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HANSARD

Thursday, November 24, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2022 Fall Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, November 24, 2022 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I would probably be called out of order if I introduced your new moustache for Movember to the gallery — good on you — but instead, I would ask the indulgence of the Legislative Assembly to welcome today: Sacha Marceau, who is the regional advisor to me, as the Premier; Aaron Casselman, ministerial advisor to the Premier; and also, Sylvia Anderson, administrative assistant to the Premier. Thank you, folks. Thank you for all the work that you do.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome some guests here today for our tribute on the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence. We have: Birju Dattani, director of the Human Rights Commission; Vida Nelson, commission legal counsel for the Yukon Human Rights Commission; and Emilie Major-Parent, communication manager for Les EssentiElles, and Evelyn, her daughter, is here as well. Welcome. It is so nice to have a little baby in the House.

We also have: Natalie Taylor, executive director for Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; Susan Power, administrative and project coordinator for Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle; and, I think, Sofia Ashley, executive director from Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre.

Thank you so much for being here today.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any tributes?

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, which is held each year from November 25 and ends on December 10, international Human Rights Day. This year's events in Whitehorse are being coordinated in the Whitehorse community by Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre in partnership with many other community organizations. In Dawson City, events are being coordinated by the Dawson City Women's Shelter, and you can find a full listing of everything that they are doing — it's incredible — on

their website. We know that gender-based violence impacts citizens in all of our families, workplaces, and communities, and that it disproportionately affects indigenous women, young women, and those who identify as LGBTQ2S+.

Today, Yukoners are invited to meet at the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre at 5:30 p.m. for the Take Back the Night march to show public support for the safety of all women and gender-diverse people.

On November 25, tomorrow, there will be a gathering here in the Legislative Assembly from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to show support for women in Iran, who, this year, were in the international spotlight after the death, in custody, of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old woman who was detained for allegedly breaking strict rules around headgear.

Part of the 16 days campaign is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women in Canada on December 6. This day is a chance for us to reflect upon those lives that have been taken simply because of their gender.

I encourage all members to attend the vigil that will happen in the foyer of this building. We will remember the 14 women who were killed 33 years ago in the Montréal massacre. We will also remember the 42 known cases of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls in the Yukon. In addition, we must always reflect on the resistance and resilience of women, gender-diverse folks and their allies.

From the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and two-spirit-plus movement here in the Yukon to the women-led protests in Iran, women are joining in solidarity to defend their rights.

I encourage all members to join me in standing against gender-based violence today and everyday.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

Gender-based violence is abuse faced by individuals based on their gender — gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. Women, girls and gender-diverse people are at high risk of this type of violence. Even more so are women with disabilities, women of colour, trans individuals, and women who are homeless or underhoused.

Gender-based violence can take many forms. It can be physical or emotional violence. It can be financial violence. It can be sexual violence. These 16 days begin tomorrow with the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and finishes up on December 10 with Human Rights Day.

December 6 is an important date for Canada, as we honour and remember the 14 women who were murdered during the tragic anti-feminist shooting that occurred on that day in 1989 at École Polytechnique in Montréal. We honour the victims and also the survivors, as many more were injured that day. It was a senseless act of violence and cost 14 innocent women their lives. It is so important for us to remember this horrible event,

to talk about it, and to continue to work toward a world where this type of violence is a thing of the past.

December 6 has also come to be known as White Ribbon Day, a campaign that helps to address violence against women through knowledge and understanding for men and boys. Of course, we recognize that intimate-partner violence can occur in any relationship and can be initiated by either partner. Women continue to be disproportionately affected, but it is important for all to acknowledge that everyone has a role to play in addressing violence in the home.

We all have a role to play in addressing all types of violence. Just this week, we gave tributes in this House to the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Much of what was said during those tributes rings true today and is relevant to violence of any nature. As my colleague and the Member for Kluane said, this is unacceptable. As a community, as a country, as human beings, we are better than this.

Applause

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus in the recognition of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. We honour and amplify the voices of survivors and the grassroots organizations that support this activism here and around the world.

Today, I reflect on the violence facing the women of Iran. In September, Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman died in the custody of the country's morality police after she was arrested for allegedly wearing her hijab improperly. Following news of Amini's death, protests spread across the country with women at the forefront. In the weeks and months following her death, the country has erupted in protests that show little sign of ceasing, despite brutal crackdowns by the Iranian government.

Iranian women and their allies are fighting for their rights, but this isn't new. Iranian women have been at the forefront of political protests and change since the beginning of the 20th century. They have been fighting for their freedom for generations. Women's bodies have been policed; they have been regulated. From what they wear to how they behave, women have borne the brunt of morality police. Across the country, growing protests have been met with brutal violence from Iranian forces. Hundreds of people, including women and children, have been killed; hundreds more have been injured, and nearly 17,000 people have been arrested.

This is a painful example of why there is a need for this global campaign to end gender-based violence. And make no mistake — acts of gender-based violence continue to happen here at home as well. This campaign has always been a time to bring to the forefront the disproportionate levels of violence faced by women and girls, as well as diverse populations, including indigenous people, people of colour, LGBTQ2S+ community members, gender non-binary individuals, those living in northern, rural and remote communities, people with disability, newcomers, children, youth, and seniors.

Tomorrow at 12:10 p.m., you can join the Iranian Yukoners association and the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre here at the Jim Smith Building to participate in an event

to reflect on the events in "Iran! Women, Life, Freedom" — time for change.

Mr. Speaker, no matter where we live, we all have a role to play in ending gender-based violence.

Applause

In recognition of Canadian men's soccer team and FIFA World Cup

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to the Canadian men's first World Cup appearance in 36 years. Yesterday, thousands across our territory were sneaking a glance at their phones, televisions, and computers as Canada began their campaign against the number two ranked Belgian team. It was a special moment to hear our anthem and to see captain Atiba Hutchinson lead teammates at a World Cup finals. This team refers to themselves as "the new Canada". They are there to compete seriously and are not content to participate. Within minutes, we saw why, as Canada outplayed their more illustrious opponents and, as one telegraph journalist said, they were a joy to watch. Alas, a combination of bad luck and opponent quality meant that Canada lost one-nil with Belgium capitalizing on one defensive slip and a missed penalty kick by Canada, but neither made them break stride. They continued to control the match and, once again, made us believe, capturing hearts beyond our borders. The excitement for this weekend's match against Croatia is palpable, and I encourage Yukoners to wake up early to cheer our side on.

While the soccer captivates, hosting in Qatar has only served to further highlight the grim human rights situation. Qatar's abuses toward marginalized communities is no secret. This includes the stories of mistreated migrant workers who died in large numbers to build the infrastructure, as well as the LGBTQ+ people who are targeted by the regime. Mr. Speaker, Qatar punishes LGBTQ+ persons with sanctions ranging from three years in prison to the death penalty, simply for being themselves and loving who they love. This is exacerbated by FIFA, the international football federation, promoting the host's empty promises about non-discrimination and then looking away when they are exposed. All human rights abuses are distressing and they must, of course, be condemned.

It is also important to note that this mega event's carbon footprint is estimated to be around 3.6 million tonnes. This deserves scrutiny and is arguably greenwashing, given the organizers' dubious claims that this would be a carbon-neutral event. However, while I certainly urge us all to support Canadian athletes, it is vital that we remember the cost and call out hypocrisy of both the host nation and the organizing body.

It is still an exciting time for Canadian soccer. Let's don the red and white and cheer on the players. Go, Team Canada.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to wish Canada's men's national soccer team success at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. Yukoners and Canadians have long awaited the men's national team appearance at a World Cup — 36 long years of frustration.

We were thrilled to watch their opening match against second-ranked Belgium yesterday. Canada has proved that they belong. They have risen to the challenge, and as Coach Herdman said about how they will respond to this disappointing loss, we're going to beat Croatia.

We would be remiss if we didn't mention the challenges with this World Cup. Qatar has attracted criticism for being selected as the host. From the onset, there were reports of foreign workers being forced to build stadiums in unsafe conditions, leading to death on the jobsite. Former FIFA president, Sepp Blatter, who led the organization when Qatar was awarded the hosting rights, told a Swiss newspaper recently that Qatar is a mistake and that the choice was bad.

Moving the tournament to the winter in the middle of the professional season has led to disappointment for players across the globe who lacked sufficient time to recover from inevitable injuries that occurred during the course of their regular season. So, Canadian soccer fans feared the worst when superstar Alphonso Davies left his club game with a hamstring injury. Thankfully, the injury wasn't serious, and Alphonso was in uniform and leading Canada on the world stage.

But injuries to players aren't the biggest concern for many critics. Qatar's policy resulted in an alcohol ban in stadiums only two days before the tournament commenced. Long-time World Cup sponsor Budweiser will now be suing FIFA for breach of contract, and most importantly, queer fans from across the world were concerned for their safety if they attended the World Cup because of Qatar's social policies.

This World Cup is developing into a statement about LGBTQ2S+ rights. Many teams were planning to wear OneLove armbands as part of their kit until FIFA caved to Qatar's pressure to penalize any player doing that. In response, the German players covered their mouths during their pre-game team photo to symbolize censorship of people speaking out for human rights.

So, the World Cup should welcome everyone, so we support and applaud efforts to ensure that all fans are safe and able to be themselves when they attend.

As always, the excitement of the world's marquee sporting event will take over, and we will share the joy, sorrow, and disappointment of the players and fans from across the world. We join Yukoners who are excited to watch the Canadian men's national team at this World Cup, and we join the millions who are tuning in to enjoy the biggest global sporting event.

We wish our boys success over the coming month. Go, Canada, go.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to acknowledge the soccer World Cup. I say "acknowledge" and not tribute nor celebrate, because we cannot celebrate this event as it is. We cannot overlook the human rights record of the host country, Qatar. We cannot overlook the deaths and abuse of migrant workers as they built the stadiums. We cannot overlook the way women are denied the rights to make choices about their lives and are subject to prosecution for being the victims of sexual assault.

We cannot overlook the ongoing abuse of LGBTQ people, including the criminalization of homosexuality, imprisonment, and torture. We cannot celebrate an event held by FIFA. When team captains declared their intention to wear the OneLove armbands in support of LGBTQ rights, FIFA announced that any player who stepped on the field wearing these armbands would face yellow cards. FIFA chose to censor and repress even those very mild forms of support for the LGBTQ community, and we cannot pay them tribute.

We know that many athletes have worked very hard — some for their entire lives — to be at the World Cup, and we wish them the best, but this World Cup event is a shameful disregard of human rights, and we cannot celebrate it.

Applause

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Speaker: Under Tabling Returns and Documents, the Chair has for tabling, pursuant to section 22(8) of the *Human Rights Act*, the annual report of the Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators.

Are there any further returns or documents for tabling?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have for tabling the Yukon Judicial Council's annual report, 2021, which is tabled pursuant to section 37(2) of the *Territorial Court Act*.

I also have for tabling the health status report, 2021, which is tabled pursuant to section 6(1) of the *Health Act*.

I also have for tabling a legislative return.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Pursuant to section 15(3) of the *Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act*, I have for tabling, their annual report for 2021-22.

I also have for tabling two legislative returns: one regarding questions from general debate earlier in the session on Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and the second being a legislative return for submitted written questions.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to a written question.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I have for tabling Canada's National Adaptation Strategy.

Ms. Blake: I have for tabling from the Yukon Hospital Corporation the 2018, 2019, and the most recent 2020, staff satisfaction survey.

Ms. White: I have for tabling a sample order-in-council to end evictions without cause.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Ms. White: I have for tabling the interim report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

Mr. Dixon: I rise to give notice of the following motion:
 THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to provide adequate funding to the Child Development Centre and work with the centre to reduce the wait times for accessing services.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to meet with the Yukon Child Care Board to discuss a revised and proposed budget.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to create an innovative supported childcare system that reflects the needs of children, families, educators, and centres.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to share the results of the supported childcare program review with the Yukon Child Care Board and conduct a further third-party review of the current supported childcare system in order to identify priorities and gaps.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to work with the Yukon Child Care Board to modernize the *Child Care Act* and regulations.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to include funding in the 2023-24 capital budget to make the necessary repairs to Venus Place, Arctic Drive, and Duncan Drive in the next construction season.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to include funding in the 2023-24 capital budget to make necessary repairs to the soccer field at Golden Horn Elementary School.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to table the 2019, 2020, and 2022 Yukon Minerals Advisory Board reports during the 2023 Spring Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to join provinces, including Saskatchewan and Alberta, in standing up to the federal government and formally opposing the new

proposed definition of prohibited weapons, which would unfairly result in people having to surrender lawfully acquired hunting rifles and shotguns.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Education to follow through on her promises to parents, including ensuring that sensory rooms in Yukon schools are modified to protect the safety of children.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works to explain the \$11 million in cost overruns for the Old Crow health and wellness centre and tenplex housing project.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to respect the role of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Minister of Environment to ensure that wildlife management decisions are data-driven and consistently informed by both analysis and local knowledge, including the knowledge of hunters, residents, renewable resources councils, and First Nations.

I also rise to give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House recognizes the importance of the outfitting industry to the Yukon economy and society and the role that it has played in the development of the territory.

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

THAT it is the opinion of this House that FIFA should not penalize players and teams who wear #OneLove armbands at the World Cup in Qatar.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to address the increasing needs of youth and families by:

(1) increasing the total operational core funding of the Boys and Girls Club of Yukon to allow them to continue to deliver current essential programs that support gaps in programming; and

(2) extending services to a seven-day-a-week accessible model.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to take part in Canada Revenue Agency's organ donor initiative, allowing Yukoners to sign up for information on organ donation through their annual tax return.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon and Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that patients from communities who are being discharged from hospital have a discharge plan that includes:

- (1) transportation to their home community; and
- (2) accommodations upon discharge.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with Town of Faro officials and the Yukon Housing Corporation to complete a community needs assessment to identify community housing needs.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase core funding to the Humane Society Yukon, Mae Bachur, and the Humane Society Dawson City.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Yukon dental program

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today to let Yukoners know about the new Yukon dental program, which will launch in January. This new program is designed to fill gaps in our current programs and will provide all Yukoners access to essential dental care. The Yukon dental program began as a recommendation in the *Putting People First* report. Our government accepted all of the recommendations from *Putting People First* back in August 2020. It is also a commitment in the confidence and supply agreement with the Yukon NDP. We are very pleased to be bringing a dental program to Yukoners this January and expect it to serve as many as 8,000 Yukoners.

It will improve Yukoners' health and reduce costly interventions, because dental health contributes to our overall health. The program will include dental treatments necessary to relieve pain and infection, prevent disease, and restore chewing and social function. It will also offer full coverage for preventive care, such as routine cleaning and treatment for cavities.

The income-tested program will provide \$1,300 in insured benefits annually to Yukoners who do not already have dental coverage. It will work in concert with existing public dental programs, including pharmacare for seniors and Yukon children's dental program. We expect the Yukon dental program will evolve alongside the newly launched Canada dental benefit, introduced recently by the federal government, as this program progresses.

We understand that, for many Yukoners, this program will be life-changing. Untreated dental issues can lead to pain, to poor nutrition, to chronic disease, and to poor quality of life. The Yukon dental program will enable treatments for good oral health, provide for annual dental checkups and care, and prevent disease.

Dental care should be accessible to everyone, and this program will make sure Yukoners have the option to get the care they need. I want to acknowledge the dentists and denturists, and everyone involved in Yukon's dental services. We appreciate your cooperation through this change and look forward to receiving your input in the coming months as we roll out this new, innovative program.

I would also like to mention Pacific Blue Cross, which will manage the program. The Yukon dental program is an example of our deep commitment to improving health outcomes and reducing inequities. This is another example of initiatives that are moving our territory forward. We will ensure that there is an easy-to-access signup process, and our staff are preparing to help Yukoners access and navigate the program.

We look forward to the integration of this program, as it takes us another step forward in our journey to transform health services for Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: I think we can all agree that regular dental checkups and follow-up work are an important part of the overall health of Yukoners. That is, of course, why many employers offer this as part of their benefits packages, and benefits packages are an important part of recruiting and retaining employees.

While we were happy to see this program focused on lower income Yukoners who may not have access to such a benefits program, there are some questions and unintended consequences that the program may have. Companies are wondering if they should now remove dental coverage from their plans, since government is covering those costs, and allocate that money to a different benefit. They are wondering if they can even remove dental from their plans altogether.

So, can the minister tell us what employers should do? Should they remove their dental plans, or can they even remove their dental plans?

The minister mentions how the Yukon program will evolve alongside the newly launched Canada dental benefit introduced recently by the federal government. How does the minister expect the program to evolve? Will this double the benefit? Will there be a percentage split between the Yukon program and the federal program? Will one program cover some services and not others? Will there be limitations on the providers who can offer services under the programs? How will people living in rural Yukon communities be able to access the program and dental services?

The minister mentions that the dental program was first mentioned in the *Putting People First* report in August 2020, and the program is a component of the confidence and supply agreement with the NDP.

However, I have to note that section 4b of the CASA says that the program — and I quote: "... will be implemented and fully funded beginning with the 2022-23 budget." We are now three quarters of the way through the fiscal year, and the program isn't slated to come online until January. This is yet another broken CASA commitment by this Liberal government, and the program will not come into force until almost two and a half years after it was first recommended.

While there are questions remaining about this program, we are hopeful that providing more Yukoners access to dental care will help our overall health care system in the long run.

Ms. White: When Tommy Douglas, the leader of the CCF, first proposed a universal health program for all Canadians, dental care was included. It is well known that poor dental care can have serious long-term impacts on a person's health and well-being. Poor dental care can lead to the obvious cavities and gum disease, but it has also been linked to heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. Dental and oral health care is health care.

So, I have been in this role for 11 years and, in that time, I have had to advocate for people to receive the support that they deserved when it came to dental care from both the Yukon Party and Liberal governments. I think about the private dental clinic that identified the critical need of the community and responded with a free community dental day. They had lineups from long before they opened, straight through until they closed. I think about the times when someone needed help for dental coverage because successive governments never viewed preventive care as essential, and by the time they got to me, they needed critical intervention. I remember how hard it was to get them the support that they needed, how many letters needed to be written, and how much justification needed to be given. I think about the hoops that they needed to jump through and how all of this affected how they felt about themselves.

For the NDP, this has always been an issue of dignity. I think about these people and their stories often, so often that it was with them in mind that I started pressuring the Liberal government to create a universal dental plan long ahead of the *Putting People First* report. I was told that it was impossible. In the 2021 territorial election, creating a universal dental plan was part of the NDP platform because we recognized the critical need. Again, we were told that it wasn't possible, not by individuals, but by other politicians. In the year leading up to the federal election, Jagmeet Singh and I had a conversation, and he asked me: If there was one thing I wanted for Canada, what would it be? My answer: universal dental coverage. The federal NDP ran with that in their platform and they were told that it wasn't possible, not by individuals, but by other politicians. And look where we are now. It turns out that you can get a lot done with a confidence and supply agreement, Mr. Speaker. The impossible becomes possible.

I had really expected the Yukon to be first, if I'm honest. I mean, our election was months earlier, but I do appreciate that there were challenges. I thank those within the department who made this happen, because they are changing the course of people's health and lives.

The NDP vision of a dental plan wasn't to replace private insurance plans that are already offered by many employers, but to ensure that those without those plans have access to the preventive dental care that they need. It's critical the individuals accessing this dental plan will not need to pay out-of-pocket to access service; otherwise, cost will still be a barrier to preventive health.

So, we appreciate all those who work to support brighter smiles in the Yukon, and we look forward to seeing the impact of this program as it rolls out and what it will change for the years to come.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Our government continues to transform the Yukon's health care system. We remain focused on a more holistic, collaborative, and people-centred system that will better meet the needs of all Yukoners. We're making substantial progress in implementing the recommendations identified in the *Putting People First* report. A new dental program that we are talking about today is one of those recommendations in the plan, and we are pleased to be moving forward with it.

As I mentioned, the *Putting People First* recommendation is also an element of the confidence and supply agreement, which our Liberal government entered into with the NDP caucus, and, of course, the Yukon Party — or at least its leader — also fully endorsed.

The Yukon dental program will help close a gap in services and provide Yukoners in need with access to critical dental care, and will help reduce the burden of our health care system and the burden for individuals in receiving that care. As I mentioned earlier, the income-tested program will provide \$1,300 in insured benefits annually to Yukoners who do not have dental coverage already. This program is in addition to our existing programs, and it's important for Yukoners to know that the children's dental program provides preventive and treatment services at no cost to school-aged children and kids in preschool. The school-age program provides services to children in kindergarten to grade 8 in Whitehorse, and from kindergarten to grade 12 in rural areas where no resident dentist is present. The social assistance aid for health care services program, which currently covers some dental services for Yukoners, will also be affected by this new program, and that will remain in existence, if necessary, but we expect most Yukoners in that category will migrate to this new program.

The extended health care benefits for seniors ensures that residents aged 65 or older, and their spouses aged 60 or older, have access to benefits for vision, pharmaceutical, and dental services.

The Yukon dental program is another key action of our government's strategy to transform Yukon's health care system to improve these services for all Yukoners. Mr. Speaker, transforming a health care system and making these kinds of improvements certainly takes time. It's not something that the Yukon Party would know about because no efforts were made in this area.

We continue moving forward to achieve a health and social system that is high performing, collaborative, culturally safe, anti-racist, and puts Yukoners at the centre. We know that improving access to health care services and supports for Yukoners is at the heart of ensuring that everyone is cared for and able to thrive.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD**Question re: Public sector growth**

Mr. Dixon: According to the Government of Yukon's Public Accounts that are tabled in the Legislature every year, the government spent \$534 million on personnel in 2016. In the most recent Public Accounts tabled earlier this Sitting, that amount that the Yukon government will spend on personnel this year has ballooned to over \$716 million. That's an incredible increase of over \$182 million in just six years. Mr. Speaker, it's a 34-percent increase. This massive 34-percent increase in the size of the public service is clearly the defining legacy of this Premier. Does the Premier acknowledge that the legacy of his time in office is ballooning the public service by over one-third?

Hon. Mr. Silver: If you take a look at the last 20 years of public service, the Yukon Liberal Party is not number one for growing government. It's not even in the second position either. Both of those accolades go to the Yukon Party. Both had years, previous to us, that ballooned — to use the member opposite's word — the public service to the largest increases in those years.

We have had this conversation quite a few times about the temporary jobs that were offered here because of COVID. A healthy economy needs healthy people. We asked the members opposite which jobs they would cut — no answers from the members opposite. They keep on telling everybody that the only reason we have a good GDP is because of the ballooning growth here in the territorial government. That has been debunked by the Minister of Economic Development.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: And here we are again. They don't like my answers so they talk as I try to answer them here in the Legislative Assembly.

A lot of the jobs that we have talked about are temporary and necessary for COVID. Outside of that, we have done a yeoman's job of actually making sure that we are providing the programs and services necessary for Yukoners, and doing so with a conscientious lens to make sure we have the government grow at a sustainable rate for the programs and services that Yukoners deserve.

Mr. Dixon: Well, let's take a look at the job numbers themselves. The Bureau of Statistics put out these job numbers. In December 2016 when the Liberals took office, there were 8,600 employees in the public service and 12,900 employees in the private sector. In October of this year, there were 10,700 employees in the public service and 12,700 employees in the private sector. This means that, since the Liberals have come into office, there are more than 2,000 more employees in the public sector than when they began and, in the private sector, 200 fewer.

The public sector has ballooned by thousands and the number of people working in the private sector has shrunk. Does the Premier acknowledge that his legacy is an explosion of growth in the public service at the cost of the private sector?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Even during a pandemic when we increased the most of our jobs — temporary. Even during two years of a pandemic, we did not come close to the two years in

which the Yukon Party grew the government larger than any government in the history of the Yukon. Again, it's very interesting that they are sitting here and saying: Do as we say and not as we do.

I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Health and Social Services — the largest growth in FTEs was in Health and Social Services. Do you know what that was for, Mr. Speaker? It was for 20.6 FTEs for Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services in the social services department — a part of the government that was woeful under the Yukon Party. Are these the jobs that the Yukon Party is coming for if they ever form government again? Are they going to gut the mental wellness programs again? I hope not.

Mr. Dixon: I know the Premier doesn't like these statistics, but they are the facts. Personnel costs have increased by over one-third. That means that the Yukon spends \$182 million more in wages and salaries than it did just a few years ago. The number of jobs in the Yukon has grown by thousands since the Liberals took office, but that job growth has been overwhelmingly in the public sector.

The number of people working in the private sector has flatlined while the public service has exploded. None of this is sustainable, but this is the Premier's legacy. Will the Premier now acknowledge that the defining legacy of his time in office has been the rapid growth of government at the cost of a flatlining private sector?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It would be my opinion that part of my legacy is growing reconciliation and actually working with First Nation governments, something that the members opposite have no clue about.

The actual safety of Yukoners — healthy people means a healthy economy. Those are the FTEs that we're talking about. Mental wellness — that's another legacy that I'm proud of. There are four mental wellness hubs in the communities and over 20 employees. The members opposite had two mental wellness nurses for all of rural Yukon — woeful and shameful.

The government is fully committed — fully committed — to providing a transparent and up-to-date budget of FTEs, which the members opposite did not, in its main and supplementary budgets. The government shares these — updated — with the House.

Planning these FTEs is extremely important. The Public Service Commission and the Department of Finance work together to both approach and to work on options when we are taking a look at making sure that we provide the mandate that we need.

Again, ladies and gentlemen who are listening in today, our number one largest increase in the budget is 20 — 20 is the largest and it's for mental wellness.

I can see what's happening with the Yukon Party. If they ever do get a chance to get into the government again, they will be gutting the public service, clearly.

Question re: Implementation of opposition motions

Mr. Cathers: Since losing three seats in the last election, losing the popular vote, and plummeting in the polls,

the Premier has struggled with the new reality. He has struggled to accept the reality that the Liberals no longer hold a majority.

In our system of democracy, government is subject to the will of the elected legislature. Unfortunately, the Premier has demonstrated an unwillingness to accept that. So, will the Premier recognize the clearly expressed will of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and write to the Prime Minister to request an exemption for home heating fuel from the Liberal carbon tax as this House voted democratically to do yesterday?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I will just start by saying that I will not.

I will also say that I was very pleased to see the NDP and the Yukon Party supporting our made-in-Yukon solutions when it comes to carbon pricing, because we just saw that the Northwest Territories and the Maritimers had to give up their exemptions for home heating fuel.

Members opposite are asking us to do something that other jurisdictions tried and failed. So, I'm not really sure why the members opposite are continuing to not look at what's happening on a national scale, and also continuing to talk about the glories of a fossil fuel world and it continuing for decades here in the Yukon.

We are completely disagreeing with the members opposite. We are providing rebates for inflation; we have talked about those quite a few times in the Legislative Assembly — a great honour to be able to talk about those. We have kept people safe during the pandemic as well. A healthy population is a healthy economy. We have the best economy in Canada; we have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada; and we are putting in measures to make sure that the reflections of international inflation here locally are not exacerbated in the people who have the most needs, but we will disagree with the members opposite, time and time again, when it comes to extending a fossil fuel future here in the Yukon.

Mr. Cathers: I can't say I'm surprised by the Premier's answer. This isn't the first time that he has ignored the clearly expressed will of this Legislative Assembly. Yukoners remember very well that, despite a majority of the Legislative Assembly voting to have the former Minister of Education removed from Cabinet, the Premier instead dismissed that democratic vote, dismissed the voices of parents, and kept her in Cabinet.

Yesterday, the Legislative Assembly voted and passed a motion calling on the Premier to seek the advice of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner about the serious question of whether his former minister contravened the conflict of interest act.

So, will the Premier respect the expressed will of the Yukon Legislative Assembly and write to the conflicts commissioner to seek his advice?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It's nice to see the greatest hits here from the members opposite, and it's nice to actually be asked a question in the Legislative Assembly in Question Period. The member opposite has avoided me the whole session, so I'm glad that I finally get at least one day to maybe just reiterate some of the answers.

What I will say about the two issues that the member opposite just brought up, we did ask the Leader of the Yukon

Party to apologize to the Legislative Assembly for misleading people by saying that there was an addendum to a briefing note — the member opposite definitely said in Hansard — that didn't exist. That briefing note, with that addendum, was the basis of a — well, it will be out of order if I say it — but an attack on a minister that was unfounded and was found out, through an independent review, to not be the case. We offered for the member opposite to correct the record; he refused to — he refused to — and then stopped asking questions about the issue. So, I'm glad that the member opposite is now bringing these things up again.

The ball is in the court of the Yukon Party when it comes to Hidden Valley. The Leader of the Official Opposition should apologize for misleading the Legislative Assembly on an addendum that did not exist.

Mr. Cathers: Well, that was quite the spin by this Premier. He is arrogant and out of touch, and, Mr. Speaker, the Premier's —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The member opposite just referred to a member of this House as being arrogant. That's abusive and insulting language and is out of order, according to Standing Order 19(i).

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

Mr. Cathers: I don't believe that language has been ruled out of order in the past. The Government House Leader this session has tried to invent new Standing Orders.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: This is a dispute between members. I would caution members to temper their remarks.

Member for Lake Laberge, please.

Mr. Cathers: The Premier's continued refusal to seek the advice of the conflicts commissioner raises the question of why he would not want the conflicts commissioner to weigh in on this matter. Perhaps a future Premier will view things differently.

Another motion that was voted on and passed by the Legislative Assembly this Sitting was about the federal Liberals' so-called "gun buyback program", which, of course, is actually confiscation of lawfully acquired property. This flawed approach has been criticized by several provinces and the National Police Federation, which represents RCMP members.

So, the question for the Premier is simple: Will he respect the will of the Legislative Assembly and follow through on the motion that was passed by this House in October, by writing to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Mr. Silver: What I will say — in response to the member opposite again besmirching the name of now a current chief in the Yukon with these allegations — and reiterate once

again is that the only sector of this whole community that is asking any questions about this privacy commission issue is the Yukon Party. If they didn't have such a track record of personal attacks, comments about persons in disparaging ways, and also attacks of other members in this Legislative Assembly, then, you know, that might be a different story.

But again, we looked into this and there is nothing to it, and the members opposite, on the last day, have clearly run out of questions.

Question re: Rent control

Ms. White: Yesterday, the Minister of Community Services questioned my colleague about our priorities. So, today, I want to talk about his. With the cost of living on the rise and prices of homes skyrocketing, more and more Yukoners are renting. We already know that the Liberals don't care about tenants; they have left giant loopholes in the legislation and have actively refused to fix them. Worse — the minister has now said that rent control will end as soon as he can make it end. At a time when Yukoners are struggling to make ends meet — and we talk almost daily in this House about inflation and cost of living — the Minister of Community Services is openly advocating for making life more expensive for tenants.

What does the minister have to say to tenants who will be facing unsustainable rent increases in February when he removes the rent cap?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What we are talking this afternoon is increasing housing opportunities for Yukoners, but what we see are really two visions of how this can be accomplished. So, there are two visions here — the New Democrats campaigned on, and also championed, implementing a rent index with no consultation. The Yukon Liberal Party campaigned on increasing supply of properties in the territory to help make life more affordable for Yukoners. But we are all, in this House, searching to do the same thing. We really do want to make life more affordable for Yukoners and we have taken many, many steps to do that.

We understand that the rent index was part of the confidence and supply agreement. The confidence and supply agreement sunsets in January 2023. We are all looking for stable, affordable housing. It's the foundation for the health and well-being of all Yukoners. We are meeting increasing housing demands in the territory. That's not something any one government or organization can accomplish on their own. We are continuing to develop and support partnerships and innovative approaches to address housing needs in the territory.

Ms. White: I am going to disagree with the minister. What we are talking about is his turning away from tenants. That's what we are talking about.

The Yukon NDP didn't table a bill to end eviction without cause, because a full overhaul of the legislation is needed. That's why we have been calling on the government to pass an order-in-council, so tenants can be protected from eviction without cause while a review is being done.

It's not even that hard to understand, but I guess protecting people and doing the right thing are concepts that the minister

chooses not to grasp. On one side, we have the Yukon Party speaking out against minimum wage, and on the other side, the Liberals promising to make rents more expensive in February. It seems the Yukon NDP is the only party who will advocate for Yukoners.

The reason why we fought so hard for rent caps in the Yukon was due to the amount of people facing shocking rent increases — increases of 30, 40, or even 50 percent. We all know how wrong that is.

So, will the minister do the right thing, renew the rent cap, and end evictions without cause?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We hear the concerns from tenants, the call to action from the Safe at Home Society and others regarding no-cause evictions. This issue has been brought to the forefront of this current rental housing market in the context of the rental index, and we appreciate the range of perspectives on this matter.

The *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* was drafted at the time to balance the needs and rights of landlords and tenants alike, outlining a process to end a tenancy, either with cause or without cause. Making a change to how a landlord or a tenant can end a tenancy would require a change in law. This takes time. It requires consultation with landlords and tenants with consideration on how to rebalance the rights of both parties, while also clarifying how either party could end a tenancy arrangement. We are not going to go into this willy-nilly with no consultation. It needs careful consideration.

We are reviewing the landlord/tenant regimes in place across the country, and we are exploring options to inform future consideration and decisions in the context of Yukon laws.

Ms. White: I will remind the minister that his government has been government for the last six years.

So, the minister said before that he couldn't just pause eviction without cause without regulation, but we know that is not accurate. I just tabled an example of what that regulation could look like. The hard reality is that the Liberals would rather let people get evicted for their own political strategy, rather than doing the right thing.

Tenants and housing advocates have repeatedly asked the government to do the right thing, but instead, the government has turned their back on them. Every tenant in the Yukon is at risk of being evicted by no fault of their own, because of this government's continued inaction. They had six years to review the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*, and they haven't. They would rather see people be evicted and face housing insecurity than fix the many problems that exist with the law.

What does the minister have to say to the hundreds of tenants he is choosing to leave behind?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The rent index was a priority for the NDP, as I said. They campaigned on the rent index, and we and the Yukon Party both agreed to support their rent index policy through the confidence and supply agreement. We appreciate the NDP's willingness to work together to address housing pressures in the territory, but we have shared — and did share — with the NDP, prior to the rent index coming into play, concerns with this policy, as did the chambers of commerce, as

did landlords — but without any consultation, they wanted to proceed. Now, again, they are coming forward with some order-in-council suggestion, without any consultation or due diligence, to correct a problem that is actually in legislation.

We have to make sure that we have — we believe in responsible decision-making. We want to serve all Yukoners when we do that responsible decision-making. We need realistic solutions to the challenges Yukoners are facing. If people are being evicted as a result of the rent index policy, then it's clearly not making affordable housing more accessible.

Question re: Affordable housing and land development

Mr. Hassard: As the Yukon continues to face an increasing challenge with affordable housing, the minister responsible for housing is unfortunately developing a reputation for being quick to make announcements and take credit, but slow to actually deliver on his commitments. I would like to ask for a few updates on some projects.

In March of this year, he promised that the project at 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street would be ready this summer. He even went so far as to say — and I quote: “Just for the record, hold me to it on this answer ... we’re looking at the end of June or mid-July...”

Can the minister tell us when the 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street affordable housing project will be ready for Yukoners who need to move into this much-needed housing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am glad we are having the opportunity to go through the same questioning that we did a couple of weeks ago on this topic. You are absolutely correct. In the spring session, I said I would take full responsibility for the timeline. I came back into the Legislative Assembly this fall, and the timeline was missed. I definitely took full responsibility for that.

The problem at hand is that there was a flaw in the flooring that was put into the new building, and we were grappling with the fact that there is legal obligation to ensure that we look after taxpayers’ dollars, and we made sure that flooring is replaced with suitable flooring, and not at the cost of Yukon taxpayers.

So, there is a delay. What we have asked the Housing Corporation is to still look at the logistics of this and fast-track getting people into the building. What I’ve been told by the department is that they are moving through that now, as we go into the end of this calendar year, so absolutely, yes, there have been challenges with it. I will say that I want to commend the project managers at Yukon Housing for where they have kept within budget, understanding that this project was built in the middle of a global pandemic with supply chain challenges. And so, again, I think all Yukoners are well aware that we did go through a global pandemic, materials have been more expensive, and I think that, in this case, the folks at Yukon Housing have done a fantastic job.

Mr. Hassard: Well, I’m sure that anyone who has heard the minister say, “hold me to this answer”, will wonder what it means whenever he makes his next commitment, so let’s try another one.

During the last election when he was Deputy Premier, the housing minister stood in front of the 5th Avenue and Rogers Street property and announced his party’s housing platform. The property was so important that they used it as a backdrop for their housing platform release. A few weeks ago, the minister admitted it, too, was delayed, but said that 300 lots would be available very soon. So, I’m wondering if the minister can tell us when that commitment will be fulfilled.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think what the member opposite meant was that we would be potentially looking at 300 units, not lots; so, I’ll help him out there, but what was really interesting was — that line of questioning weeks ago was based on the fact that we had a debate in the House, and I talked about the fact that we had a mudslide that occurred — which everybody in the territory is well aware of. The leader of the opposition party said that I was disingenuous in the fact that I said that was what has held us back on our RFP.

Look, the city communicated with us; they told us that we needed to go and make sure there was geotechnical work done to make sure the site was suitable to develop. That’s a fact, and that’s the truth. The other comments that were made that day were focused on the fact that we were bouncing back and forth on the decision-making, and the funny thing was — left this Chamber, went upstairs, and you know what I found, which was really interesting? It was a 2015 press release from the Yukon Party committing to give the properties to somebody and that the work was underway. Then, in 2016, there was another press release talking about how — now there was more work done, or it was underway, and they were going to give it to somebody else.

The funny part was, the person who was asking me the question in the Legislative Assembly was who put the press release out. So, again, we see nothing done on 5th Avenue and Rogers Street — get fired up if you want — nothing done on it, and here we are, we are doing the work —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: — and we are getting it done.

Mr. Hassard: It appears that the minister is definitely not getting it done, as he states, but anyway, it is easy to see, Mr. Speaker, why the Office of the Auditor General has characterized the minister’s work as a startling lack of progress, even the minister says that he is getting it done.

The OAG has also found that the minister has not done an adequate job of addressing adequate or affordable housing for Yukoners in the greatest need. One of the minister’s responses to this criticism has been the Safe at Home project, to convert a former hotel into housing. In fact, he directed \$15 million of federal dollars allocated to the Yukon toward that project.

So, can the minister give us an update on when this so-called “rapid housing initiative” will be welcoming tenants?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The report from the Auditor General, we humbly accepted and committed to that work — a lot of work that is underway already. But what is hilarious to watch, is the fact that the person who is asking me the questions, I believe, at one point had some responsibility for housing in the Yukon government. If you go back and look at the actual time

frame for the OAG report — you're right, I will take that on. I think that I was on the job for four months of the entire report.

Again, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin will not take any responsibility on that, but, look — we will do that work. We will support NGOs. You can see right now that people are all striving to take on the responsibility of building housing, but you know what? Do they want to do that, if they get smeared by the Yukon Party, by one mistake that they make, when they undertake these projects — trying to fill the gap that was left by the Yukon Party, when they didn't want to spend the money that we got from Ottawa for affordable housing?

So, again, people can holler off-mic, but the reality is that Yukoners remember — Yukoners remember exactly what happened — two different times on bilateral agreements on that money. We will continue to go out. We will do things in an innovative way. We will fill that gap when it comes to housing, and again, I thank our partners at Safe at Home, the Anti-Poverty Coalition, First Nation development corporations, and the leadership at Yukon Housing, as we undertake this challenge.

Question re: Sexual abuse within elementary school, Child and Youth advocate review of

Mr. Kent: So, yesterday, the Minister of Education tabled her response to the October 20, 2022, report by the Child and Youth Advocate. In that six-page response, the minister leans heavily on the work done in the safer schools action plan and offers very few new commitments.

This is inconsistent with what the Child and Youth Advocate specifically told the minister. Here is what the advocate said — and I quote: “To be clear, a response to this review and its recommendations that merely subsumes the Advocate’s review into the Safer Schools Action Plan (and steps taken since) is not adequate.”

Does the minister believe that her reliance on the safer schools action plan is an adequate response to the Child and Youth Advocate, despite the advocate’s clear statement to the contrary?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we are talking about the well-being, safety, and protection of our students when they are in our care. That’s one of our most enduring priorities. I stated yesterday, and I will state again today, that we really appreciate the work that the Child and Youth Advocate did on behalf of Yukoners. The review that she did for us — I tabled that document yesterday.

The Government of Yukon is continuing to work closely with the Child and Youth Advocate. We have accepted all the recommendations in principle in the October 2022 review and committed to continuing system-wide corrective actions. I think that the member opposite needs to read the response again and recognize that there are a number of actions that move into areas within the reimagining inclusive and special education and the work we are doing to respond to the 2019 Auditor General report.

There are a number of actions, as a result of her recommendations, that do fit into the safer schools action plan. I will continue to build on my answer as we go forward.

Mr. Kent: I have to remind the minister that she actually questioned the legal authority of the Child and Youth Advocate to even conduct this review and issue this report back in the summer, when it first came to light.

Much of the Child and Youth Advocate’s report highlights the inadequate response and lack of therapeutic supports for those children and families affected since 2019. The advocate criticized the minister’s response and the lack of necessary support for those affected.

While the response that the minister tabled yesterday outlines a number of actions that will be completed under the safer schools action plan, we know that the advocate was looking for more. Other than items in the safer schools action plan, can the minister tell us about any tangible changes that she has implemented since receiving the advocate’s report in October?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, at the centre of all of our decision-making is the well-being of Yukon children, and that remains at the centre of our decision-making and action. There is nothing more important than the safety and protection of students when they are in our care. I have spent a tremendous amount of my time focusing on supports for children and for families, and particularly have worked closely to ensure that the Hidden Valley Elementary School is supported, as our other schools need to be as well.

We have worked very closely with the Child and Youth Advocate and have completely cooperated with the review that she conducted. As I said, there are a number of actions that are in the response, if the member will go back and read it, that clearly, clearly indicate the work that we’re doing on inclusive and special education.

Again, Mr. Speaker — I said this yesterday, and I’ll say it again today — it’s really great that the members opposite are now thinking that education is important in the Yukon. They had a very huge opportunity, especially the critic, to make changes and did not do so. That’s the difference between the Yukon Liberal government and the Yukon Party government — we’re taking action.

Mr. Kent: Over the course of this Sitting, and again just now, today, the minister has emphasized that children and students are at the centre of the government’s response. She has said that repeatedly, but if there is one single finding in the Child and Youth Advocate’s report that is absolutely clear, it is that children have absolutely not been at the centre of the government’s response. The very first line in the advocate’s report says this — and I’ll quote: “Children have not been prioritized, and their rights have been violated...”

So, can the minister tell us why there is such a massive gap between what she says here in the Legislature and what action she actually takes?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we have worked very closely with the Child and Youth Advocate. We have undertaken our own review of what has taken place at Hidden Valley Elementary School and have taken many corrective actions. There were seven recommendations from our report that we actioned immediately — it included 23 actions

government-wide, and 13 of those are now complete. We are on-target to complete those by the spring of 2023.

As well, we are picking up where the Yukon Party clearly didn't do the work, and they don't like to hear it, but you know what, Mr. Speaker? The truth is the truth. They had 14 years to deal with issues within our school system. The othering of children has brought us to where we are today, and the system-wide approaches that we are taking are concrete; they are going to change education for all Yukon children.

Mr. Speaker, it's good that they are now paying attention to this, but they had a chance; they didn't do the work; we are doing the hard work. If it was easy, perhaps they would have done it, but it's not. These are incredibly difficult times, and we are working with families and keeping children at the centre.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 206: *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 22, the Yukon Development Corporation, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Yukon Development Corporation

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I would, first of all, like to welcome colleagues from the Yukon Development Corporation. On my right is the president and CEO of the corporation, Mr. Justin Ferbey, and on my left is our senior policy advisor, Jamie McAllister, and I thank them for being

here today to help answer questions from the opposition on the Yukon Development Corporation's supplementary budget.

I'm just going to say a couple of remarks to begin with because, just one week ago, we had the corporation along with Yukon Energy and various witnesses, and they answered lots of questions then. We have already had some debate about the Yukon Development Corporation when, I think, we were debating the *Clean Energy Act*.

To begin with, we have really increased our operations — our O&M budget — by a little over \$3 million. That has to do with our inflationary relief rebate of \$50 a month for Yukoners — that was for June, July, and August — and then recently we announced that we are extending that again for October, November, and December. So, I anticipate coming back into the spring Legislative Assembly again with another supplementary budget. That's the big change.

I'm happy to answer questions from opposition members.

Ms. Tredger: I would like to thank the officials as well for being here to answer questions today. I want to start with the money from the Arctic energy fund that was not spent. My understanding is that it was allocated to organizations that ended up not using it. Could the minister talk a little bit about that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The reduction really reflects some changes that were made to a couple of proponents after the mains — after we passed our budget in the spring. So, it's the Beaver Creek solar project — they secured other federal funding ahead of the Arctic energy fund. Also, the Kluane wind project reduced its Arctic energy fund allocation, also securing additional funding from other federal sources. The funds that they have secured are fully recoverable and accessible in future years. So, there was a \$5-million reduction to the Arctic energy fund, and that has been offset by a \$5-million increase on the Investing in Canada infrastructure program.

I will stop there to see if there are further questions.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for correcting me on the \$5 million — I forgot about the extra zeroes in the budget lines.

So, I guess my question is: Why other sources of funding worked better for these proponents, and whether there are things about the Arctic energy fund that aren't working for proponents such that they are seeking funding elsewhere? Is it a red tape issue? Are there too restrictive parameters on the funding? I am wondering if the minister can comment on that and whether the application process for that fund needs to be re-jigged so that it is more accessible to people.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This mostly has to do with a fit for the proponents. For example, with the Beaver Creek solar project, it was really around timing. There was other funding that they could secure so they took it. It was an opportunity and that was good.

With the Kluane wind project, it was really around alignment and right down to the reporting requirements that were going to be there. Again, there was another opportunity for other funds that became available and were utilized. We support that.

One of the good reasons for that is that now we get that \$5-million room back in our Arctic energy fund that we can

reuse. The money is not lost at all; it's just not spent here. In that sense, it is good news.

Ms. Tredger: I am certainly glad to hear that there are lots of funding opportunities available for green energy right now. I just wanted to make sure that — when we have money available and it has not been taken, it makes me worried that there is something about the process that is making it difficult. I guess I would just encourage the minister to make sure that the money we have available is really accessible to people and that they can access it when they need it.

I want to talk a little bit more about the interim electrical rebate, which was, I believe, the program where people were getting money credited to their electrical bills through ATCO. My first question is: Was any money provided to ATCO to administer that program?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: To answer the latter question, there were no administration dollars that flowed to ATCO. We reached out to them and asked them to do this and they agreed. There was no loss of the rebate going to Yukoners. There was no charge to us as a government to implement it.

Second of all, the development corporation, at all times, works with our communities to help them navigate through all of the opportunities that exist out there around funding. For example, I know that they are often in conversation with the funders — often that is Ottawa — and making sure that they are up on how each of the funds work and trying to tailor them, and I think that this is an example — these two cases — of where it was seen as an improvement of the funding for the partners in Beaver Creek and in Burwash. We believe that this is good news, especially that it gives us this extra opportunity. I have just checked with the deputy minister and confirmed that they work at all times to support communities to access funds.

Ms. Tredger: Thank you for that; I appreciate that. I appreciate the answer. I think that I actually meant the “inflation relief rebate”, not the “interim electrical rebate” and I think you both caught that, so that is good.

My understanding is that the inflation relief rebate for residential customers is \$50 per month per electricity bill, but there are customers who have many households on the same electricity bill. My understanding is that those customers — or collective customers — are still getting only \$50, even though many households are represented on that bill.

Is the minister aware of this problem and is he looking into it? Does he have plans to correct it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, I thank the member for that question. The president and I have even gone and talked with — sort of an apartment building to talk to them about their situation, because they had set up their apartment so that it was just on one meter. The reason that we chose this rebate — it was not intended to be forever. It was a short-term initiative, which we identified as being able to apply automatically to all non-government, residential, and commercial electricity bills. It was just seen as a way to have an immediate — and deepest — impact across the Yukon.

It's one of the tools that we chose, but I have also talked to some Yukoners who are off-grid. They generate their own electricity. Of course, they are not going to get that rebate,

either, so there is always an attempt to get as broad as possible, but there are challenges. We have had several conversations with Yukoners about how they fit or don't fit under the approach, but the approach was meant to go out and reach as widely as possible as quickly as possible.

Ms. Tredger: So, yes, I imagine, when you roll out a program quickly, there are challenges.

My understanding is that there is a second iteration of that program coming up in the second supplementary budget. Is the minister planning to fix any of the problems he identified with the first round in the second round?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is currently an extension of the program that we got set up. The questions that have been posed to us about rate classes, and things like that, they are deeper questions. They are things, for example, if we were to try to create new rate classes, those are questions that we have to go to the Utilities Board with, and things like that.

We are working, right now, to review and update the *Public Utilities Act*. So, this is a question that — we have identified this challenge and noted it for that process, but the additional three months of rebate that we have initiated for October, November, and December, was really just an extension of the earlier rate relief that we had stood up.

Ms. Tredger: I would love to talk about the rate classes issue in a moment, but I just want to come back to this question of multiple households on the same bill, or as a single customer.

Does the minister think it's fair that buildings with many households are only going to get a \$50 rebate, if they pay their electricity collectively?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The program was designed to try to get it out as quickly and as deeply as possible. For example, you might also have a situation where people are roommates. You might have a group of people who are roommates. What should we do in that situation?

Should it be for each person? Should it be for each member of a family? There is no simple way to try to draw these lines easily. The way that we understand that we would need to get to, to deal with this, is to look at those rate classes — so, that's when, at least in those initial conversations that we had, that was where we landed. We did some consideration of it.

So, it is not a perfect system; it's a pretty good system. The other thing that I would say is that some people, on their electricity bill, have huge electricity bills, because they have big places, and some people have small places. What we also thought was: “Well, if we do the \$50 per bill, at least for those places, tipping those places that are smaller for people who have more modest incomes, and so the \$50 would go a little further.” So, there is no perfect system.

I appreciate that the member opposite is identifying ways where we could consider it, if we had more time, or if we were going to do something permanently — that is what we are doing, as we try to review the *Public Utilities Act*.

Ms. Tredger: I guess I'll just express my disappointment that we had an iteration of the program; problems were identified, the minister has acknowledged those problems; and then when the program was extended, it doesn't sound like there was an attempt made to solve those problems.

Let's talk about rate classes, because I think that's another important issue. For example, one of my personal beefs with the rate classes is that condos pay commercial rates for their shared common spaces, which is just really strange, because if my neighbour has a single-family house, and they have a garage, and they have a hallway, they don't pay commercial rates on their garage and their hallway, but my neighbour living in a condo is paying commercial rates on those shared spaces. I think that's actually incentivising the wrong thing. I think having collective spaces is a really good use of resources; it's a really good use of our electricity and all those things. So, I do think that it's really important to address some of those rate class issues.

Now, I think we are all aware that the NDP has been calling for a general rate review for a while, and that's something that could be addressed, is my understanding, when that general rate review happens. Is the minister planning to direct the Utilities Board to direct a general rate review?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to give a few responses. I appreciate the question. First of all, when we first sat down with members of the public who said that the interim rate relief rebate didn't catch them, because they had one meter for multiple units, even at that time, when we talked to them, we explained where we needed to go with this work. It's really around rate classes. We looked at it right away. We tried to see what the possibilities were, and we saw right away that the issue was going to need work in those rate classes. That was the place where it would need to be addressed.

Then, the folks suggested that there were things that were set up in other jurisdictions. We did some cross-jurisdictional work, and what we generally found was that the same approach was used across the country, so that wasn't helping us at that moment. We needed to do — what it meant was more work.

I'm not sure — the member opposite has just suggested that, when there is a general rate review, the classes can be adjusted. I want to be careful about that. I would need to go back and talk to the department a little more deeply and look at that, as that is not the understanding that I have right now, but I can investigate that question further.

When it comes to what we've been asking for, I have written to ATCO to try to get them in front of a rate review. I have been advocating for that all along. At the same time as the member opposite was talking about that here in the Legislature, what I was doing was talking to ATCO and writing to ATCO to advocate for that as well.

Now, when I look at the rates, it was ATCO's rates where they were getting a return on equity that was higher than was forecast originally, but that's not Yukon Energy, so I'm not suggesting that we should go to a general rate review, because that includes Yukon Energy. I am not sure that they are yet in their timing.

Usually what happens is utilities work on capital projects, and then, at some point, they decide that now they need to go in front of a utilities board to see how those can be paid for or not. Yukon Energy has been in front of the board, even recently under the energy purchase agreement, for example. Those are the things that I think are happening.

What I can say is that, as we continue to do work on reviewing the *Public Utilities Act*, rate classes are one of the topics that we are raising.

Ms. Tredger: I have a couple of follow-up questions, but I'm going to do them one at a time, just to try to keep the conversation from jumping around too much.

My understanding is that the minister has said that there are concerns about the rate classes, and he wants to have them adjusted, and he's doing work. Can he tell me: so, what is the plan to change the rate classes, and is there a timeline for that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to have a look as we are here, but under *Our Clean Future*, we identified as one of our actions to review the *Public Utilities Act*. The lead on that is actually Justice, because that is where the act sits, but they work closely with the Yukon Development Corporation. I will check the timing on that under our actions. I think that it is 2024-25, but I will just have a quick look.

The language my team has just given to me around rate classes is that it is bigger than a general rate application. They refer to it as a seismic shift. You want to do these things thoughtfully and carefully. That is how I am being advised and what I am trying to share with folks here in the Legislature — what that looks like — but the purpose of looking at the act is to try to modernize it to think about a future where we are trying to move toward selling electricity here and there — for example, where we have vehicles plugging in at, say, a grocery store, or to contemplate the fact that we want to do demand-side management, or to contemplate the fact that we are moving toward renewables. There are a lot of differences in how we're approaching our energy and our electrical utilities now, and working with First Nations. So, those differences are things that we are trying to achieve by reviewing the act at the same time as we would be looking at rate classes.

Ms. Tredger: To follow up on the second part of the minister's previous, previous answer, he said that he has been writing to ATCO asking them to do a rate review. Why is he choosing to go that route as opposed to directing the Utilities Board to call a rate review for ATCO?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: At the beginning, when the chamber of commerce approached us and talked to us about the situation with ATCO — and earnings went beyond their targeted return on equity and those were happening over time — we started looking at several approaches. One was through the Department of Justice to consider whether we would require something. That work, even now, is still ongoing.

One of the ones that I was tasked with was to reach out to ATCO and to talk to them about this problem and request that they come forward and do it themselves. They have done that somewhat, so they made some suggestions and they brought it before the Utilities Board. The Utilities Board has issued a decision about that, which I tabled here last week, I think.

There is some back and forth still happening between the board and the utility. That continues.

In the meantime, after I saw what ATCO had proposed, I wrote to them again and said, "I appreciate that this has come forward, but it is still not addressing the fundamentals of this problem, and I still encourage you to come forward to apply for

a general rate application to the Utilities Board itself.” In the meantime, we have continued to work in the background to see — if the utility does not do that, what would be our step and how far to go?

I want to say that we will always seek to work with this private sector company to get them to do it of their own volition, and that would be our preferred approach because it is them coming forward and not us forcing them to be there. That is the work that we are doing right now.

Ms. Tredger: How long does the minister plan to wait to see if ATCO is going to come forward with a general rate application of their own?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just go back to answer the earlier question about *Our Clean Future* and the *Public Utilities Act*. The timeline on our action there is 2025 — for the review of it.

I can say that we have had healthy correspondence going back and forth with ATCO, and I want to leave it to them. I think that they are going to talk to Yukoners shortly, and I leave it for them. Today I am just going to say that this work is ongoing.

Ms. Tredger: I certainly appreciate the desire and the intention to work together collaboratively. I think that is always everyone’s goal and first choice. But, with absolutely no disrespect meant to ATCO, their accountability is to their shareholders. Their goal is profit, and they are the only choice for electricity for everyone in Whitehorse. They are not a Crown corporation, but they do have a monopoly. Therefore, they need to be accountable to the public for their decisions. The way that we have for them to be accountable to the public is through the Yukon Utilities Board.

The minister has said that he has asked them to come to the board, but that may not be in the interest of their shareholders and profits. He has talked about a plan B, but I am not hearing a deadline for a plan B, and I am not hearing, actually, a commitment that, if ATCO declines to come for a general rate review, this government will, in fact, enforce that.

So, I have asked for a deadline and I haven’t gotten one. I guess I’ll ask: Is there a commitment that if, at some point, the ongoing conversations don’t work out, will this government compel ATCO to go for a rate review — or, through the Yukon Utilities Board, compel ATCO to go for the general rate review?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer, Madam Chair, is yes. Let me just try to add to that. It is far better to have a utility come of their own volition than for them to be required to do so, and we should all understand that the utility will present their information on their costs to the Utilities Board, whose job it is to try to review that and judge what is fair and what is not. That’s the whole purpose of the Utilities Board — to create fairness for ratepayers in a place where you don’t have the ability to have a competitive market.

So, what I can say is that, since we were made aware of this problem by the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, we have done continuous follow-up on it. On my part, my job was to work with the ATCO Electric Yukon to persuade them to come back before the Utilities Board. They did that, partially, and I

thank them for that. But immediately, when I saw what was in their application, I wrote to them and said, “Not enough.” That correspondence is going back and forth.

The Minister of Justice had the role to look into the *Public Utilities Act* to see what tools we could use, should I not be successful on my side of that equation.

I will leave it there for now.

Ms. Tredger: The minister said that it’s better for the utility to come of their own volition. I imagine there is some goodwill there, but why?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Whenever you have a company that is willing to step forward, the process is typically more constructive and more fruitful than when you do not. So, if a company believes that it is in their interest to argue against the rate application, then it can often be a more difficult process, take longer, and not always have similar outcomes. I think there are some pretty simple reasons why that is the case.

I will also say that, with ATCO, our dialogue back and forth has always been constructive and respectful, even though we have disagreed with each other about how much they should be coming back to the Utilities Board with.

Ms. Tredger: I want to wrap up by saying that, of course, we want to work with companies, and of course we want them to be part of a constructive process, but ultimately, what I care about is Yukoners getting fair power rates. If that has to happen through a process that is more difficult, then that is what has to happen. If it can happen easily, it’s great that can happen. But I am very concerned about the idea of making Yukoners continue to pay rates that we don’t know are fair or not. I suspect they are not, given that ATCO has been earning far above, as the minister said, the targeted amount of returns.

Yukoners are waiting right now on that review, and it’s in the hopes of a more constructive process. It’s in the hopes of more goodwill but, ultimately, they are waiting and they are paying those power rates right now. That is what I hope will be the priority in all the decisions going forward.

With that, I will end my questions for the department. Thank you to the officials. I really appreciate you being here and answering the questions. I will cede the floor to my colleagues.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, just a couple of points: First of all, right now, the Utilities Board is independent. It’s not for me to say: “Hey, this is what you should find.” They have this arm’s length from us; that’s an important factor to how these boards work. Second of all, they are dealing with a hearing right now with ATCO. In the response that I tabled the other day, it basically said: “Hey, ATCO, you need to come back with more information on this stuff.” So, even if we were going to get to the point of directing the Utilities Board to then require ATCO to come before a general rate application, we would not do that while they are in the middle of a hearing at the moment. So, that’s part of that independence piece.

So, we are doing this work, and I continue to have the back-and-forth with ATCO. One of the things I do each time that they come up in debate here in the Assembly, I make sure to point them right to our debate, so that they can see all this back-and-

forth conversation, because, of course, everyone here cares about getting fair rates for Yukoners.

So, I appreciate that this is an important issue. I can say that we have worked diligently on it, and I really appreciate the questions coming from the Member for Whitehorse Centre on the issue today.

Mr. Kent: I have a few questions for the minister, and in preparing for debate today, I took a look back at the 2016 Liberal Party platform, and in there is a promise to expand the mandate of YDC beyond energy and set up a \$10-million economic infrastructure investment fund through YDC. So, I'm curious if the minister can tell us if that work was ever completed, and if so, what non-energy projects it has funded?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, that platform commitment was what led to the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative. I won't use the acronym, but there are always acronyms for these things. So, that is what got set up, and I am told by officials that there was a look to expand it beyond energy, but that didn't get realized, but that is the fund that was created to try to create more diversification in the territory.

Mr. Kent: So, just to be clear then, that commitment made in 2016 was never realized — to expand the mandate of YDC beyond energy. Am I correct in assuming that?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: How officials described the evolution of it was that they were looking at things beyond energy — for example, fibre — but then the work happened with Northwestel, so that was addressing that question. There were other types of infrastructure that was looked at to see if it was of interest, but really, what was happening was that the focus was all coming back on to energy, and that was where the main focus was, so that is why the focus stayed there.

I would describe it as the market dictated where we should be investing, and that is why there was the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative.

Mr. Kent: I guess the mandate for YDC is strictly on energy projects. I am just making that assumption, so maybe I can get the minister to respond to that.

Just another question, then, moving on to a different topic: Can the minister tell us what the current FTE count is with the Yukon Development Corporation? I know that he tabled a legislative return yesterday — or perhaps it was the day before — in response to a question from my colleague, the MLA for Kluane, with a list of FTE counts back in 2016-17. The Development Corporation is not included on that for obvious reasons, but if he has that information now, it would be great to know what the FTE count was back then; and if not, I would just appreciate a letter or a response back from the minister at some time in the near future.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just on the first question, yes, the mandate of the Yukon Development Corporation remains focused on energy. In terms of the number of FTEs, what I am being told is that, in 2016-17, as now, the number of full-time equivalent employees at the Yukon Development Corporation can be counted on one hand. There is some question about whether it is three or four, but let's just say that it is five or less.

Mr. Kent: Yes, if I could just get the minister to send that with the correct information in a letter at some point, I

would appreciate that — just with the exact numbers from 2016-17, and then what the exact numbers for FTEs at YDC are now.

I did want to ask a question about the rebate program in the budget. It's set at \$3.191 million. Essentially, it was mirrored for this fall. So, in that next supplementary budget that the minister was talking about, is that the number we're expecting to have for the inflation reduction rebate that is on the power bills?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, Chair. So, the number will be the \$3.19 million, plus or minus one percent. There is always a little bit of variability to it, so we'll get some actuals. I think it's roughly — early in the new year, we should get those actuals, but plus or minus a percentage point — yes.

Mr. Kent: So, the actuals that will come in the new year will be for this latest round of rebates — so, the actuals for the ones that were done in the spring, that's this \$3.191 million — that is the actual amount that was spent?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Correct.

Mr. Kent: I'm just wanting to get a sense on some of the supply contracts that the Energy Corporation has. Can the minister give us the status of the diesel supply contract? Are the terms of that contract — was it negotiated for a fixed cost or a variable cost, and then when does that contract end?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, if I could just ask for clarification — we're talking about the fuel? Thank you. Just one moment, Chair.

The fuel costs, of course, as we look forward, are always variable — depending on weather and also on whether we have any challenges with our supply. What I can say is that, over the 2019-20 year, and the 2020-21 year, those costs averaged about \$2 million. I will have to look to get more information on the 2021-22 year, and we wouldn't know yet for 2022-23, of course.

Mr. Kent: Is that \$2 million only on the diesel supply because, obviously, there is diesel and liquefied natural gas. So, is the \$2 million for just diesel, or is it for both? If it's not for both, what is the LNG cost?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The number that I was giving was just for diesels. In fact, it is just for the fuel for the rental diesels. I will seek to get other numbers — or the corporation will look to get further numbers.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear then, the amount of \$2 million that the minister gave us is just for the cost of fuel for the diesels that are rented. Obviously, there are — what the Energy Corporation, I think, calls "dependable diesels", which are located in various locations. So, that is what the minister will get me the numbers on — as far as the diesel consumption — and then he will get me the LNG consumption as well. I just want to be clear so that we get the correct numbers from the minister.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The number that I will try to get, just to confirm, is for all diesel fuel consumed, because I think that is what is being asked for.

Just going back to the previous question about the number of full-time equivalents, the current staffing complement at the Development Corporation is three permanent full-time

equivalents and one term full-time equivalent, and that is the same as it was in 2016.

Mr. Kent: Can I ask the minister if he has the most recent numbers for the cost of renting diesels from Finning? If he has the most recent numbers — I think that it is 17, and he can correct me if I am wrong — but for the 17 rented diesels, what the capital cost is, excluding the \$2 million in fuel costs.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The rental cost for this year, which includes transportation to and from Yukon Energy, for 2022-23 is \$3.54 million. The rental cost from last year, 2021-22, was \$3.6 million. From 2020-21, it was \$4.1 million.

I will also note, in case the member opposite missed it, that when the witnesses were here last week, they talked about the levelized cost of rentals. This is what they had shared with the Utility Board — that the levelized cost of capacity of rentals is \$210 per kilowatt year. They had run the numbers, and if they were to build a permanent diesel plant, then the levelized cost would be \$253 per kilowatt year. So, the price was higher if it was a permanent diesel plant, versus rentals.

Mr. Kent: We heard at the recent Geoscience Forum that there is a request for proposals being prepared — or perhaps it already is prepared — for long-term rentals. I am just curious if the minister can give us any details on what that RFP will be, how long they are looking at renting, and if it is only for diesels — or is an LNG component also being considering as part of this RFP?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Maybe the member opposite could either share the reference or we could — I am just not aware of that reference, so I don't know what the reference is to. I am unable to answer the question, right now, anyway.

Mr. Kent: We were told that there is currently a request for proposals for long-term thermal energy rentals similar to the diesel rentals that are in Whitehorse and Faro right now. Going into the long term, obviously, we heard from the EPA review for the Atlin hydro that they could be renting diesels or some other thermal capacity into the 2030s, so we were just curious if the minister knows about that. If not, we can always follow up with him in the spring as that situation evolves or if that situation changes.

I do have just a couple of quick questions regarding the Atlin hydro funding gap. What has been identified most recently is a \$60-million funding gap. I am curious if the minister has any status updates for us on if that gap has been filled or where some of the potential funders will come from. We understand from one of the individuals from THELP who spoke on CBC here that they have essentially set a January deadline for closing that funding gap. Does the minister have any updates for us with respect to that \$60 million and potential funders for it?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just to go over a few points, possibly what the members heard discussed at the Geoscience Forum and Trade Show was that Yukon Energy is out right now with an RFP to replace some of our existing permanent diesel generators. Maybe that is what was discussed. Anyway, that is out right now, and when those diesel generators come online, we anticipate that the new generators will be much more efficient than the existing generators, which means that it will

also drop some need for the rental diesels — not by increasing numbers, just by increasing efficiency of those diesel generators. I have asked the corporation to just advise me on what that looks like.

Second of all, the work is ongoing. The corporations were here last week. I have had a couple of conversations since then. I know that they are planning to support Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership. In conversations with Ottawa — I think they have a trip planned shortly to go to Ottawa to engage in conversations there. I have offered to be supportive of that.

So, that work is ongoing. I think, at this time, we're all looking to support Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership and the Taku River Tlingit, as they seek to secure the remaining funds, and it is ongoing. I know that the member opposite is using a reference that he heard through the media about January, but those dates — what I'm hearing is that the work is ongoing. So, we'll see what that approach yields.

Finally, Deputy Chair, I'm advised by the corporation that the replacement of our existing diesel generators — permanent diesel generators — will mean that we need two fewer of our rental diesels.

Mr. Kent: Yes, it's something different that we had heard about, so I'll leave it and follow up with the minister or officials in the new year and keep an eye on the website for that RFP to come forward.

One of the other things that I think a lot of Yukoners and others are concerned about with respect to the Atlin hydro project — you know, obviously, we have seen some significant cost-estimate escalations over the past couple of years. I think we're at about \$315 million right now. THELP has said that they're sort of tapped out and would be looking for grant money.

So, one of the concerns is additional cost overruns during construction. Who would be on the hook for those? Who would be taking the primary risk, if there are cost overruns, and Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership does not have the funding to carry that on? I guess I'll leave it at that: Who would be on the hook for cost overruns during construction, or money between now and when construction begins, that increases that funding gap beyond what it is right now?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yukoners should know that whenever we are talking about these projects, what happens is that the proponent — in this case, the Taku River Tlingit and the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership — secure contract prices, and that's where they start to get the estimates. There is always, of course, within the amount of money, a contingency that they have built in, if there are some cost overruns. Anyway, that is the way in which you do the diligent work that is happening right now to secure prices at a known cost and to ensure that the project will be done well. That is why the funding gap is being sought to be closed.

The basic question that the member is asking is who takes responsibility for the project. The answer is that it is the proponent. In this case, that is the Taku River Tlingit and the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to clarify this with the minister: We will use the \$315-million number as the most recent one

reported for the estimate for this project. There is about a \$60-million or so funding gap. I think that we have committed \$50 million to it, and we may be asked to commit more to close this funding gap, but that will be all that Yukoners will be asked to contribute to this project, even if there are cost overruns during construction?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Well, we also have drafted an energy purchase agreement, so we are agreeing to buy winter energy at 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour, and there is an element that would go up by half of inflation over time. Then, in 10 years' time, it would drop down to 9.7 cents a kilowatt hour for winter energy. That compares, for example, to the over 20 cents that we pay now to produce that same energy using our diesels and LNG.

So, there are costs there, and that is actually the place where Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership, with the Taku River Tlingit, are looking forward, because that will help pay back, over time, for their loan, for example — I think it is \$80 million — I would have to check — the Canada Infrastructure Bank is \$80 million.

The member is asking me to predict the future. That is tough to do. What I can say is that, currently, we are working to help close this funding gap, and we will continue to do that. Then we will see if the project lands with the price that we still feel is good, and that price then leads to this pretty low energy cost for Yukoners, then that is when we will make the decision about whether we go ahead or not.

Mr. Kent: Obviously, the project has to be complete and be producing energy for the electricity purchase agreement to kick in, so my question was about cost overruns that may occur during construction. We have heard about supply chain interruptions and other activities, and it sounded to me like the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited company is in for all that they can be in, at this point. I am not asking the minister for a number, but I am just curious if there is additional risk for Yukon taxpayers, or Yukon ratepayers, as a part of any cost overruns during construction.

I do, also, have one other question with respect to that project, and it is about the line. Is THELP, or Tlingit Homeland Energy, will they be responsible for the O&M and upkeep of the line — if there are trees on the line, or any of that type of O&M expense, is that something that will be their responsibility, or is it something that we have committed to in some way?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is not going on the back of ratepayers. That is the whole point. It is our attempt to invest in the project. It does use taxpayers' dollars — that is correct. Although, right now, if we think about it as a project, roughly one-sixth of the cost is being paid for by Yukoners. The BC government is also investing. The federal government, in total, is a little over \$100 million. THELP is in for a little over \$3 million. They will be borrowing, though, so that's their responsibility to pay back an extra \$80 million.

The risk question is a good question. How do we mitigate risk? In this case, because it's Tlingit Homeland Energy that is doing the work and taking on that risk, that's why they are seeking these firm contracts ahead of time, where there is a

supply chain commitment. That, itself, can often change how bidders bid on those prices, because then the risk is passed on to them to make sure. That's the work that is ongoing right now.

With respect to the rates, this is one of the reasons why Yukoners would get such favourable rates over time. It is because we are helping to invest in the infrastructure that makes the project viable, but it doesn't come to ratepayers. That price remains very, very reasonable for Yukoners. I tabled numbers from across North America about sort of similar rates on prices per kilowatt hour. In the United States, for example, they are way over 20 cents a kilowatt hour on average. This would get it to us at 13.5 cents a kilowatt hour. That's winter energy, mind you, which is very valuable to us.

The last question the member asked about is, who has the responsibility for the upkeep of the transmission line. The answer is, between Atlin and Jakes Corner, that would be Tlingit Homeland Energy's responsibility. However, I think the anticipation is — I'm not even sure if that deal has been worked out yet, but the way it is likely to work, is they would contract that work out to ATCO Yukon, because they have the expertise to do it, but it is their responsibility.

Mr. Kent: I have one final question before I turn it over to my colleague, the Member for Copperbelt North, and that is with respect to the residential billing. My colleague, the Member for Kluane, introduced a motion awhile back, urging Canada to remove the GST from residential energy bills and home heating fuel. I am just looking at the sample bill that's on the Yukon Energy website.

Yukon residents pay GST on the customer charge, the energy charge, the fuel adjustment rider, the YEC 2017-18 GRA true-up, YECL rate adjuster rider, and the Yukon Energy revenue shortfall rider. I'm just curious if the minister would consider speaking to his colleagues in Ottawa about removing the GST from residential energy bills. I know that it's not a territorial responsibility, but I'm wondering if it is something that the minister would consider doing.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The question that I am going to be asking my federal counterparts is if they would be willing to invest more money in Yukon infrastructure. I will leave it to our Premier, as the Minister of Finance, which is where I think GST is more reasonably held. The work that I am doing is to talk to my counterparts in Ottawa about investing in energy and resource infrastructure here in the territory. I heard Minister Wilkinson had an opening video at the Geoscience Forum and he talked about a generational change that is coming right now as we transition off of fossil fuels. So, definitely, I have a lot of things that I am in direct conversation with my counterparts on, and I'm really keen to have those conversations on behalf of Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to ask some questions today. I wasn't able to ask a few questions of the Energy Corporation when they were here based on time, so I just wanted a few project updates, if I could, from the minister and I have a few policy-related questions as well. The first one that I will ask about is the proposed solar project in Beaver Creek. I had the opportunity to visit Beaver Creek a few times in the last year with the Member for Kluane. There is a cleared

area there that is a prospective solar project. I know that there were a number of questions that were asked of us when we were there about the status of that project. So, I would just like to put it to the minister — if he could provide an update on the Beaver Creek solar project.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: This is one of those projects that is here under the budget before us right now because the project decided to move away from the Arctic energy fund and they are using federal funds. I am not going to be able to answer the specific question. I can say that the scope is just under two megawatts — 1.9 megawatts. They are looking to have it in service a year from now. We did fund, through the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative, \$500,000 to do some feasibility work for them. That work has already happened.

What I can say is that the next time I am in dialogue with my counterparts in Ottawa, I will ask the question about how this program is unfolding.

Mr. Dixon: I just wanted to seek some clarification. Can the minister repeat or explain a little bit more about which fund is supporting this project? If so, how much funding has been provided already and what stage is it at?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have asked the corporation to advise me on which fund is being used. What I can say is that we have invested \$500,000 previously to the feasibility and that, under the Arctic energy fund, we were anticipating spending about \$3.5 million under this year's budget to the project.

But, as I said, the folks in Beaver Creek found a fund that they preferred; it was better for them and worked better for their timing. I think I'm about to figure out what the name of it is. Well, it's an acronym. It's the CERRC. It's the Clean Energy for Rural and Remote Communities fund. They also got some money from CanNor — another couple of million dollars. So, the total that they got through the Clean Energy for Rural and Remote Communities was over \$13 million.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister providing the name of that fund. Is that an NRCan fund, or which branch of the federal government is that fund under?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is NRCan — Natural Resources Canada.

Mr. Dixon: Where did the \$500,000 that we contributed come from? Was that through the Development Corporation, or was there a fund that we used?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It was, as I said, the Innovative Renewable Energy Initiative fund — I sometimes call it "IREI", and I hear it pronounced different ways — and that fund is administered from the Yukon Development Corporation.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's answers there. I will move on to the next project that I wanted to seek an update on, and that is the solar project in Watson Lake.

Sorry — before I move on, can the minister just tell me the name of the proponent in Beaver Creek? I believe it's the development corporation, but I'm not entirely sure.

But next after that is the project in Watson Lake — if I could have an update from the minister on the project in Watson Lake.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, the Beaver Creek project is — and I hope I can pronounce well — the Copper Nīisūū Limited Partnership.

The Watson Lake project is First Kaska, and so far, we have funded just under \$300,000.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister accommodating my scattered-ness there.

Can the minister provide a bit more of an update on the project in Watson Lake? How big of a project is it contemplated to be? What is the anticipated capital cost? What are the timelines? Any information that he can provide about that would be appreciated — the location as well.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I may have missed the last part of the question, but the Watson Lake First Kaska solar project is just over 4.5 megawatts and it is expected to displace over one million litres of diesel annually, and about 3,500 tonnes of GHGs annually.

Mr. Dixon: Is there a capital cost estimate for the project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: It is still early stages with the project. You may scale it up or down, but in orders of magnitude, it is somewhere in the \$20-million to \$25-million capital range.

Mr. Dixon: Can the minister repeat how much the Yukon Development Corporation has flowed to this project so far, and if any other sources of funding have been identified yet — for instance, other federal pots of money that will potentially fund this project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: As I mentioned earlier, just under \$300,000 has been invested so far. That is really the feasibility investment — to take a look at it — but I have to tell you that, whenever you are an off-grid community, solar is a good first choice to start with because it can eat into that diesel right away.

As I mentioned earlier, in early responses around how the Development Corporation works with our communities, they iterate with them to identify good, potential funding sources. One of the ones that has been marked as a good, potential funding source here is the Arctic energy fund.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister raising the question around off-grid, because both Beaver Creek and Watson Lake obviously fit into that category. There have been some questions put to us, and I would just like to have the minister respond so we can share it with those who have asked. What happens in terms of the off-grid projects like Watson Lake or Beaver Creek? Are there impacts on the rate, either for the ratepayers in those communities or generally in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Generally speaking, we have a single rate for the territory, so even if our costs are higher — just as an example, costs are always going to be higher in Old Crow, because we would have to fly diesel in, but what we do is we say that the rate that is paid in Whitehorse should also be the rate that is paid in Watson Lake, Beaver Creek, and Old Crow. So, we will always have one residential rate across the territory. Of course, there are effects on those rates over time, as costs creep up, but there's no differential rate for Watson Lake. We will continue to have the folks in Watson Lake pay the same rate as Whitehorse.

Mr. Dixon: In the case of those two projects, is there an agreement between the proponent and ATCO, or is YEC involved as well?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In Watson Lake, ATCO Yukon is the supplier of the energy. There are a few places in the territory where ATCO does supply. In this case, the energy purchase agreement for the solar project would be between the proponent, First Kaska, and the generation utility, which in this case is ATCO.

Mr. Dixon: I thank the minister for that. Just to return to the rates very quickly —

I appreciate that the rate is the same for Whitehorse as it is for the other communities below 1,000 kilowatt hours, but are there differential rates beyond 1,000 kilowatt hours for different communities?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am being advised that it is the same beyond the 1,000 kilowatt hour rate for residential.

Mr. Dixon: I will move on. I would like to talk to the minister a little bit about the independent power producer policy. I had a chance to have this discussion with the Energy Corporation when they were here not this fall, but last fall. Since then, I know that there has been a program review conducted of the IPP that was done by an independent consultant providing a report to the Energy Corporation, YDC, and EMR. I appreciate that not all of those are on discussion today, but of course the minister has some synergy there.

What is the minister's, sort of, initial reaction to the program review that was conducted and put forward this summer? There were a number of recommendations that I would like to go through, but I will give the minister the opportunity to provide an initial response to what the IPP review did, what the results were, and what the government's initial response to that program review will be.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There is a team that is pulled together from the Development Corporation and Energy, Mines and Resources — the Energy branch — and they are taking a look at the review that was done and that is publicly available. The team has begun — they have sort of parsed it out into ranges of action, so they have begun to action the near-term actions, and deal with those. I think that they are still assessing overall what next steps should be — sort of on the mid- or long-term, and I anticipate sitting down with the corporation and the branch, following session, to go over what the game plan is.

Mr. Dixon: Thank you, Deputy Chair, I appreciate that.

There are a number of concerns that were raised in the program review. There are things that are noted that are positive, too, I should say — absolutely — but there are a number of fairly significant concerns that were raised by proponents, by interviewees, who were asked for their thoughts on this. Those were largely bucketed into sort of two categories: one was a process bucket, a list of areas of things that were not working well with regard to process, and things that were not working well in general. One of those concerns on the general side was outdated policy framework.

So, I'm just wondering, in general, what timeline Yukoners can expect will be taken to review this. There are obviously

going to be policy debates going on — potentially regulatory or legislative changes as well.

I would ask the minister to explain what happens now, and when can we anticipate seeing some policy changes, as a result of this program review?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: One of the things that the utilities did was update their process guidelines, and they republished those. That was part of an iteration, for example, based on the questions about the policy framework. That helps proponents to navigate through the system.

The member asked about the timeline around redoing the policy framework. My team is saying to me that they don't have a timeline yet. They have been digging through it to try to see how deep the changes should go, so there are some questions yet. I think that is part of when I say that they are going to be going over it with me following session, or in the coming months, and that will then lead to some direction to them about how far to go. Then they can recommend to me the amount of time they will need to accomplish that.

We are too early at this stage to know the timeline, but what I can say is that the corporation, in working with the Energy branch, has identified things where they can make improvements now. They will do that work and then, for the deeper policy questions, they are going to want to take a little more time to consider how far that would go.

Deputy Chair (Ms. Tredger): Is there any further general debate on Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation? Seeing none, we will proceed to line-by-line debate.

Mr. Dixon: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 22, Yukon Development Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$3,191,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$3,191,000 agreed to

Yukon Development Corporation agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Department of Economic Development – continued

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to thank the officials. Our deputy minister, Justin Ferbey, and our assistant deputy minister, Michael Prochazka, are here with us today. It is great to have another opportunity to come into the Assembly. I think that this is probably our third or fourth visit. Although they were short periods of time, we have had a chance to cover a lot of ground and look forward to questions from the opposition today.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development?

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

Mr. Dixon: Madam Chair, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Copperbelt North has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$1,354,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$1,354,000 agreed to

Department of Economic Development agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Community Services — continued

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I'm just going to introduce my deputy, once again: Matt King, who drove the speed limit to be here this afternoon on very short notice, so I thank him for being here, and I'll throw it open for general debate.

Mr. Istchenko: I also want to welcome the official here. So, we don't have much time left here today, so I do have a few questions. So, the rural fire report has been out for a year, but still, we have seen little done on this file. Were there any community meetings held in any of the unincorporated communities in the Yukon, and how many were in attendance, and when, and where? Because the report states that recruiting requirements are a barrier, as it is too much for volunteers. Has any work been done to lessen the requirements, which would help with recruitment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The delivery of fire services in the Yukon's unincorporated communities is challenging, given our remote and small population base. I am sure that the member opposite knows that, through his experience.

To know that our fire service model remains sustainable, we commissioned an independent review of fire services in rural Yukon. The review contains 104 recommendations in the areas of governance, operations, strategy, risk management, and compliance. These present an exciting opportunity to shape the future of the Yukon fire service, and we are pleased to see a number of recommendations that will ensure safe and sustainable fire services across the Yukon.

Since the release of the review in December of 2021, the Fire Marshal's Office presented the report to communities and fire service stakeholders. The Fire Marshal's Office has also met with key communities, Yukon fire chiefs, Yukon First Nations, municipal governments, and fire service stakeholders. It has truly been an incredible effort on behalf of the Fire Marshal's Office, and I really want to thank them for all of that amazing work that they have done.

Their feedback of these groups has identified priorities, which include innovative programs that match the capacity of individual communities and strengthen fire resilience through a levels-of-service response model, mutual aid agreements, and a fire safety champion program that focuses on fire prevention and education.

We continue to have regular discussions with people across the territory, including residents of Keno, to understand

their concerns and find creative solutions to meet the needs of the community within the capacity and ability of the Fire Marshal's Office.

I can also say that the Fire Marshal's Office continues to meet with communities across the territory on implementing the fire review. It's in the process of preparing a detailed summary of what we have done and where we are going next.

I can also say this afternoon that the Fire Marshal's Office remains committed to working with Yukon communities to ensure a pragmatic level of service in each community. The Fire Marshal's Office held several meetings with the public and stakeholders to discuss the content of the review and next steps, including a media briefing, a meeting with the community of Keno, and a public meeting open to all residents of unincorporated Yukon in December 2021. There have been several additional meetings with the community of Keno — most recently on August 9, 2022 — to discuss establishing a fire response program and repairing the water source, which has led to the establishment of two fire safety champions in the community.

Regular, ongoing contact occurs with the fire safety champions. There have been: multiple meetings with the Association of Yukon Fire Chiefs; a meeting with all Fire Marshal's Office staff and fire chiefs and deputy chiefs from across the Yukon on January 30, 2022; a meeting with chief administrative officers in Yukon communities on February 10, 2022; a meeting with the CAO for the Town of Faro on May 30, 2022, to discuss mutual aid agreements; and a meeting with the National Indigenous Fire Safety Council on February 14, 2022, and July 13, 2022. We have had meetings with the Ross River Dena Council on June 1, 2022, and September 7, 2022, actively working to re-establish fire service, and a meeting with the Mendenhall Community Association on June 15, 2022, to discuss fire safety champion programs and re-establishing a fire department. We had a meeting with the Dawson City Fire Department chief on June 27, 2022, to discuss mutual aid agreements with the Klondike Valley Fire Department. There has been a meeting with the Mayo fire chief on June 28, 2022, to discuss mutual aid agreements and training support for Keno residents.

We are planning to meet with the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation soon to discuss re-establishing a fire service. We are also planning to meet with the White River First Nation to discuss fire safety champion programs and re-establishing a fire service there. So, there has been an awful lot of work and consultation with communities across the territory on the fire review, and I look forward to the next question.

Mr. Istchenko: I'm going to focus a little bit more on the north Alaska Highway. One of the big issues, out of the 104 recommendations, was the fact that recruiting requirements — there is a barrier with residents and the level that they need to be at, and I mentioned that in my first question.

I want to also really reiterate to the minister that there was a fire near Beaver Creek this summer, and they had to send the fire chief — or the ex-fire chief — from Haines Junction to Beaver Creek to show somebody how to operate — this is a year since you got the 104 recommendations. The fire chief

retired in Beaver Creek. I think there is a fire chief now, but no real fire department. So, you had to send somebody up there to show them how to operate the equipment that they have in that community.

In Destruction Bay, there is basically no service. It was moved to Burwash and the truck will come from Burwash, but that's a long way from Burwash. We have seen fire effects on these residents. It appears that their pleas have kind of fallen on deaf ears. Do you know what I have heard from some of the residents up there? How many buildings need to burn before the minister takes the issue seriously? There hasn't been a meeting in Burwash or Destruction Bay to have that discussion.

There is a fire truck sitting outside Haines Junction. It has been outside there — now it's going to be the second year — in the snowbank. This truck has been replaced with a new one. Other old trucks have been auctioned off in the past. A resident of Keno got tired of waiting and they went and bought their own truck. So, can the minister confirm whether the government is actually willing to provide — maybe this truck sitting out in Haines Junction — and send it to Destruction Bay so they can put it in the empty, heated fire hall that the government has there? I will just leave it at that.

I really want to reiterate that there is not much fire service. I commend the people who volunteer their time and who want to be on there, but a lot of the requirements — for instance, in Destruction Bay, they said, "Listen, if you want to be in the fire department, come out to Whitehorse for two weeks." Well, they have other jobs, and they can't take that much time. They also need holidays. They want to volunteer in their community, but the requirements are so high. It said it in one of the recommendations — that was probably one of the main ones that we picked up on — but there hasn't been much change. So, I'll leave it at that and see if the minister wants to comment.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can hear in the Member for Kluane's voice the passion and the real consideration of his constituents. I totally empathize and understand that. Fire is a visceral threat to people, especially living in some of these smaller towns. I understand that, and it is one of the very reasons why we undertook this fire review and have acted on it.

You heard the list of actions that the very small Fire Marshal's Office has undertaken in the last year to stand up and implement the significant recommendations that came out of the review that we commissioned for this very reason. I wish I could snap my fingers and — voilà — have everything fixed today so that this visceral fear of fire that we have in communities across the territory could be taken away. But it doesn't work that way, and I know the member opposite knows that. He is representing his constituents and I totally respect that.

So, I don't have the information. I mentioned White River, and I know that the fire marshal has been out. I will check in — what their planned engagement is for the north Alaska Highway — and I will look into seeing what has actually happened to date. I know that the Fire Marshal's Office is, as I said, actively meeting with communities across the territory, and I know the member opposite has put the north highway on the radar. I

know that there were whistle stops on the north highway; I just don't have the information this afternoon about what happened there.

The member opposite talked about equipment, trucks, and that type of thing. I mean, it's fine — we do provide equipment to departments with members across the territory, and we will continue to do that. The problem, as the member opposite has intimated in his questions this afternoon, is that we have had retirements. People are stepping away from this and they are busy. They have got busy lives, and the needs of becoming a firefighter in the territory — there is training that has to be done, and the training can be quite rigorous. These are the standards that are imposed if you want to become a firefighter. And so, yes, if you want to do that work, you have to take the training, and the training is offered. I know we are trying to get training out to communities, and that's one of the reasons why we did the review. So, we know that it's hard to recruit.

We are looking through the review to start to have smaller department models that are less onerous and that are more responsive. We have what's called the "fire protection in a box". We have tendered for the equipment needed for the fire protection in a box. We have found fire bush tanks to allocate to some communities — those smaller things that we can get to these — we have also procured those as well.

These smaller department models that do not have a functional volunteer fire department — we are looking at smaller tools to help support those communities. We expect to roll out and share details about all of this in the coming weeks.

So, it's not a long time, but we are working on it. We know that this is an issue for Yukoners. We know it's hard, and our volunteers — our society — are aging. We have volunteers dropping off. It's difficult to start to recruit some of these. The demographics are shifting so that's why we are actually approaching this review and that's what we are trying to do. Thank you very much for the questions this afternoon.

Mr. Istchenko: I thank the minister for that. I just want to switch to dumps here. Can the minister tell me what changes are coming to the Champagne dump and the Destruction Bay dump, and were there public meetings held with the residents of Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing, and then Champagne and Mendenhall to discuss these changes?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member opposite for his question.

We have talked quite a bit this session and last, and over the years as well. I know that my colleague certainly has brought this up, as well, about how we are changing waste management in the territory — modernizing it, making it reflect, or come closer to, models that are currently in use across the nation, to deal with trash — to sort of put in a financial incentive to people to start thinking about how much garbage they are producing, and to put in an equitable, fair, and consistent approach to costs across the territory.

Again, I will mention, for the record, that this initiative really came from the Association of Yukon Communities. It was community-driven. The Association of Yukon Communities — indeed, communities across the territory — came to us and said: "You really have to do something as a

government, as a senior level of government, to deal with waste management in the territory. We need your help." So, we started this initiative.

We continue to work toward the modern vision for solid-waste management in the Yukon that addresses many long-standing challenges in the sector, while ensuring sustainable access to waste disposal services for all Yukoners. Our regional agreements are modernizing our partnerships with municipalities. The work on these agreements, as well as on formalizing the land tenure for these existing facilities, is well underway. The agreements are an important feature of bringing Yukon's solid-waste management system up to modern standards and ensuring that we are managing costs and future liabilities effectively.

As part of moving toward these arrangements, Yukon municipalities have completed 10-year solid-waste management plans. We are pleased to see this progress from our partners in waste management. The plans are a critical step in our regionalization goals and address long-standing and land tenure issues, clarify ownership of future liabilities related to site closures and decommissioning, and ensure long-term access to waste disposal facilities for all Yukoners. This vision is based on the recommendations from the Ministerial Committee on Solid Waste, which was represented by municipalities, Association of Yukon Communities, and Yukon government officials.

To the specific question that the member opposite raised this afternoon, the only sites that are being closed are the very smallest sites. They are Silver City, Braeburn, Johnsons Crossing, and Keno. Those are the ones that are being closed. The others will continue to be open, but there will be changes made.

Solid-waste management plans and best practices will be implemented in those waste facilities. We hope to get composting and other diversion streams built into those facilities, or get the material out of those facilities and into some of the regional transfer stations.

He mentioned the Champagne facility. There are some contracting issues, and the staff is working to manage those, but there's no real change to the specific waste facilities he mentioned.

Mr. Istchenko: The minister keeps stating that AYC wanted these changes. Residents of Keno, Silver City, and Destruction Bay area wrote to the AYC and asked them about that. The AYC wrote back to them, and I tabled the letter in the House the other day, that they don't speak on behalf of the small communities, like Silver City or Keno. AYC is the Association of Yukon Communities.

The simple solution to our dump issue is for the minister to task his department to go and meet with people — meet with the residents of Champagne and Mendenhall. That is the Champagne dump. If you meet with them, you will get some great ideas to make the dump better. If you meet with the residents of Destruction Bay and Burwash Landing, and actually have a meeting that's about solid waste and the dump — if you were to go and meet with the residents of Keno or the residents of Silver City, they would come up with something.

They have great ideas. They have awesome ideas on making it cost-effective and just for local users. There are businesses that are going to lose their opportunity. There are senior citizens who are now going to have to drive hundreds of kilometres.

I just think that we can go back and forth with what he said, she said, and everything else; we can go back and forth on dumps, but there still hasn't been meaningful consultation from the Department of Community Services, because they are responsible for the landfills and the dumps. If they were to do that — it's wintertime and a great time to go and meet with people and have discussions, because people are around — they will come to the meetings. They will engage with the department. I have heard so many good ideas, but the department hasn't heard them, because they haven't met. They haven't had those discussions.

I guess my question is this: Will the minister commit that he'll task his department to go and actually have meaningful, advertised consultations with the local First Nations who use the facilities, the businesses and the residents, before he makes changes to those landfills?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The talk had gone on so well this afternoon, and then — all due respect to the Member for Kluane, but he starts disparaging the department and saying they're not talking to people. I cannot, for the life of me — Chair, I want to strenuously, strenuously tell the member opposite that the Department of Community Services has been doing an extraordinarily great job — a fantastic job — of consulting and meeting on the veritable universe of issues it deals with on a yearly basis. It is incredible the work of the civil service, especially within this department that I'm very, very proud to represent. You are casting aspersions about the work that these folks are doing — it's great. To hear from residents who are not talking — listen, the Department of Community Services is actively meeting with communities across the territory, and the Association of Yukon Communities as well, to establish regional landfills. Once the regional landfills are stood up, fixed, and improved, then we're going to get into doing some of these other refinements that are so important.

We can't do this without the municipalities. We're working with the municipalities. Once the regional stations are up — once we get the gates, electric fences, gatehouses, and staffing in place, this whole plan will come into much clearer focus and things will go. The Department of Community Services is meeting with people all the time. Some of the regional landfills mentioned in the member opposite's opening remarks aren't even slated for change.

I have personally met with residents up in the member opposite's riding. I have met with Keno residents, and the department officials have met with Keno residents on this and many, many other issues. They are putting in bear-proof cages, they're putting in electric fences, and they have a mining company up in Keno that is actually going to do the garbage collection for the residents of Keno, because of the work of the department in brokering this. I really thank the mining company for stepping up and taking on this job, on behalf of the residents of Keno — moving the trash — an incredible amount of trash

that we're creating. They are moving that to the regional transfer station in Mayo.

So, I take a little bit of umbrage at the suggestion that the Department of Community Services is not speaking to people, because on a daily basis, they talk to Yukoners and understand — I think that the wealth of knowledge we have in Community Services about the people of the Yukon, through the community advisory program, is absolutely a wealth of knowledge — it's a treasure — and the work that they do there, constantly reaching out to Yukoners to hear their concerns, their ideas and incorporating, and being flexible enough and reasonable enough to adapt to the suggestions they have.

I really cannot sit here and hear that criticism and not respond to it.

I'm going to keep going for a little bit more. Waste management is part of environmental stewardship. I am going to take some of the barbs out. Our government believes in responsible, sustainable waste management. I don't want to end this on a downer. Our government believes in responsible, sustainable waste management. We know that responsible waste management will help protect our territory's environment for future generations. We are working with our partners to move the Yukon toward a more efficient, cost-effective, and sustainable solid-waste system for the benefit of all Yukoners. Supporting responsible waste management, recycling and diversion will help reduce waste. It's going to stop illegal dumping across the territory. That's really the goal here.

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(1)

Chair: The time has reached 5:00 p.m. on this, the 28th sitting day of the 2022 Fall Sitting.

Standing Order 76(1) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Chair of the Committee of the Whole, if the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole at the time, shall interrupt proceedings at 5:00 p.m. and, with respect to each Government Bill before Committee that the Government House Leader directs to be called, shall:

"(a) put the question on any amendment then before the Committee;

"(b) put the question, without debate or amendment, on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill, including all clauses, schedules, title and preamble, be deemed to be read and carried;

"(c) put the question on a motion moved by a Minister that the bill be reported to the Assembly; and

"(d) when all bills have been dealt with, recall the Speaker to the Chair to report on the proceedings of the Committee."

Pursuant to the Sessional Order adopted on October 31, 2022, through the adoption of Motion No. 494, Standing Order 76 only applies to appropriation bills for this Sitting.

It is the duty of the Chair to now conduct the business of Committee of the Whole in the manner directed by Standing Order 76(1). The Chair will now ask the Government House

Leader to indicate whether the appropriation bill now before Committee of the Whole should be called.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Chair, the government directs that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be called at this time.

Bill No. 206: Second Appropriation Act 2022-23 — continued

Chair: The Committee will now deal with Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

The Chair will now recognize the Member for Klondike for the purpose of moving a motion, pursuant to Standing Order 76(1)(b).

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that all clauses, schedules, the preamble and the title of Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be deemed to be read and carried.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that all clauses, schedules, the preamble and the title of Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be deemed to be read and carried.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$26,247,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of nil agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$26,247,000

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to

Schedules A and B agreed to

Preamble agreed to

Title agreed to

Hon. Mr. Silver: Madam Chair, I move that you report Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Klondike that the Chair report Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, without amendment.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question. Are you agreed?

Motion agreed to

Chair: As the appropriation bill identified by the Government House Leader has now been decided upon, it is my duty to rise and report to the House.

Speaker resumes the Chair

Termination of Sitting as per Standing Order 76(2)

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Blake: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report the bill without amendment.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

Standing Order 76(2)(d) states, "On the sitting day that the Assembly has reached the maximum number of sitting days allocated for that Sitting, pursuant to Standing Order 75, the Speaker of the Assembly, when recalled to the Chair after the House has been in the Committee of the Whole, shall:

"(d) with respect to each Government Bill standing on the Order Paper for Third Reading and designated to be called by the Government House Leader,

"(i) receive a motion for Third Reading and passage of the bill, and

"(ii) put the question, without debate or amendment, on that motion."

Pursuant to the Sessional Order adopted on October 31, 2022, through the adoption of Motion No. 494, Standing Order 76 only applies to appropriation bills for this Sitting.

I shall, therefore, ask the Government House Leader to indicate whether the appropriation bill now standing on the Order Paper for third reading should be called.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Mr. Speaker, the government directs that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be called for third reading at this time.

Bill No. 206: Second Appropriation Act 2022-23 — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 206, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Hon. Premier that Bill No. 206, entitled *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

As no debate or amendment is permitted, I shall now put the question to the House.

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, eight nays.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 206 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 206 has passed this House.

We are now prepared to receive the Commissioner of Yukon, in her capacity as Lieutenant Governor, to grant assent to bills which have passed this House.

Commissioner Bernard enters the Chamber announced by her Aide-de-Camp

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

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

Clerk: *National Day for Truth and Reconciliation Act; Second Appropriation Act 2022-23.*

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

Dear members, thank you for your work during this Fall Sitting. Enjoy some rest and spending time with friends and family. Our office is preparing a levee video that will be ready for January 1, and we will present the 2022 Order of Yukon inductees, the Bravery Award, the Public Volunteer Service Award, and other awards presented during this year.

We are also working on some fun projects for 2023, including a book on the history of the Office of the Commissioner and a deck of playing cards. We will be hosting the annual conference of the Governor General, Lieutenant Governors, and territorial Commissioners in June 2023.

In closing, and to celebrate Canada Music Week, in the words of my favourite band, the Arkells, "...tell the ones you love, you love 'em".

Take care of yourselves, and merci, thank you, shaw nithän, günilschish, mahsi' cho.

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

Before adjournment of the Fall Sitting of the Yukon Legislative Assembly, I have a few brief comments. I would like to extend thanks, on behalf of the myself, as Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole, and on behalf of the members of our Legislative Assembly to the Clerk, Dan Cable; Deputy Clerk, Linda Kolody; Clerk of Committees, Allison Lloyd; Director of Administration, Finance, and Systems, Helen Fitzsimmons; Operation Manager, Warren Pearson; Finance and Operations Clerk, Lyndsey Amundson; as well as Sergeant-at-Arms, Karina Watson; and Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Joe Mewett, who all provided invaluable support to all MLAs and their staff in order for us all to continue to do the important work that we are sent here to do on behalf of all Yukoners.

As well, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the skilled team of Hansard for their timely and accurate service, and all the other background staff and contractors who keep this Legislative Assembly operating.

I would also like to thank Chris Rodgers, our camera operator for the Assembly. I would also commend the hard-working civil servants who deliver services to Yukoners and support to all of us, as members, in our work.

I wish Members of the Legislative Assembly all the best for the coming holiday season. I hope all of us can look forward to the holidays with family, friends, and the great Yukon outdoors. Thank you very much.

As the House has, pursuant to Standing Order 75(4), reached the maximum number of sitting days permitted for this Fall Sitting, and the House has completed consideration of the designated legislation, it is the duty of the Chair to declare that this House now stands adjourned.

The House adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

The following sessional papers were tabled November 24, 2022:

35-1-85

Yukon Human Rights Panel of Adjudicators 2021-22 Annual Report (Speaker Harper)

35-1-86

Yukon Judicial Council Annual Report 2021 (McPhee)

35-1-87

Yukon Health Status Report 2021 (McPhee)

35-1-88

Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Annual Report 2021-2022 (McLean)

35-1-89

Interim Report of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform (November 24, 2022) (White)

The following legislative returns were tabled November 24, 2022:

35-1-78

Response to Written Question No. 29 re: medical staff shortages (McPhee)

35-1-79

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Mr. Kent related to general debate on Bill No. 206, *Second Appropriation Act 2022-23* (McLean)

35-1-80

Response to Written Question No. 28 re: *Education Act* requirements for initiatives that promote equality and non-discrimination (McLean)

35-1-81

Response to Written Question No. 24 re: value of claims exchanged for compensation (Streicker)