure pot — the generosity we have seen from the federal government over the last several years — is still rolling out. We have the Investing in Canada infrastructure program. We still have millions of dollars allocated — hundreds of millions of dollars; I believe it's almost \$300 million of projects yet to come.

The city has identified a number of projects under the Investing in Canada infrastructure fund which we are funding. At this point, there is no more federal money identified directly for this. As far as the city is concerned, they have not yet come to me with a tangible, formal request for more funding for this project, which I believe they are scoping out now, as far as the City of Whitehorse goes.

I am awaiting information from the City of Whitehorse. We will try to marry whatever request we get from the City of Whitehorse on infrastructure to federal pots of money that may or may not be available. That's what we are going to try to do. It's not a hard no, but sewer and water is a city responsibility. We certainly work as best we can to support municipalities across the territory in providing good, clean drinking water to their residents. We certainly work not only with the municipality but also with the federal government to make sure we have infrastructure money for those projects. When and if those pots of money become available from the feds, we will certainly help bridge the City of Whitehorse to get access to those funds.

Ms. McLeod: I am going to move on a bit to some remarks that the minister made in his opening statement. He mentioned that the reservoirs in Mayo would be awarded this year.

Can the minister tell us the budget for this project and if he has a better sense of the timing for this work? What is the status

of the legal case against the contractor who did the first set of reservoirs that failed?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will refer the member opposite to our five-year capital plan on page 17. It has the details for the reservoir in that document. In 2024-25, we are expecting to spend somewhere between \$4 million and \$5 million on the reservoir in Mayo and, in 2025-26, another \$1 million to \$2 million. The total project cost is estimated at \$5 million to \$7 million.

I am not at liberty to get into any details of the legal case. The legal case is proceeding and moving along, wending its way through the justice system. This is a project that I would have preferred not to have to undertake. It was unfortunate that the material that was put in place the first time didn't work, frankly. I mean, that is why we are here. It failed, and so we are having to redo this. That has prompted the legal case.

We are working very closely with the Village of Mayo. The backup tank is operational. We are going to demolish the existing tanks and rebuild. The contract tender went out last summer and the completion is expected to be next year. We're making as much progress as we can in the face of a situation that none of us wanted.

Ms. McLeod: I am wondering if the original contractor was bonded and if it is reasonable to expect some money to flow from that bond to the Yukon government to assist with that replacement.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, the contractor was bonded.

Ms. McLeod: By extension, I am going to guess that the minister intends — assuming that the court case goes the government's way — that there will be some money flowing to them.

I am going to move on to my own riding of Watson Lake. The minister mentioned in his opening statement that the government is doing a \$14-million project in Watson Lake regarding the water, sewer, and road improvements. It is my understanding that this is just one portion of a much broader scope of work that the community wants to get done. Can the minister confirm that there are more phases beyond this project, and if so, how will they be funded?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, this is one phase of a multi-phase project in Watson Lake. This is typical of horizontal infrastructure; it is done in phases to keep the projects affordable to allow it to come out in an orderly fashion. I had a good conversation with the Town of Watson Lake when I was down there with the mayor and council. We talked about the horizontal infrastructure and how it's going to roll out. I know that we're looking at ways to fund future projects and we will have more to say on that in the future.

Ms. McLeod: I'm kind of wondering when, I guess, the Town of Watson Lake could be looking at getting some additional information by way of a planning discussion, because these multi-phase water and sewer projects don't just appear; you need to plan for them, of course. Everybody knows that. I'm wondering if the minister can get us a little more information on that.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: All right. This is a great question. I really appreciate the member opposite putting it on the floor today.

Since the signing of the small communities fund and the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, the Yukon, with the support of the Government of Canada — historic investment from the Government of Canada — we have committed more than \$777 million on 124 infrastructure projects.

Our Infrastructure Development branch manages the small communities fund, the Investing in Canada infrastructure program, and the Canada Community-Building Fund. The Infrastructure Development branch has also supported municipalities and First Nations on Infrastructure Canada application-based funding. We have seen in the last several years an unprecedented investment in infrastructure across the territory, and I will probably get into that a little bit more just to put it in context.

The member opposite is saying: When's the next one?

Sure, I get it. I know that the members opposite were reluctant to take any of this money because they were worried about investing in communities and debt. The fact is that we took a different approach, and we're doing it. We are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in infrastructure to improve our communities — from Beaver Creek to Old Crow to Watson Lake and all points in between — in ways that have never been seen in the territory before. We are happy to do that because we know how important it is for these municipalities. When I was down in Watson Lake, we had this conversation, as I said in an earlier message.

Next year, the team at CS is going to do preliminary design work — next year — with the Town of Watson Lake to meet the town's needs. I want to be clear that the municipality is responsible for sewer and water infrastructure, just like it is in Whitehorse and just like it is in Dawson City. It is a municipal responsibility. Now, we're talking about small towns here — small villages, in some cases — and we understand that it is difficult to manage these projects, so the team at CS is more than happy to come in with project managers and support the municipalities in doing some of this work — in planning, getting project managers to do the work for these small municipalities — because we know how difficult it is, so we will do project management on these municipalities' behalf.

If they want to do it themselves, if they want to start planning out these multi-phased projects themselves, they can do that. They can take on the responsibility that really rests with the municipal government that is duly elected by the citizens of the region. We can do a transfer payment agreement with the municipality and collaborate with them, but we recognize the challenges in a small town, and we will continue to support municipalities as they plan for the future and do that thing.

As a matter of fact, as I said earlier in this answer, the staff at Community Services will be doing preliminary design work next year for the next phases of the municipal infrastructure that the municipality needs. We will await new tranches of money from Ottawa, and hopefully, we can connect municipalities to new money as it becomes available.

I just want to say that it has been an unprecedented and absolutely fantastic investment that the federal government in Ottawa has made in the territory, from border to border, on behalf of Yukoners. I am very appreciative of that support that I have seen from our federal government.

I have seen how our communities have flourished under this unprecedented investment and unprecedented delivery of infrastructure projects. As I have said, 124 infrastructure projects — more than \$777 million spent across the territory. I have an itemized list of some of the stuff going on this year, and it is incredible. I really think that our communities are certainly benefiting from all of this incredible investment that we are making in Yukoners and in our Yukon municipalities.

Ms. McLeod: The consultant report for McConnell Lake flooding has been presented. What are the next steps, and when does the minister expect a decision to be made about which mitigation option will be chosen?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Deputy Chair, and I appreciate the question from the member opposite.

I made a commitment to go out and speak with residents of McConnell Lake, and we do have the report. I will be meeting with folks out that way, and I think that it is only appropriate to have a discussion with them before I make any announcements here on the floor of the House this afternoon.

Ms. McLeod: Fair enough; thank you for that.

What is the status of the psychology regulations? When does the minister anticipate them being ready, and will he commit to sharing the draft regulations with the psychology association prior to them coming into force?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are working very closely and extensively with the psychologists, as we have been drafting these regulations, and we have invited them to participate in the review and drafting of the standards. The director of the professional licensing group has asked for help on standards in two e-mails in the past months; we haven't heard back. So, we are working very closely with the psychologists, and we look forward to having these new regulations in place by the fall.

Ms. McLeod: This is a question about the Sima review. Can the minister give us an update on where this is at? Has the contract been awarded? When is it scheduled to be done? How will Yukoners be engaged on this?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, we are in the midst of finalizing a procurement with a company to proceed with the review of the act. Once that is finalized, I expect the company will go out and do targeted engagements with Yukon First Nations, municipalities, and transboundary Indigenous groups. That will be happening in the near future. We will award the contract and then the company will get its legs underneath it and go out and start the targeted engagement. This is going to be a fairly lengthy process to review the act and then come back with changes. That work is starting soon and it will carry on throughout the year and then will probably be back in 2025.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the officials for helping us out here today, and thank you to the minister. I will turn it over to the Third Party now.

Ms. White: I will use my 10 minutes wisely.

During the briefing, it sounded like there was not clarity yet on how many air tankers the territory had procured for fire season. A contractor was maybe pulling out of their contract to provide an aircraft. Can the minister provide an update on that? Why did the contractor pull out? Are our contracts not competitive? Is that a reason? Did they decide to fly in another jurisdiction? Contracts for both Air Spray and Conair have now expired as of March 31. Are there new ones in place?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I thank the member opposite for the question. It's great to resume our conversation this afternoon. I will report this afternoon that we have more aircraft in the Yukon this year than we've had perhaps ever before. We now have four light tankers and we are going to have a heavy tanker with a Bird Dog, so we will actually have more aircraft this year than we have in the past. Those contracts have all been secured.

The member opposite is correct; one of the contractors did decide to pull out. We met with that contractor to understand what was going on. We learned that, after we had tendered our tanker contracts and secured our tanker contracts, BC, faced with unprecedented change in the climate and in the way wildfires were experienced, actually changed their contracting in early 2024 after ours had gone out. They have gone to a much longer time period; the contracts are longer.

Subsequent to that, we are now assessing our contracting for tankers in the territory, and we are working to match our southern partners. We are looking at changing the way we contract for tankers here in the territory. We are working on that as we speak, but for this coming season, we have more aircraft than we have had before, and that is a good thing.

Ms. White: There is an image right now — I guess not an image — from Yukon Protective Services about an evacuation alert in the Klondike River Valley. It says — quote: "Klondike Valley Breakup Update (Thursday April 25, 2024)". "A Flood Watch is now in place for the Klondike River from the Confluence up to and including Dredge Pond. This is the intermediate

level of flood advisory, meaning river levels are rising and will approach or may exceed banks. Areas beside the river may flood."

Can the minister please let me know what supports are in place for residents who are now at risk of flooding and who have been put on evacuation alert?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First off, I'm very glad to see that the member opposite got the alert that we put out; it shows that it's working. I had informed my Cabinet colleagues just before coming in that this was happening. This isn't a surprise for anybody; we have been warning of potential flooding in the Klondike for months now. I have given several news conferences on it. So, this is happening as we have warned, and we don't know how it's going. This is an alert just letting people know, again, that the ice is moving, so they should be prepared. I know that the municipality and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in have been working very closely with their citizens to get them prepared for just such an eventuality.

Currently, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and the fire chief — the fire service up in Old Crow — are fielding questions from residents. Emergency Measures is on the scene and working

with the fire chief and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in as we speak. Situation reports are going to be flowing out of the Klondike now that we have actually put the alert in place. The alert is there to let residents know that they should be prepared and be alert for changes in their situation.

We have had two tabletop exercises up in the Klondike with EMO, the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and the municipality that went very, very well and have helped to forge better communications and better understanding among all three groups.

We are going to keep on doing what we are doing. We are working very closely with the municipality and the First Nation on this. We have a sandbagging machine up there. We have sandbag stations already identified. That's the situation in the Klondike right now. It is important that we keep in touch with people and we are doing that. We have learned from last year. All three — the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, the municipality, and ourselves — have made improvements and refinements to the way we respond to floods like this. With any luck, the ice will go out and things will be fine, but we are making sure that residents know what is happening as early as possible, which is why we have been talking about this so much for the last several months.

As I said, this doesn't come as a surprise to anybody. We are working very closely with the stakeholders in the Klondike and the residents.

We have several channels of communication open, as I mentioned. The member opposite actually got the Facebook post that we put out, but we have other channels — we are on the radio talking with folks. So, there is a lot of communication happening.

With that, Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

Hon. Mr. Streicker: 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 the 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. 213, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2024-25*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following sessional paper was tabled April 25, 2024:

35-1-152

Bill No. 38, Health Authority Act, reprinted with amendments (McPhee)