



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Number 107

1st Session

35th Legislature

HANSARD

Thursday, March 9, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker: The Honourable Jeremy Harper

YUKON LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

2023 Spring Sitting

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

CABINET MINISTERS

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 9, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Clarke: In honour of the Yukon Biodiversity Forum tribute, we have in the gallery, from the Department of Environment, Caitlin Willier from the Yukon Fish and Wildlife branch and Bruce Bennett from the Yukon Conservation Data Centre. I have heard from a colleague that Bruce may be close to retirement, so if that is in fact the case, we certainly wish you all the best in a well-deserved retirement.

Thank you for coming.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to help me welcome Odile Nelson, senior communications advisor for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, here for our tribute here today and also for the tabling of Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*. Thank you so much for all of your work on that.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Yukon Biodiversity Forum

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to the 2023 Yukon Biodiversity Forum that took place this past weekend on March 4. This annual one-day event, coordinated by the Yukon Conservation Data Centre at the Department of Environment and YukonU Research Centre at Yukon University, highlights the ongoing biodiversity assessment and monitoring projects throughout the Yukon. Approximately 150 people attended this event.

The forum brings together Yukoners and researchers to share information and learn about Yukon plants, animals, and special habitats. It is an opportunity to raise awareness about various status trends and new discoveries from the whole spectrum of Yukon wild species. This includes Yukon plants, fungi, fish, mammals, birds, amphibians, invertebrates, and their habitats.

I was able to attend a part of the forum. I know that I was joined there by my colleague, the Member for Whitehorse Centre, on the weekend and was impressed by the presentations and the speakers. I learned, among other things, about zooplanktons in Yukon lakes, how to use social media to talk

about science, and Thomas Yung's discussion about psynergic bats in the Yukon. Yes, compelling — yes, it was.

While I could not attend the other presentations, I was encouraged to see that presentations touched upon a wide variety of topics, such as butterflies, flora, fish stranding in northern Yukon, snowshoe hares, songbirds, McIntyre Creek, species at risk, farmlands, thick-billed murrets, and lastly — but certainly not least — our iconic grizzly bears. Events like this not only support public education, but also act as an important avenue for fostering partnerships. Students, community members, and researchers — all with different focuses and areas of expertise — are exposed to the current field projects that relate to biodiversity assessment and monitoring in the Yukon. Mr. Speaker, by sharing information in these types of gatherings, we can better work together to identify knowledge gaps and species or habitats that require monitoring.

In closing, I would like to thank the researchers and scientists for their commitment to Yukon's biodiversity, its assessment, monitoring, and conservation. In particular, I would like to thank the skilled team of experts at the Department of Environment for their continued work in this field. Some of the staff involved in the forum, as I have mentioned, have joined us in the gallery today.

I applaud you all for your contributions to Yukon's most precious resource — our environment.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the 2023 Yukon Biodiversity Forum, which took place at Yukon University on March 4. This day-long event was co-hosted by the Yukon Conservation Data Centre and the YukonU Research Centre as an opportunity to bring together Yukon researchers and lovers of nature to highlight Yukon biodiversity.

Topics included assessment, monitoring, and conservation. As we know, the Yukon is home to an incredible community of people who dedicate their lives and careers to studying, researching, and learning all that our environment has to offer us.

I would like to thank those who work in this field, whether as part of their profession or as part of their hobbies and interests. The Yukon Conservation Data Centre maintains a website dedicated to sharing information about animals, plants, fungi, and ecosystems that make up the Yukon's beautiful environment.

You can find up-to-date scientific information on all species, as well as other information that could be useful, such as how to determine what type of animal has left those sprawling prints through your yard — other than bear. I think we all know what bear prints look like.

The YukonU Research Centre has a biodiverse monitoring program that has been tracking key indicators of change in the Yukon's ecosystems for more than 40 years. I just want to give a big shout-out and a thank you to all those who organized and took part in this event.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the 2023 Yukon Biodiversity Forum.

I had the absolute delight of attending the forum on Saturday. The room was packed, and you could feel it buzzing with energy and excitement. I met scientists, students, activists, educators, and interested community members. What they all had in common was a deep love for all living things of the Yukon. There was so much passion and knowledge in the room about biodiversity in the Yukon — from birds to bears, from insects to invertebrates.

Thank you to the organizers. I know that Krystal Isbister and Bruce Bennett played a key role, and I know there were many, many more. Thank you to all the presenters. I learned so much about Yukon's nature and the programs protecting it. I even picked up some tips for talking about science on social media.

Congratulations on a wildly successful biodiversity forum.
Applause

In recognition of the Bare Essentials campaign

Hon. Ms. McLean: It is my honour to rise on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government to pay tribute to the annual Bare Essentials campaign. People fleeing because of gender-based violence may not always be able to bring the necessities that they need with them. For two decades, the staff at the Women and Gender Equity Directorate have coordinated the campaign that supplies transition homes and safe houses across the territory with the much-needed supplies, such as diapers and personal care products.

This campaign would not be possible without the ongoing support and encouragement across the Government of Yukon. Bare Essentials is a team effort. I would like to thank everyone who contributed with their donations and their time.

This year, we distributed 98 bins, baskets, and packages of goods to facilities in Whitehorse, Dawson, Watson Lake, Old Crow and Ross River.

What is always astounding to me is that each year, for 20 years, these supplies are completely used by women and children fleeing violence — again, they will be completely used before the end of this calendar year of 2023. It is always a bittersweet feeling to see the mountain — the mountain of products donated by caring Yukoners — and then the realization sets in that all of this will be used by women and children fleeing their homes because of domestic violence.

The campaign makes an impact, but our work does not end here. The Bare Essentials campaign supplies transition homes and safe houses with the most-needed items, but we also need to continue to address root causes of the problem — gender-based violence toward women and children.

Living a life free from violence is a fundamental human right. It is impossible — impossible — to heal or advance your dream, or even dream at all, when you are in complete survival mode in your day-to-day life. Gender-based violence is one of the main obstacles in the way of achieving gender equality. Addressing root causes and better supports for victims, survivors, and their families must be our focus.

Our government is committed to this vision, which is evident in the work that we have done on the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* and in our strategy, *Changing the Story to Upholding Dignity and Justice: Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit+ Strategy*, and its implementation plan. We must all keep this goal in our minds and in our hearts, both inside these walls, as decision-makers, and in our private lives, as Yukoners. Just like Bare Essentials, reaching this goal is going to take a team effort.

Applause

Ms. Clarke: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the annual Bare Essentials campaign, organized to provide basic personal items to women and their children who have left violent households and require basic necessities. Intimate partner violence is one of the most common forms of violence against women. It includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse or controlling behaviours by an intimate partner.

We see an increase in reports of violence within the homes during the winter months, especially over the last few years throughout the pandemic.

Individuals facing situations of domestic violence are often forced to flee their situations with minimal or no personal belongings. Bare Essentials aims to provide items needed by families, including toiletries, personal hygiene, diapers and wipes, and other necessities. These materials are donated annually and sorted out for distribution to transition homes and organizations across the territory. The Yukon is home to an incredible network of services and women's organizations that are available to help individuals facing intimate partner violence and other situations.

The work that they do to help in emergency situations and to help Yukoners to get back on their feet is so important. They are often stretched thin in terms of resources, and campaigns such as this are crucial to ensure that the services they provide are not affected by having to purchase these items.

Thank you to all those who organized this important event this year. It's a lot of work organizing this campaign, and the efforts of all departmental staff and volunteers from organizations are greatly appreciated. Thank you to all involved in this year's campaign — those who organized, put in the work to box and ship items, and especially those who donated to this important cause. Salamat po.

Applause

Ms. White: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP caucus to extend our gratitude to all those within the Yukon government public service who look outside themselves to support those fleeing abuse or violence through their generous donations to the Bare Essentials campaign. This long-standing act of sharing started way back in 2002 and in the last 20-plus years has brought in literally tonnes of personal hygiene products that are then shared across the continuum of organizations supporting women and children.

Thank you to all of those who shared their time to organize and distribute the bounty so generously donated by their co-workers across the government. Your kindness is felt and, I know, greatly appreciated by many.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. White: I have for tabling a document from the government of Nova Scotia, entitled *Midwifery in Nova Scotia: Report of the external assessment team*.

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 17 — received

Clerk: Mr. Speaker and honourable members of the Assembly: I have had the honour to review a petition, being Petition No. 17 of the First Session of the 35th Legislative Assembly, as presented by the Leader of the Third Party on March 8, 2023.

The petition presented by the Leader of the Third Party meets the requirements as to form of the Standing Orders of the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

Speaker: Accordingly, I declare Petition No. 17 is deemed to be read and received.

Pursuant to Standing Order 67, the Executive Council shall provide a response to a petition which has been read and received within eight sitting days of its presentation. Therefore, the Executive Council response to Petition No. 17 shall be provided on or before March 22, 2023.

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 22: *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Ms. McLean: I move that Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate that Bill No. 22, entitled *Act to amend the Yukon Advisory Council on Women's Issues Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 22 agreed to

Bill No. 24: *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)* — Introduction and First Reading

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Public Service Commission that Bill No. 24, entitled *Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023)*, be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion for introduction and first reading of Bill No. 24 agreed to

Speaker: Are there any further bills for introduction? Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House recognizes the successful completion of the 87-unit Boreal Commons rental development by Right On Property Group and encourages the Yukon government to continue to work in partnership with private sector developers and other levels of government to address gaps in the housing continuum and improve affordability and accessibility of housing for all Yukoners.

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

THAT this House:

(1) recognizes that there is an urgent need to safeguard nature and halt and reverse biodiversity loss; and

(2) supports the Government of Canada for signing on to the *Kumming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework* that lays out clear goals and targets to protect nature and biodiversity, as well as supporting the protection of at least 30 percent of terrestrial, inland water and of coastal and marine areas by 2030.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Canada to work with other levels of government, tourism stakeholders, and the Canada Border Services Agency to:

(1) determine appropriate opening and closing dates for the Yukon-Alaska border crossings for the 2023 tourism season;

(2) determine appropriate operating hours for Yukon-Alaska border crossings that reflect the needs of Yukon and Alaska tourism; and

(3) establish stronger communications between border operators, contractors, tourism operators, and governments about the ongoing operation of the Yukon-Alaska border crossings.

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

THAT this House supports the development of resource road regulations that will provide a modern framework for managing and enforcing resource roads in the Yukon.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to provide an update to the public on the timelines and process for changing zoning regulations in the Shallow Bay area.

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

THAT this House:

(1) congratulates the Village of Carmacks ahead of the grand opening of its new arena this weekend;

(2) acknowledges that the previous Yukon Party government and their Community Services minister failed to make any progress on a replacement arena in the Village of Carmacks from December 2014 until it left office in November 2016;

(3) recognizes that it was not a priority for the previous Yukon Party government to address rural infrastructure needs;

(4) recognizes that the previous Yukon Party government's position, namely that building infrastructure was too expensive and their government did not have the capacity to manage such projects and left rural communities without proper facilities; and

(5) acknowledges the work of the current government that has ensured that the Village of Carmacks has a new and much-needed arena.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

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

Mr. Cathers: I would just note that the motion read by the Minister of Community Services seems very clearly to be out of order based on your previous rulings. I would ask you to review the motion and report back to the House.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I would remind all members that motions are reviewed every day by the Clerks. If there is an issue with one of the motions, it will be brought up the next day.

Are there any further notices of motions?

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to increase the amount of medical travel subsidy to reflect the actual costs to patients and medical escorts.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents attending medical appointments, as referenced in the 2021 Yukon Liberal Party platform.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to investigate the option of booking blocks of hotel rooms in

Vancouver and/or other locations for Yukon patients and escorts on medical travel.

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

THAT this House supports the implementation of maximum allowable rent adjustments in the Northwest Territories, as proposed by Katrina Nokleby, Member of the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories for Great Slave.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

5th Avenue and Rogers Street lot development

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to update Yukoners on the 5th and Rogers lot. Today, the land application package for the development of this lot will be available online for the next eight weeks.

The 2.12-hectare lot represents a significant opportunity to increase the housing stock in a prime downtown Whitehorse location. The City of Whitehorse's official community plan identifies a vision for a mixed-use, residential-commercial use in the area to increase the vitality of downtown.

Preparing the 5th and Rogers lot for development has required significant work due to the requirement for remediation and the recent landslides experienced along the escarpment, but this remains an area with incredible potential. The land application package will consider social benefits, such as much-needed affordable housing in the downtown core, unit accessibility, and the participation of First Nations.

This project supports the housing action plan and the recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Our government has been listening to the Yukon business community on the best approach to developing the 5th and Rogers parcel. It has been important to our government to hear all feedback relating to this promising site.

The request for proposals has been developed using the results of the 2020 expression of interest, which will see this parcel sold as a single, raw-land parcel. The expression of interest feedback also indicated that prospective developers were looking for flexible payment and construction commitment schedules in the sales agreement. Our government is prepared to provide this based on the successful bidder's commitment to realizing community social benefits through the development. The future developer will need to address the building of a berm, ensure compliance with a risk-based restoration permit due to previous contamination under the site, remove existing structures, and assess the location of power lines.

From the expression of interest, it was indicated that most respondents wanted no further site improvements to be made prior to the sale of the land. We have taken this feedback seriously by leaving those components for the future developer.

The release of the land application package represents an exciting milestone for all involved and the fulfillment of a platform commitment in the item from my mandate letter.

As the revitalization of this important area of Whitehorse progresses, we look forward to working with the successful bidder, the City of Whitehorse, and Whitehorse residents.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you to the Premier for the update on the 5th and Rogers lot development in downtown Whitehorse. It seems that, according to this statement, the government is hoping that the private sector will move forward to develop this for the city's housing market. My colleagues and I will watch for the results of the RFP that will ultimately determine what developments happen.

Salamat po.

Ms. Tredger: Almost exactly two years ago, I remember standing at 5th and Rogers during the 2021 election, talking about how we had to move faster to develop land for housing. Before that, my predecessor, Liz Hanson, stood at 5th and Rogers in 2016, making the same call to action. So, it is a relief to see that this parcel of land will now finally be available for development, and I'm hopeful that this is the last we hear of 5th and Rogers, other than from new tenants telling their friends where they have just moved to.

With a vacancy rate of 0.8 percent, as of December 2022, it is critical, now more than ever, that affordable rentals be the focus on this development area in Whitehorse. With the waitlists at Yukon Housing, people couch surfing, and families underhoused, this government needs to make affordable rentals a priority.

When the minister speaks of the vitality of downtown, I think with pride about the great diversity of Whitehorse Centre, but then I remember that his government is planning to remove our neighbourhood school and wonder how that contributes to vitality and how that contributes to mixed use and diversity — how all those new downtown families that I hope will live at 5th and Rogers will have to send their kids over the bridge to Riverdale or up the hill to Takhini, and how that goes against so many of the things this government says that it stands for.

So, I hope, as this government supports the development of downtown, they will keep in mind the priority of the Downtown Residents' Association — an elementary school downtown.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will just start by addressing the points from the Third Party first. My understanding — and I will check with my colleague — is that there is a conversation and consultation that is going to occur concerning education infrastructure in the downtown, and I will leave it to her to speak to that later.

I would also point out the fact that in 2015-16, yes, there was a conversation that was happening concerning 5th and Rogers, and we have, since 2021, moved on this project. Of course, there have been some challenges along the escarpment, and I will speak to that in a second.

Mr. Speaker, our government is, again, continuing to deliver on our commitment to increase housing supply in the territory so that all Yukoners have a place to call home. We are advancing the sale of 5th and Rogers, and I am as excited as the

Yukon Party is to look and see what the results will be. I know that there is a lot of interest. People have been reaching out, looking to see what our package looks like that we are going to provide and look at the opportunities to build something quite significant.

The private sector is going to be a key partner. This is something that successive governments have talked about. We will move on it. We think it's important that the private sector plays a key role in the diversity of our housing ecosystem.

I just want to point out a couple of things. I think it's extremely important that, in this House, we are providing that accurate information. I know that, in the fall, I was called "disingenuous", and I think that was a pretty strong statement and it was really about the fact that we were delaying this RFP because we wanted to make sure that we had geotechnical work completed. That geotechnical work has been completed. I don't want to see people living at 5th and Rogers and having a risk. The City of Whitehorse reached out to us and said that we needed to do that work. We respectfully listened to them, and that work has been undertaken and it will change a bit of the scope of the structures that will go on-site, but the berm is going to be something that will be a major mitigation effort.

I want to say to the Yukon Party, please, I'm open for a conversation any time on these points. It was really just a technical undertaking, but it does give instability in our investment ecosystem when we hear comments like that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the City of Whitehorse for their work. I'm proud of our team. There were press releases in 2015 and in 2016 about the work that was going to be done in steering committees, and we go back and forth about — to be fair to Yukoners — who is getting stuff done, but I'm proud of the fact that we are moving on these sometimes very complex files. Sometimes we have to deal with wicked problems, and we take them on and we move through them.

I'm going to thank my colleagues at Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as Community Services. Some of the things that I will share with Yukoners — yes, it took time to prepare this parcel. Safety for all Yukoners is of the utmost importance to our government, and after the slides last summer, geotechnical studies were absolutely crucial. This overall prep work has been a collaborative process between the Yukon government and the City of Whitehorse, and this work includes feasibility work, site assessment, and geotechnical studies on the escarpment, including the portion of the escarpment near the site, to ensure that the berm construction would be sufficient to mitigate any future landslide risks, just to name a few.

This week, there were some comments that were made by different members — some community members — who said that we were not aware of the priorities of the communities. I think we have shown, through our work and our studies, that we are. I think some folks are out of touch with the individuals they represent. I think we're doing good work on lot development, and we're doing good work on making sure that the private sector can play a key role in helping us with our housing solutions.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Campground development

Mr. Dixon: Yukoners who utilize our wonderful network of campgrounds have been looking forward to the development of a new campground since the Liberal government made that announcement in 2020; however, there is a subtle change in this year's five-year capital plan from the one tabled last year that has caught the eye of some Yukon campers.

Last year, there was a line item for — and I quote: “Development of a new Yukon campground.” This year's five-year capital plan reads differently. I have a simple question for the Minister of Environment: Is the construction of a new territorial campground still in the government's plans?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We recognize that user demand for campsites has returned to pre-pandemic levels and is anticipated to increase steadily for years to come. To address this demand, we are actively working to increase the number of available campsites in the territory.

In 2023, we will add approximately 20 campsites across three territorial campgrounds at Congdon Creek, Wolf Creek, and Ethel Lake. Our intent is to offer a range of recreation opportunities that appeal to a diversity of park visitors. Seasonal work to improve community and visitor experience at some of these locations will begin this spring.

Yukon Parks continues to meet with First Nation governments to further the Yukon parks strategy and to deliver on our commitments. Through these discussions, we hope to advance plans to significantly expand and improve some of our recreation parks. We are in the process of completing conceptual designs for potential expansions and recreational activities at several campgrounds. These include: Conrad, Little Salmon, Pine Lake, Snafu, Tarfu, and Twin Lakes.

I certainly recognize from the question from the Leader of the Official Opposition that this is a priority for Yukoners — it is an amazing experience and amazing value proposition, and we are working hard to meet the demand.

Mr. Dixon: So, it appears from the minister's answer that there is no new campground in the works.

Since the parks strategy was released in 2020, Yukoners have been getting excited at the idea of a new campground in the Yukon. In fact, as recently as last year, the minister told Yukoners they should get excited about it. Here is what he said just last year — and I quote: “I'm pleased to share the work that is underway to select a new campground location. Indeed, this is an exciting project to provide greater opportunities to all Yukoners and to the guests we welcome here on an annual basis.”

So, my question for the minister is: When was the decision made to cancel the development of a new campground?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Four existing campgrounds and one land reserve have been identified as potential candidates for significant expansions to become better campgrounds. Those include Tatchun Lake, Million Dollar Falls, Lake Laberge, Twin Lakes, and possibly the Scout Lake land reserves. The expansion concepts include treating these more as full parks

and not just campgrounds, including a focus on First Nation collaborative management and cultural continuity.

During previous engagement, First Nations indicated that they did not want more land to be developed within their traditional territories to create a new campground. As discussed at the November 22 DM briefing, Parks is now looking at existing campgrounds where there are possibilities to add a significant number of new camping sites and/or expand campground boundaries, if at all possible.

To answer the member opposite's question, we are engaging with impacted First Nations. We are having these important discussions to create opportunities. We will not be developing lands where we do not have the support of the impacted First Nation governments.

Mr. Dixon: Last year, the minister made it very clear that a new campground was coming, and that was something that was committed for a number of years now. I know that many Yukoners were very excited at the prospect of a new campground and will be disappointed to hear that what the government is doing instead is simply doing infill in existing campgrounds.

Here's what the minister told the Legislature last year, and I quote: “... various sites within a two-hour drive from Whitehorse are being considered. The final decision has not yet been made, but I can advise that, as indicated, the proposed campground could be larger than 150 campsites. It should ultimately have a rustic atmosphere and well-spaced campsites, have a quiet zone available, and provide active recreational opportunities like hiking trails.”

The minister didn't just promise a new campground; he basically promised the best campground ever. Now, what we are hearing from the minister is that there will be no new campground for Yukoners, and instead just simply infill.

My question for the minister is this: Why is he letting down Yukon campers?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I have indicated, we will be engaging with the affected First Nation governments, and we will seek their guidance. We believe that there are incredible opportunities to improve the camping experience.

To the member opposite's question, if the ultimate decision is that there are opportunities to create greater recreational opportunities, including recreational trails, including, for instance, what occurred last year in Haines Junction — the Pine Lake to the Village of Haines Junction connector trail, which promotes active transportation, so that the residents in Haines Junction and the campers in Pine Lake can walk, bike, scooter, or whatever they wish between the two communities — we see those being opportunities.

We also see there being opportunities within two hours, and outside of two hours, for Yukon government, in collaboration with Yukon First Nations, to tell Yukon First Nations' stories at campgrounds, and we believe that there are significant opportunities. We believe that the impacted and affected First Nation governments are interested in this proposition. So, we will take guidance, and we will continue these conversations. Nothing has been ruled out.

Question re: Driver's licensing process

Mr. Hassard: So, over the past year, we have heard concerns raised by businesses in both the tourism and mining industries about the growing red tape and the process for obtaining a class 4 driver's licence. Class 4 licences are a necessity for tourism businesses to transport clients and operate tours, as well as moving crews on- and off-site in the mining industry. Now, we have heard that the waitlist for booking a class 4 road test is multiple months, which is hampering recruitment and retention of employees in an already tight job market.

So, will the minister agree to cutting the red tape and streamlining the class 4 driver's licence process to ease the strain felt across the private sector?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the question from the member opposite. I have been in contact with the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, as have my colleagues, and we have responded to their executive. We have addressed some of the issues. The first issue is with respect to reciprocity, and we have advised the Tourism Industry Association that Yukon has reciprocal agreements in place to allow existing class 4, or equivalent, driver's licences from other jurisdictions within Canada or the United States to exchange their licence to a class 4 Yukon licence without further testing. In such cases, applicants are provided a new licence with a new expiry, up to five years from the date of issue, meaning that they are treated as new licence applications, which will alleviate the typical testing requirements.

I can say that, while the testing requirements are streamlined in such cases, Yukon motor vehicle regulations do require that commercial licence applicants file a medical examination certificate at the time of their application, and the *Motor Vehicles Act* requires that the medical examination certificates have been completed within 180 days of the date of filing.

I can also advise that it is helpful to note that the Motor Vehicles branch in Yukon will accept the medical examination certificate from any jurisdiction within Canada or the United States, should an individual wish to complete medicals prior to leaving their home jurisdiction.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the answer from the minister, but one thing that I would like to know is, is that, in fact, in place today? Because, if not, why are businesses being told differently, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the member opposite. This is the guidance that my department has provided to the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon, and it is my understanding that is the current situation with respect to the reciprocity of the driver's licence and with respect to the medical examination certificate being usable from another jurisdiction.

So, I guess, to answer the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's question, yes, that's the information that I have and that has been conveyed to the chair, to the vice-president, to an executive director, to the project manager, and also to the president of the Wilderness Tourism Association of the Yukon. So, we have communicated with the Yukon Chamber of Mines,

the Yukon Producers Group, the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, and as indicated, the Wilderness Tourism Association, and of course, the Tourism Industry Association of Yukon.

Mr. Hassard: I'm sure the tourism and mining industries will be happy to hear that from the minister today. The other thing that the minister brought up was the fact about the driver's medical exams, and we appreciate the fact that they are actually accepting the exams from outside of the territory, but it's still a problem for people who are wishing to get a new class 4 driver's licence here in the Yukon.

So, what is the government doing to ensure that someone who wants to get a new class 4 driver's licence here in the Yukon is able to get a medical exam in a timely manner to get that licence?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would just say at the outset that, of course, our all-of-government approach will make every effort to support the various industries that have raised concerns, in order to streamline the licensing process, and we will not be putting up any unreasonable barriers.

I have reached out to my colleagues at Health and Social Services to share concerns raised about accessing medical exams in the Yukon in order to obtain a Yukon class 4 licence. I have been informed that providing medical exams for drivers' licences is not an insured service; however, our government continues to work with partners to improve access to our health care system as a whole, which should alleviate some of the pressures related to this matter.

I will certainly be in contact with the Minister of Health and Social Services on an all-of-government basis to expedite the licensing in all of these key industries, which are getting going in this early spring and into the summer.

I do note for all Yukoners that there are issues with respect to waits on driver training and driver examinations, and that is acknowledged, but we're making best efforts to fill that gap as soon as possible.

Question re: Medical travel

Ms. White: Dealing with the medical travel in the Yukon can be notoriously difficult. In fact, every week, we hear from Yukoners who are left behind by the system. Even for folks who are lucky enough to qualify for a medical travel subsidy, the money runs out fast. People get \$150 a day to pay for everything they need away from home: food, hotel room, and transportation. Anyone who has booked a hotel in the last few years knows that rooms under \$150 a night are hard to come by. That means that people are forced to pay out of pocket, borrow money from friends, or take money out of their savings, all to access the medical care they need.

Will the minister increase the medical travel subsidy to reflect the actual cost of travelling?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question, particularly because it's important that Yukoners know that we have already doubled the medical travel subsidy. For years, it was not responsive to the needs of Yukoners. The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting Yukoners to access the services that they need, including medical travel and care

coordination. Our government continues to expand the inter-territory programs to ensure that more Yukoners can access care closer to home and not need to travel. Certainly, there will be situations when some people will still need to travel outside their home communities, either here to Whitehorse or to receive medical services outside of the Yukon.

Our program provides supports for insured health services that are not available in someone's home community. We're investing in enhancements to our care coordination and medical travel units by implementing the recommendations of *Putting People First*. It was relatively recently that the medical travel subsidy was increased to \$155 per day from \$75 per day, where it had only started on the second day. It was doubled under our government. It begins on the first day, and that is what is available at this time to Yukoners.

Ms. White: So, the medical travel subsidy is still far from being enough. People should not have to pay out of pocket for essential health care, and throwing a few rocks into the giant pit left by the Yukon Party is not enough anymore, after six years of being in government, which is why I am asking the question.

So many of the policies for medical travel simply do not make sense. The minister may remember our letters from last fall, when medical travel was denied to a person who was waiting for a double lung transplant. Good news — after the story broke in the media, it was resolved, but not for long because here we are again. This time, medical travel has denied her husband's medical escort subsidy, despite the fact that her transplant team was very clear: she cannot live on her own. It is not just risky; it's impossible. Again, this is just one of the latest examples, but it is far from being the only one.

Can the minister explain why her department makes decisions that go against medical orders?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is not appropriate for me to discuss a particular case here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, and I won't do so, but I will say that the member opposite does not have the most recent facts. I can also indicate that when — and I encourage all members, when individuals come to them, to please contact our office. We have resolved hundreds of cases on an individual basis, not only with respect to medical travel, but with respect to making sure that individuals are receiving the absolute best care wherever they need it to be.

We are exploring the recommendation to deliver a safe and alternative service to Yukoners who travel to Whitehorse to access care, as outlined in the *Putting People First* recommendation related to the medical travel. That has been implemented. As I have noted, it has been doubled, and the index to inflation is considered annually. As of April 1, 2023, the medical travel subsidy that the member opposite has noted will be \$166 per day. In addition to the medical travel subsidy, eligible clients receiving social assistance may have their hotel costs covered for outpatient medical travel, and there are lots of additional opportunities for Yukoners to receive service —

Speaker: Order.

Ms. White: So, 15 minutes before Question Period was the last time I talked with the couple I referenced, and I sent

two e-mails this morning to the minister's office, and the last time I was able to check, I had not heard back. So, I think my information is up to date, but I would like to be wrong — I really would.

I'm not surprised with the minister and her points about medical subsidy, but I want her to know that I think there's another option. I went down to Vancouver with a friend this winter, as the escort, and was only covered for one day, and I was stunned to see dozens of Yukoners in the lobby, and all of them were there for medical travel, and all of them were paying for a room in downtown Vancouver for whatever the hotel's regular rate was.

I don't think that it has to be this way. The government could work with one or multiple hotels in Vancouver, or where required, and secure a block rate for Yukoners travelling for medical reasons. Block rates are typically cheaper than the regular rate. Will the minister work with hotels near hospitals Yukoners most frequent to secure block rates for Yukoners who —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I know that Yukoners have committed their information through the *Putting People First* report and through the discussions that took place to develop that report. We have accepted all 76 recommendations and are working to implement them, incorporating the feedback from Yukoners through that process.

I am very pleased to say that a number of the elements of *Putting People First* have already been implemented, including the advice about medical travel. I can also indicate that there are discussions and comments in that report that deal with places for individuals to stay that would be more economical, safe, and welcoming places for them when they are in very stressful times, dealing with medical situations when they are far away from home.

We will absolutely continue the work to explore those options from that report and look forward to doing so.

Question re: Hunting in Yukon

Mr. Istchenko: This weekend, the Minister of Environment gave a speech at the Yukon Fish and Game Association wild game banquet. In that speech, he committed to working to improve the relationship between the government and the hunting community. One specific promise that he had made was to create new hunting opportunities for licensed hunters.

This was welcome news to the community, but they would like to know a little bit more information on what the minister means. What new hunting opportunities is the minister considering?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: We are in the process of reviewing the data with respect to the various surveys, and we are considering — for instance, in some of the ranges and the areas where we have both the aerial surveys and where permit hunts have been provided for — providing additional opportunities.

My priority is to provide, where supported by science and by the data from my wildlife biologists — I will provide opportunities to Yukon resident hunters. I will do so. I have met

with the Fish and Game Association. I will meet with them again, and we will continue these conversations.

They have asked to be provided with additional opportunities with, potentially, the elk hunt and different ways of hunting elk. They have asked for reconsideration of the Sifton-Miners Range. They have also asked for consideration of perhaps increasing the deer hunt. I said that all these issues are on the table.

Mr. Istchenko: Since this government has been power, they have focused on reducing hunting opportunities for licensed and resident hunters. They have been quick to shut down and restrict hunting, but incredibly slow to revisit those decisions to create new opportunities. It was a welcome change of position when the minister told the Yukon Fish and Game Association at their banquet that he was changing his position and was trying to create new opportunities; however, during his speech, he was light on details and he is very light on details in this House today.

He has raised the expectations of the hunting community, and we are all looking for some concrete examples of some of the new hunting opportunities that he is considering. Will the minister put some meat on the bone here? When he announced that he will be looking to create new hunting opportunities, what did he mean?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I would like to take this opportunity, first of all, to congratulate the president, Bryce Bekar, and executive director Eric Schroff and their entire executive for putting on an incredibly successful fish and game banquet. I thank them for having me.

As I indicated, we recognize that the Yukon's unique and valuable opportunities for hunting and the Department of Environment's decisions about hunting — we are committed to ensuring harvesting is done sustainably while respecting the importance of wildlife conservation and Indigenous subsistence harvest rights. Managing human activity — particularly hunting — is our primary tool to conserve game.

The allocation framework is needed, however, to help improve our transparency and fairness, and thus the public's understanding and acceptance of the process, rules, and responsibilities around hunting opportunities. Our goal is to develop a clear harvest allocation framework that includes a modernized process. The allocation framework will ensure that the division of hunting opportunities between resident and non-resident hunters align with Yukoners' values, reflects the best available data, and respects First Nation subsistence harvest rights.

I will continue these conversations and I am listening to the Fish and Game Association as to what they are —

Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Istchenko: So, in his speech to the Yukon Fish and Game Association on Saturday night, the minister made it clear that he wants to repair the relationship between his government and the hunting community that was so damaged by the previous minister. One of the most symbolic decisions that the former minister made was to cut funding to the Fish and Game Association. While the minister has restored some of that cut,

the funding to the Yukon Fish and Game Association still has not returned to the level where it was before the cut.

Will the minister now agree to fully restore the funding to the Yukon Fish and Game Association?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to commend the minister on his work so far with the fish and game organization. I, of course, highlighted in the mandate letter that I provided to the minister that it was important to do two key things. One was to look for the best opportunities for Yukoners to have a chance to go out and do what they love, which is not just about supporting their families, but traditional undertakings — but to ensure that the hunting community had the best opportunities to do what they do here for resident hunters. Second, it was about ensuring that we support the work of the Department of Environment to collect data so that we can make sure that appropriate decisions can be made, and it needs to be work that is timely. I am going to commend the minister on those points.

I think it's also important that we take into consideration other boards that have a key role in these decisions, which come from the *Umbrella Final Agreement*, and some of the work done — whether by the renewable councils or by fish and wildlife. I am going to be here to support the minister in those discussions.

I had an opportunity to meet with the leadership, as well, of the Fish and Game Association. In those discussions, we talked about the contribution agreements and if they were in a position right now to do the work that they can do. They said that they can, but they also said that they would be interested in support for different projects in the future, and we are interested in more conversations. So, we are here to support that community —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Yukon River crossing at Dawson City

Ms. Van Bibber: Last year's budget included \$250,000 for the planning of a new bridge crossing the Yukon River at Dawson City. Next week, the Department of Highways and Public Works will be hosting a meeting in Dawson to discuss the development of a new bridge.

Can the minister tell us whether or not engagement has begun with the City of Dawson or the Tr'ondëk Hwëch' in First Nation?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Highways and Public Works is responsible for the safe and sustained operation of Yukon's transportation system. Climate change is impacting the Yukon's transportation infrastructure in many ways. Shifting permafrost is affecting our highways, record snowfalls are creating more frequent avalanches, and changing temperatures are affecting the feasibility of winter roads and ice bridges. The impacts of changing climate on the Dawson City Yukon River crossing are substantial. The Yukon River saw record flows this summer and more unpredictable environmental conditions make the construction of the ice bridge increasingly uncertain, although we have been fortunate in the past two seasons. Given these circumstances, we need to start having discussions with the residents of Dawson City on the future of the river crossing.

Highways and Public Works and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Chief and Council met in September 2022 to begin discussions on community engagement and to discuss the future of the river crossing in Dawson.

As Yukoners have likely read, Highways and Public Works will be hosting an information session for Dawson City residents this month. We will also be re-engaging with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in in March about what is important to them when considering the future of the Yukon River crossing in Dawson City.

Ms. Van Bibber: We are well aware of the climate change issues. The challenges that this government has had with the ice bridge in Dawson are well-documented and the source of a lot of humour within the community and throughout the territory.

We note that this project is not in the five-year capital plan. When can we expect this project to advance?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the Member for Porter Creek North has indicated, currently Yukoners rely on the *George Black* ferry and the ice bridge to cross the Yukon River in Dawson. As we know, the *George Black* ferry typically operates between May and October, and ice bridge construction begins in mid-December — although it is not fully operational to, I think, around 40,000 kilograms until even a month after that. It is dependent on environmental conditions. Dawson residents, of course, know that this means that, twice a year, there is a gap in service affecting residents of West Dawson, including the ability to access emergency services.

In addition, in past years, there has been enough variation in the freeze-up that we aren't able to construct a safe and sanctioned ice bridge. This resulted, at the time, in residents crossing over the ice at unsanctioned crossings that were not determined to be safe.

Absolutely this engagement process is happening. We know — perhaps new Yukoners don't know this — that the Yukon bridge was to have been constructed 15, 16, 17 years ago under the former Yukon Party government — at a much lower cost, I'm sure —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Van Bibber: Over the past year, we have seen the community deal with real issues because of the mechanical issues facing the *George Black* ferry. Last summer, Highways and Public Works officials told CBC Yukon that replacing the *George Black* ferry was under consideration. It doesn't seem like buying a brand new ferry would make sense if the government is planning on building a bridge.

What are the plans for the *George Black* ferry, and how do those plans fit with the timing of construction of a new bridge?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Supporting the Tourism Industry Association, supporting Yukon placer miners, and supporting the economy in general is a priority in our all-of-government approach. That has been shown now, where we have, on an all-of-government basis, opened up access to Sixty Mile placer miners, and we are beginning the process of opening up the Bonanza loop early as well so that placer miners can get in and support the Yukon economy.

Certainly, alive to the issue about the *George Black* ferry — this is an active conversation that I'm having with my team. I am being briefed on this issue. Even most optimistically, any sort of permanent bridge crossing, which the former Yukon Party government didn't get done, will not occur in the near future, so certainly, the *George Black* ferry has to be looked at, and any possible redundancy, which may have to be built in.

I'm having these conversations. I'm alive to the issue. Thank you for the question from the member opposite.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 26: Act to amend the Municipal Act (2023) — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 26, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Mostyn.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I move that Bill No. 26, entitled *Act to amend the Municipal Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Community Services that Bill No. 26, entitled *Act to amend the Municipal Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is my privilege and honour to introduce Bill No. 26, *Act to amend the Municipal Act (2023)*, which amends the *Municipal Act*. Bill No. 26 will extend the term of office for municipal and local advisory councils from three years to four, effective with the October 2024 general election.

In May 2022, the Association of Yukon Communities, which includes municipalities and local advisory councils, passed a resolution that the Government of Yukon increase the term of office for municipal council from three years to four years. In March 2022, the Government of Yukon and the Association of Yukon Communities signed a renewed partnership agreement. The agreement sets the foundation for how the two parties would work together over the next three years, based on principles of fairness, cooperation, and collaboration.

This bill supports this government's commitment to partner with the Association of Yukon Communities. Recognizing the changes such as this requires proper engagement with citizens. The Association of Yukon Communities asked the Government of Yukon to work together to seek public input. We held a public engagement from September 1 through 28, 2022. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics received data from 149 Yukoners. The majority of the respondents supported a four-year term; 93 said yes, 51 said no, while five said that they were not sure. Most respondents said that they vote whenever they are eligible to, and only nine respondents said that a four-year term would make them less likely to vote. Similarly, most respondents reported that a change in term would not affect their likelihood of running as a candidate or volunteering in election campaigns.

We also invited councils to provide government-to-government feedback if they felt anything was not captured in the Association of Yukon Communities' resolution. No formal responses were received.

The Association of Yukon Communities resolution states that a longer term will give municipal councils additional time to enact strategic priorities; allow them to plan beyond the three-year term; meet the demands on municipal councils to plan and set direction to address the needs of their citizens, which are increasing with population growth; and finally, meet the increasing requirements related to the implementation of Yukon First Nation land claims and self-government agreements, and the transfer of administration and control of land and resources, from Canada to Yukon. These are great objectives and ones the government is happy to support.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise and speak to this bill at second reading on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition. I would like to acknowledge the work done by the City of Whitehorse and the AYC in advancing this issue. As members may recall, this started with a motion put forward at the city council here in Whitehorse. I believe it was championed initially by Councillor Kirk Cameron, who spoke to the issue in the media following the passage of that motion. After that motion was passed by the City of Whitehorse, it proceeded to the Association of Yukon Communities annual general meeting where, under the sponsorship of the City of Whitehorse, it passed with the support of AYC.

We were pleased to see it come forward here today in the spring session. In this case, I have to give the government some credit for moving quickly on this priority. The motion only passed through the AYC process recently, so they have obviously done some work to advance this priority very quickly.

I should note as well, though, that despite its passage at AYC, there were some communities across the territory that did raise some concerns and had some questions, so we will be sure to bring forward some of those questions in Committee of the Whole and ask the government to respond to some of the concerns that were raised by members of the municipal governments across the territory during the debate at AYC. We are also curious to learn a little bit more about the role of LACs in this process and any changes that are contemplated in the process by which the terms of LACs are set. Obviously, the councils are set in this legislation, and we would like to discuss a little bit more about the role of the director in setting the terms of the LACs.

Finally, we certainly recognize the benefits of a lengthened term. The ability to act on strategic priorities, the ability to better sync with the budget cycles of municipalities, and a range of other benefits would come with the four-year term. However, as I noted earlier, there were some questions raised, particularly by smaller municipalities that had some questions about the impact it would mean for them.

So, we are supportive of this bill coming forward. We look forward to getting into debate in Committee of the Whole and asking some questions that have been raised throughout the

discussion on this issue over the course of its debate at the municipal level.

With that, we will look forward to getting into Committee of the Whole.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking to Bill No. 26, I echo the sentiments of my colleagues, which is we heard the desire of this change to happen from the AYC, heard about the motion and how that went down, and the truth of the matter is that changing the terms from three to four years makes sense. So, we look forward to Committee of the Whole.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will just add a couple of comments. I happened to be a city councillor when the *Municipal Act* had a fairly significant rewrite about a decade ago and, at that time, I recall us debating, through the Association of Yukon Communities, whether we should go to a four-year term. The Association of Yukon Communities, at that time, was undecided; it was quite split. So, I am happy to hear that it is much more concurrent at the moment with a four-year term. I'm excited for councils. I think, when I look across Canada, most other provinces have gone to four-year terms, so I think they are seeing this when they go the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and meet with colleagues from across the country and they discuss whether it's better or worse. I think, generally, the feeling with municipalities is that it is better.

One small comment that I will raise is that we have five local advisory councils in the Yukon, and four of them are in my riding of Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes. I often attend those local advisory council meetings. I was at one last night; I was at one the night before; I will be at one tonight. For the local advisory councils, they are less keen on four years, but they are very supportive of the overall initiative for municipalities and for the Association of Yukon Communities.

Really — you may have heard me when I rose to speak to the budget. I tried to give a shout-out to those local advisory councils, because those folks do a lot of volunteer work in their positions, and it is a hard role for them — or it is a demanding role for them — and they are nervous about making that extra commitment, but I think they will also grow into it well, and they have been supportive of this bill coming forward, and I have been keeping them up to date on the progress.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the vote at second reading.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I really appreciate the thoughts and views of the members this afternoon on this very important matter. I really want to stress how important this was to AYC. We saw it as an important move as well. This is a step forward for representative government at the community level within the territory. I want to commend the department officials from

Yukon government, both in Community Services and with the Bureau of Statistics — and, of course, Justice for fast-tracking this piece of legislation and getting it before the House in the spring. It really was an amazing effort on behalf of the civil service to get this before it, and I really do appreciate that work.

I look forward to the questions from the opposition when we get into Committee of the Whole.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 17 yea, nil nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 26 agreed to

Bill No. 209: *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2023-24* — Third Reading

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 209, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 209, entitled *Interim Supply Appropriation Act 2023-24*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I want to thank members opposite for their comments during Committee and also at second reading, and I will cede the floor to the opposition.

Mr. Cathers: I won't speak at length here as I did talk to this budget — interim supply — earlier. As has been the practice of the Yukon Party Official Opposition, since interim

supply is a confidence bill, we do not vote in favour of confidence matters for this Liberal government. I would note, as well, that we, of course, don't object to the general practice of an interim supply bill to ensure that government is able to pay the bills on time, but it is a timely time, I think, to remind this Liberal government that, in the fiscal year that we are just finishing right now, there were a number of serious issues with government not paying their bills on time, including those affecting health care delivery.

That includes the fact that they shortchanged the hospital in excess of \$14.5 million, based on the budget that the hospital chair and CEO indicated to us last fall of their budgetary needs of \$103.5 million for O&M prior to factoring in inflation and pandemic impacts, and the fact that, according to the supplementary budget tabled by the Finance minister, they are currently only receiving \$88.9 million in O&M, according to the Yukon Hospital Services line item.

Other areas where they were late in paying the bills included paying doctors in a timely manner for health care services they provided, with physicians telling us that some of their billings have been outstanding for over 90 days, and that the problem is something that they have raised with government on a number of occasions and has yet to be resolved. We saw the government delayed in paying pharmacists for some items for many months; nurses who didn't receive bonuses promised by this minister — the Minister of Health and Social Services, pardon me — which led to grievances filed against this government and, of course, in the area of the regulated and funded midwifery program, which was committed to and then re-announced many times by this government, we saw the government actually ban midwives operating in unregulated private practice, fumble the ball for many months on starting the program, and then abruptly shut it down.

So, my point is that we do agree with the importance of paying the bills on time. We would encourage the government to make sure that they are doing that, especially in areas where it impacts health care services.

Ms. White: Today, in speaking to the interim bill, I would remind the House that, when I was in the Official Opposition capacity to a Yukon Party government, we didn't get along, and we still voted in favour of this, because it is what allows government to run. So, today, we will vote in favour of this for that reason and many others.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thanks to the members opposite for their comments. I will be definitely interested in Committee of the Whole when Health gets a chance to respond. Again, just because the member opposite says it, doesn't actually make it so, especially with the midwifery situation.

It was quite interesting to come into government, and after hearing the associations, organizations, and midwifery

concerns across the Yukon for five years in opposition, and hearing the government of the day say that they are working on midwifery — the Yukon Party — and then coming in and realizing that not even the beginning of the regulation work to actually prepare was even started.

The legislative process took a long time, for sure, but again, really disheartening to finally come in and be able see how much work was just not done by the Yukon Party in midwifery in Yukon. So, we are very proud that now, we have done the regulations, we've done the legislation, and the Yukon Liberal Party is responsible for midwifery being regulated in the Yukon. We are very proud of that track record, as the Yukon Party basically just didn't lift a finger on it.

Thank you again for the support from the NDP as well, because I agree with the Leader of the Third Party: it's important that we keep the lights on, and this is what the interim supply bill does.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Disagree.

Mr. Kent: Disagree.

Ms. Clarke: Disagree.

Mr. Cathers: Disagree.

Ms. McLeod: Disagree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.

Mr. Hassard: Disagree.

Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are nine yea, eight nay.

Speaker: The yeas have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Motion for third reading of Bill No. 209 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 209 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: Committee will now come to order.

Bill No. 207: *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23* — continued

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Department of Highways and Public Works — continued

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Yesterday afternoon, just prior to the end of the afternoon session, I had provided the balance of my introductory comments. I will just reintroduce Deputy Minister Catherine Harwood, to my right, and her assistant, Alyson Miller, to her right, here assisting from the department. I will sit down and look forward to the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Hassard: I, too, would like to thank the officials for being here today to assist the minister in some smooth progress this afternoon — I foresee.

The first question I would have is if we could get a breakdown on the Klondike Highway budget in the supplementary.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My understanding is that there is a commitment from the department to provide a detailed breakdown of the work that has been, or is anticipated to be, completed on the Klondike Highway for fiscal 2022-23. The member opposite will know that the voted amounts — or the legislative authority to spend from the main estimates on the Klondike Highway — was \$42,898,000, reduced in this capital budgeting exercise by \$5,832,000, for a revised proposed vote of \$37,066,000, and the notes indicate that has to do with timing, and also with respect to some supply chain interruptions — the Sikanni bridge in northeastern British Columbia. So, that was one of the issues, but in any event, notwithstanding that, it

is predicted that somewhere in excess of \$37 million will have been dedicated to the Klondike Highway in this fiscal year, and there is more work to be done.

I do have specific information with respect to the work that has been done on the north Klondike Highway over the course of this last year and can provide that to the member opposite, if he wishes, in this Committee of the Whole session this afternoon. The answer is — it looks like approximately in excess of \$37 million having been spent and committed, via a legislative return, to provide the breakdown to the House.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that from the minister, and maybe it would be easier just to do it all at once. When the department is getting that legislative return in order, if they could also provide the changes in major projects, as well as the line item on the Alaska Highway, if that would be possible, Deputy Chair.

The one further question I have in regard to that is in regard to the Nisutlin bridge. So, I am wondering if the minister could provide some update on where we are at with the Nisutlin bridge and why the change in the supplementary budget for that particular project as well.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite has noted, the primary increase in the supplementary budget request for Highways and Public Works is, in fact, in relation to the Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement project. The other two projects are the Dempster fibre and the Carmacks bypass projects, which I can speak to at some point this afternoon as well.

Bid prices for this project, as was communicated, came in higher than anticipated due to current global economic circumstances and the high premium on steel and other materials arising from general inflationary pressures and also, as we heard, the war in Ukraine. As well, this contract was ultimately awarded in May 2022, so into this fiscal year. In an all-of-government approach, the decision — although it was difficult to make, we needed to move forward with this critical piece of infrastructure. The contract was awarded in May 2022. At the time, there was just really a place-holder value budgeted for the Nisutlin Bay bridge in the amount of \$3.94 million toward the Nisutlin Bay bridge and an additional \$400,000 toward repairs in the 2022-23 mains budget.

Once the commitment was made on an all-of-government basis, it was known that more would be spent in 2022-23, and the overall capital expenditure for the government, which the member opposite will know was just in excess of \$546 million, was being closely monitored as to whether a supplementary in the fall would be required for Highways and Public Works. The member opposite and the House will note that eventually various lapses were identified in the supplementary budget. On page S-14 in the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*, for 2022-23, the lapses that were identified at the Yukon Development Corporation, the Yukon Housing Corporation, Tourism and Culture, Health and Social Services, Environment, and Community Services — so they were all identified at the period 8 variance. In consequence of that, on an all-of-government basis, the 2022-23 vote today was \$546,477,000 and the revised vote was also \$546,477,000.

If those projected lapses had not occurred — and, of course, Highways and Public Works would have had to ask for more spending — well, on an all-of-government basis, they would have had to ask for more spending authority. In fact, it would have been something like \$580 million or \$590 million. But, by the fall, it was evident that it was unlikely that, on an all-of-government basis, \$546 million would be expended. So, that was the amount.

We have worked with Transport Canada to secure an additional \$52.5-million contribution to the national trade corridors fund to support the increased cost of the project. As I indicated in my comments, we worked together as one government to identify areas across departments where money was available from other projects. There were projects that were likely to lapse, as I've indicated, and that's why we ended up with the amount that was requested specifically by Highways and Public Works but not resulting in a net additional request for authority to spend on the 2022-23 capital budget. It's the same as it was in the spring of 2022.

Mr. Hassard: It was interesting to listen to that answer from the Minister of Highways and Public Works. There was something said by the Finance minister that the additional request in the supplementary budget for the Nisutlin bridge was because of the accelerated schedule. My understanding from looking at the project on a daily basis is that, in fact, it's behind schedule, so I'm curious if the minister can give us some understanding as to why the Finance minister would have used the words "an accelerated schedule"?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think it's fair to say that, in the briefings I have had with my department with respect to the three main components of this supplementary budget — which are the Dempster fibre project, the Carmacks bypass, and the Nisutlin Bay bridge — the one where there was a notable request for acceleration was the Carmacks bypass.

There was an element of acceleration in the Dempster fibre project, but if there was an element of communicated acceleration with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, it was compared to what was expected when that decision was being made, whether to proceed or not, as to what might get done. But it became fairly clear during the course of the summer and into the fall that substantive work was going to be done with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge project, which, of course, is a positive development.

Just for the record, the Nisutlin Bay bridge is a critical link along the Alaska Highway. It is an important landmark for Teslin. In the spring of 2019, the Yukon government and Teslin Tlingit Council signed a project agreement for the bridge replacement. Through the project charter, we have been working together to design and build a safe, reliable structure that accommodates more traffic while also improving access for pedestrians and cyclists. This project will provide a significant positive economic outcome for the territory, local businesses, and the community of Teslin.

The tender was posted on October 13, 2021, and for two prequalified contractors — and closed on February 3, 2022. A \$169.96-million contract, which is the largest infrastructure project so far in the history of the Yukon, was awarded on

May 3, 2022, to Graham Infrastructure LP. The project was scheduled to begin in the summer of 2022, with a winter shutdown between mid-December to the end of March 2023. While the project is in winter shutdown, there are still some activities behind the scenes, such as shipping materials to the site, working with utility companies to ensure that the project does not impact the relocating of existing fibre optic cable and electrical lines, and project planning and scheduling. Work is scheduled to start again in the early spring.

The following work has been completed to date by the contractor — such as mobilization, site preparation, construction camp and project office set-up, initial steps for the pit and quarry development for granular and rock production, partial temporary work such as trestle bridge construction, which includes piling and building access ramps, civil work such as clearing and grubbing of the new alignment, and fish salvage work.

The following work is planned by the contractor for this spring: temporary and permanent work such as piling, cofferdam, and complete access road and ramp, and granular and rock production.

I have more notes as well, but as far as the department was concerned, the so-called acceleration occurred fairly quickly after the amount — just in excess of \$4 million — was set aside when it became clear in discussions with Graham Infrastructure LP that work was, in fact, going to proceed and that additional funds would be required.

As I indicated previously in my comments, that's when the whole discussion of how the \$546,477,000 looked from an all-of-government perspective — did Highways and Public Works require additional spending authority in the fall to continue, or did it not? Ultimately, there was an exercise undertaken, which now, subject to legislative authority in the House, will allow this project to proceed with no net new request on all an all-of-government basis.

Mr. Hassard: I guess my question for the minister would be: Since the project was awarded in May and there was no supplementary last fall, did he feel that the roughly \$4.5 million that they had in the budget was actually enough to cover the work that was going to happen last year? It just doesn't seem to make sense to me that, if you award a \$160-million project in May, you should be anticipating that you are going to get as much work done as you can in the summer, so why would there not have been more money in the initial budget?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I am advised by the department that their recollection is that discussions were occurring quite soon after the contract was signed in June and July to come up with a work plan, and that the department was monitoring the spend closely, and as I have indicated a few times in my responses, monitoring the overall spend closely, and that if there had to be a request for a supplementary budget legislative authority in the fall of 2022, it would have had to have been made quite soon after the awarding of the contract and after the discussions that were occurring with Graham Infrastructure LP with respect to their work plan.

I would concede to the House that it became fairly clear relatively soon that there was going to be a substantial work season. Ultimately, that work season is in the range of \$39.7 million, but as indicated, it was also fairly quickly determined that the \$546.47 million all-of-government capital budget legislative authority ask for the spring of 2022-23 was going to be somewhat generous, I suppose, or optimistic with respect to a few departments, so that, on an all-of-government basis, although it was monitored very closely, it was determined that the ask wasn't likely to be required. Ultimately, that planning was correct, and it doesn't appear to have been required.

Mr. Hassard: I also think the interesting thing around this is the fact that the project is considerably behind where the company had anticipated it being at this point in time. You know, last fall, the company, Graham construction, had talked about hoping to have bollards concrete poured; 30,000 metres of gravel in place; and we're not anywhere near that. So, I am wondering if the minister knows: Was this winter shutdown that has taken place — was that anticipated beforehand, or was this something that came up later on?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise that the Department of Highways and Public Works is in frequent contact with Graham Infrastructure LP — I would venture to say probably weekly telephone conversations. I know that my deputy minister has met with the leaders — the executive and leaders of this project — most recently in-person, and in Vancouver as well. The most recent communication we have from Graham is that the project is, as far as they can see right now, still on schedule.

What I would caution all Yukoners, first of all, is that this is the largest infrastructure program structure project that has ever been entered into in the history of the Yukon, and it is multi-year. I know that going forward, in the next year or so — of course there might be bumps in the road. But I'm answering the member opposite's direct question with respect to the scheduling of this project. I'm advised that the project was scheduled for a winter shutdown between mid-December 2022 to the end of March 2023, and we are working with the contractor on their return plan and finalizing the work plan for the upcoming season.

So, what I would say is that this project is still in the relatively early phase. Will it proceed absolutely seamlessly? Will there be bumps in the road? Likely.

I know that the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin in the prior session identified issues with respect to aggregate. I have been to Teslin at least twice on this matter, and I spoke to both the executives from Graham Infrastructure. I also spoke to the persons who are tasked with the various jobs, including accessing the aggregate. I have heard from them about the disappointment of the quality of the aggregate, but I also heard from them that they are a nimble, innovative and problem-solving national company that is in the business of problem-solving, and they expressed, in October of last year when I was on-site, a high degree of confidence that this will proceed as they anticipate it to proceed.

Will there be issues between YG and Graham Infrastructure and perhaps with the Teslin Tlingit Council? You

certainly can't rule that out as being a possibility, but I suppose, to answer the member opposite's question, that the original schedule at the time of tender did include the scheduled winter shutdown and also, given that it is a multi-year project, it will always take a phased approach to scheduling, which allows for a pace that will suit the Teslin Tlingit Council, Yukon government, and the contractor.

I was certainly impressed in my interactions with the leadership from Graham Infrastructure LP. Their commitment to the Village of Teslin, their commitment to the Teslin Tlingit Council, their commitment to there being a healthy work camp environment, their commitment to ensuring that any potential negative consequences of the so-called "work camp culture" would be alleviated — I was certainly heartened by that, and I have heard Members of the Legislative Assembly express concerns about that over the course of the last year.

So, yes, of course, there will be challenges. I am committed to continuing to travel to Teslin or to meet with Graham Infrastructure LP as might be deemed advisable in order to ensure the success of this project. But I have met in person with the ownership group — the vice-presidents who are responsible for this project — and they certainly have expressed an excitement and enthusiasm in having a strong partnership with an Indigenous self-governing government and about succeeding in a project in a remote, northern environment.

I certainly got the impression that — and I have said this before — this is not their first rodeo, and they are professionals. Even if we do have some disputes on discrete issues, I have a high degree of confidence that we will get this done.

Mr. Hassard: I am certainly not questioning Graham Infrastructure's abilities or whether or not they will get the project done.

The minister said that the original schedule showed a winter shutdown. I am wondering if the minister could actually table that schedule for people to see, because the understanding of the community was that there would be a Christmas shutdown but not such a lengthy shutdown as this. I am hoping that the minister could provide that schedule so that members in my community can actually see that this is in fact the case.

Also, it would be nice if the minister could provide an updated budget and schedule, too, just so that people can see if the schedule is still the way that it was intended to be and that the budget is still moving according to plan, because it is very interesting to look at the equipment — the cranes in particular that are sitting there for months — not moving.

Obviously, that equipment doesn't sit for free; somebody needs to be getting paid for it. I would be a little bit surprised if Graham Infrastructure was having that equipment on-site just out of the goodness of their heart.

So, if the minister could provide us with that updated budget and updated timeline, it would certainly be appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I think that I can be brief in this answer. The member opposite will know this, but a detailed breakdown of the budget information is sensitive, as it would likely contain the manner in which they are conducting their business. But, in any event, to answer the member opposite's question, yes, the total can be provided to date — and yes to the

schedule, as soon as we are able to provide that going forward — so, yes.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly look forward to seeing that information and I appreciate the minister making that available.

On the line of bridges, I have questions regarding the Big Creek bridge between Watson Lake and Teslin as well. My understanding is that this job was supposed to be completed in the fall of 2021.

It is still not completed. We know that there have been issues with some work that wasn't up to standard and, therefore, the bridge was not able to be opened. But we haven't heard anything in terms of what mitigation is going to have to take place in order for that project to be completed.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Candidly, I have driven past the Big Creek bridge a few times in the last year and a half or so in my travels between Teslin and Watson Lake, and I certainly agree with both the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin and the Member for Watson Lake that this project ought to have been completed and that there have been delays. I will just provide some information to the House today.

The Big Creek bridge is nearing the end of its useful life and needs to be replaced. The bridge is located approximately 65 kilometres west of Watson Lake on the Alaska Highway and is an important part of Yukon's transportation network. The project to replace the existing bridge started in 2020 and is currently scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2023. In 2020, the tender was awarded to Julmac Contracting Ltd. with an original planned completion being within the calendar year of 2022. However — the member opposite will likely know — in 2022, defects were discovered during inspections of the new bridge. The department has developed a plan with the contractor to address the deficiencies and ensure that the bridge meets required specifications. Our position is that the rectifications of the deficiencies are the responsibility of the contractor. At this time, the contract has been extended for one year, to the end of September 2023, with no additional funds added to complete the work.

Deputy Chair, until the new bridge is ready, we are continuing to perform regular maintenance and inspections of the existing bridge and to ensure that it remains safe for the travelling public. To better understand how these deficiencies might impact the structure, the Department of Highways and Public Works worked with the contractor to do a full assessment of the bridge. The assessment provided details of what additional work the contractor is required to perform to allow the bridge to be opened for public use.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that answer from the minister. I am happy to hear that there won't be any more taxpayers' dollars spent on that project, so that's good.

I have some questions regarding the parking lot at the main administration building — it has come up in the Legislature a couple of times. When we heard about it a couple of days ago, earlier this week, the Finance minister — and I will quote from Hansard. The Finance minister said: "When we do Management Board, we will get an envelope for certain things from Highways and Public Works. To think that the paving of the actual parking lot that we as ministers decide upon — it's

not — we give allocations to envelopes of spending for the department. They will prioritize that spending.”

So, I am curious if the minister can provide some context around this statement. It doesn't appear to make a lot of sense. Was there some type of special envelope for this project, or maybe the minister could just provide some context around how that decision was made?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I will provide some background on the parking lot, and I think I will be in a position to answer the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin's question about prioritization of capital projects and how that operates. Grading, drainage, and resurfacing improvements to the south parking lot at the now Jim Smith Building have addressed flooding and pooling previously experienced during heavy rainfall and spring snow melt. As members will know, and employees and the general public who attend the Jim Smith Building know, after heavy rain, flooding and pooling would occur, limiting full use of the lot and making it a challenge for people with mobility issues to access the building.

This was the first major regrading and repaving of the parking lot since its initial construction in 1976 — approaching 47 years ago. These improvements have made the Jim Smith Building a more inclusive and welcoming environment for both the staff who work here and the public. Resurfacing of the parking lot was completed in October 2022; however, electrical work and the bike shelter construction will be completed in the spring of 2023. The main defect of the old parking lot was the consistent flooding. To address the issues, the department removed all of the old asphalt, added gravel, and regraded the parking area. It should be noted that the concrete curbs were also deteriorating and needed to be remade.

While doing this work, the department also included needed safety upgrades, such as removing trees so that sightlines were clear, both for vehicles and security. Also, the leaves from the trees blocked the storm drain and caused the substantial ponding to occur.

In addition, we upgraded the lighting in the parking lot to eliminate low lighting or dark sections and improve energy efficiency and security. As well, this project has sustainability features, including a new bicycle shelter, which has either been constructed or is about to be completed, being constructed to the south of this building in order to support active transportation, and to ensure that certain areas of the new lot can support the future installation of electric vehicle chargers, including two in the near future.

There are also several other benefits to these improvements — new energy efficient LED light fixtures that have been installed in the parking lot to increase visibility and to improve pedestrian safety and security. A covered bicycle shelter will be built to encourage active transportation, as I indicated. There are also options for the future installation of charging stations for electric vehicles, or plug-in electric vehicles, adding to what is already on-site.

As indicated, some trees needed to be removed during the construction. The trees closest to Rotary Park have been replaced, while the trees that were in the middle of the parking

lot have been replaced with planter boxes. This will allow for a higher level of maintenance to be provided.

In answering the question with respect to prioritization envelopes for infrastructure projects, both in Whitehorse and across the Yukon, I am advised that Highways and Public Works Property Management division is allocated a building maintenance envelope annually. It is used for projects across the territory. The Property Management division uses a prioritization matrix to rank projects. Based on the ranking and budget, the Property Management division decides which building maintenance projects to do in a given year.

Factors in ranking include age of asset and safety, and some of the other factors, which I set out in my comments with respect to the parking lot upgrade to the south end of the Jim Smith Building.

My understanding is that it is not a political decision with respect to this, that there is a ranking matrix with respect to priority projects, and that decisions are made based on, hopefully, an objective matrix of decision-making, and then it's sequenced in given years.

That's the information I have with respect to the decision-making processes that take place at Property Management division. I will indicate once again that my information is that parking lot had no substantial work done since the coming into existence of what used to be known as the Main Administration Building, which is now known as the Jim Smith Building. I am understanding from my officials at Highways and Public Works that parking lot, after 47 years, came to the top of that decision-making matrix. The decision was made, and new, resilient infrastructure was created there.

That's my information, Deputy Chair.

Mr. Hassard: Could the minister provide us with some clarity around that? Is there a dollar threshold, or an amount, before it has to have Management Board approval, or is it just whatever is in the PMD's maintenance budget, that they can just spend however they want?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The information I have currently — and perhaps I will confirm this by legislative return — but the information I have from the department is that, pursuant to GAM 2.17, there is an exemption for maintenance work, and that it applied to this project, and that, therefore, specific Management Board approval was not required, and it came to be, and was approved through an envelope of funding during that year — but that's the information I have with respect to that project.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly look forward to receiving that legislative return and getting that information.

If I could go back, for a minute, Deputy Chair, I had a couple of other bridge questions that I forgot to mention. One regarding the Big Creek bridge was to ask if the minister could clarify, or let us know, if all of the subcontractors have been paid up to date in regard to that project?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: That's a fairly specific question. I don't disagree with the member opposite that it is important that subs are paid. I will certainly follow up to see if there are any outstanding claims underway. The member opposite will likely know, but there is a process for unpaid subs to approach YG,

and if the Yukon government has funds, we put them aside. They can be put aside in trust while the dispute between the general contractor and the subcontractors is resolved.

On the specific question with respect to the Big Creek bridge, is there any late-breaking information? No? I will endeavour to get the answer as to whether all of the subcontractor claims have been satisfied.

Mr. Hassard: Would the minister be willing to provide that in legislative return?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: My hard-working department will be busy, but it is important to provide this important information to Yukoners and to the member opposite, so the answer is yes.

Mr. Hassard: I certainly appreciate that commitment from the minister, and I thank the department for going through the work to provide that for us, because Yukoners do appreciate it.

I had a question for the minister — not necessarily about bridges, but major projects, such as the Nisutlin Bay bridge, or the Carmacks bypass. Does Highways and Public Works have any way of tracking, or do they even attempt to track, how much money is kept in the community where these projects take place?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite likely knows, the Yukon government has the business incentive program, which provides financial incentives for Yukon companies to report back on the local involvement in projects. YG and Highways and Public Works do track the benefits in the Yukon First Nation procurement policy. Highways and Public Works does not have a method for tracking money directly in the community, and that would, of course, require significant data from contractors. I can go to the specific notes, but perhaps keeping it at high level with respect to these three projects that are sort of the subject matter of the supplementary budget debate today, of course, there is a project agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council with respect to the Nisutlin Bay bridge, and there will certainly be a report card from the Teslin Tlingit Council.

My ongoing discussions with Chief Morris as to whether the spirit and intent of that project agreement has been met and whether there actually has been sufficient and meaningful financial and socio-economic benefit to the Village of Teslin and to the Teslin Tlingit Council, so that will be an ongoing report card for YG in the Village of Teslin and in Teslin Tlingit Council territory.

Similarly, with respect to the Carmacks bypass, there is also a project agreement there with the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation. Once again, we will also receive an ongoing and active report card from the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation — and perhaps the Village of Carmacks as well — as to whether the spirit and intent of that project agreement have been met, and that there have been meaningful financial benefits to the Village of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation traditional territory.

The Dempster fibre project also includes transboundary First Nations — the Gwich'in Tribal Council and Gwich'in Nation in the Northwest Territories — but the First Nation government that we have been dealing with most recently is the

Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I had the privilege of meeting with Chief Joseph and her council twice in the last four or five months because there were concerns about benefits accruing to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. I met with Chief Joseph and her council and my officials. There was certainly a loud and clear message that they wish to have meaningful benefits. We heard that message loud and clear. I believe — and I believe Chief Joseph publicly indicated that she thought that the relationship between YG and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in was back on track with respect to meaningful benefits accruing to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in with respect to the Dempster fibre project.

This is a roundabout way of answering the member opposite's question, but with respect to the major projects, they will all have significant First Nation, Indigenous, self-government project agreement components. There is another aspect for the non-Indigenous Yukon component as to how — I think what the member opposite is also asking is: How sticky is the money? Are the benefits of the projects — whether it's the Dempster fibre, national trade corridors funding on the north Klondike, or the airport, the Nisutlin Bay bridge, the grid-scale battery project, turbines — some of these projects necessarily have a lot of fixed costs — big metal, lithium, copper infrastructure that's coming up the road from somewhere else. Obviously, those funds are not sticky at all.

I am learning, too, but we certainly should be in a position to analyze how circular the available funds are for the major projects — remain within the territory. But kudos to Pelly Construction on the Carmacks bypass. By all accounts, that has been a positive news story. Hats off to Keith and Jennifer Byram on that project. That seems to have gone very well, and we hope that there will be reports of meaningful benefit accruing to the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation and the community of Carmacks.

As I said previously in some of my comments, I have reason to believe that Graham Infrastructure will invest in the community of Teslin and with the Teslin Tlingit Council in a positive manner and that benefits will accrue with them as well.

I am just reviewing my notes, Deputy Chair.

On a 45,000-foot level, of course, when you see the budget highlight documents, there are many projects. I won't go into detail right now, but I certainly can if I find myself on my feet for longer this afternoon.

There are many projects across the territory, including, as we heard in a tribute or notice of motion — congratulating the community of Carmacks on the completion of their recreation centre and their rink. Or we hope that the Pelly Crossing pool is open soon, this summer — and I know that it is an incredibly important asset.

It's a roundabout way of saying that we are investing in all kinds of infrastructure projects across the territory. I believe the member opposite's suggestion is a good one. We should be as aware as possible as to how “sticky” the money is with respect to both major projects, medium projects — maybe less so with the small projects — but I don't disagree with the member opposite.

Mr. Hassard: Just a follow-up to that, the minister talked about the benefit agreements that had been signed with

the three First Nations on those three particular projects, and he also talked about the report cards. He talked about the Village of Teslin and the Village of Carmacks. He didn't mention the City of Dawson, so I'll ask about those two in particular. Will those two villages also have input into that report card, or will that report card only have the input of the First Nations in those two respective areas?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I take the members opposite's point, and I have just conferred with my deputy minister on this topic. I can commit my department to lots of things this afternoon, but certainly, I have met with the town of Dawson City town council; I have met with the Mayor of the Village of Carmacks; I have met with the Village of Teslin town council and the Teslin Tlingit Council in a joint meeting. So, it's only fair for my department, and perhaps Community Services, at some point too, to bind my minister colleague to the left — I'm joking — but yes, on these major projects, it makes sense for our officials to speak to — there are two orders of government in those three communities, and we should be speaking to the village or town administrations as well, because we can always do things better, and these are multi-year contracts, multi-year projects — the Dempster is three or four years, and Nisutlin will be three or four years, and Carmacks bypass will be two-plus years, so there is time to gather that feedback.

I will certainly instruct my department to have those meetings. We do anticipate having more Resource Gateway projects. We will have more "dirt moving" or road building between Carmacks and Dawson. There is a prospect of ongoing work at the airport as well. So, we can always do better, and we can always develop better practices.

So, I guess that is a roundabout way of responding to the member opposite, and saying yes, we will engage with the three municipal administrations.

Deputy Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

Deputy Chair: Order, please.

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Hassard: Thank you, Deputy Chair. I would like to thank the minister for that commitment before the break. I know that the Village of Teslin, for sure — and I am quite sure that the Village of Carmacks and the City of Dawson will also be happy to hear that they will have some input in that regard.

I have a couple of questions around the First Nation procurement policy. My understanding, when the First Nation procurement policy was first implemented, was to ensure that 15 percent of government procurement went to First Nation businesses, so I am just curious if the minister can give us an update on, I guess, two things. How are we measuring that

progress, and where are we in terms of meeting that goal? Or, if there is a different goal, then he could provide us with that information as well.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can provide the House with a more general survey of where we are in the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, but perhaps, for the purpose of the time I am spending on my feet right now, I will provide the most up-to-date data we have. The time period is from October 4, 2021 to December 31, 2022. During that period, with respect to the Yukon First Nation procurement policy, 144 tenders that closed had a bid value reduction applied to one or more bids. The estimated percentages are: 6.2 percent of contracts measured by number were awarded to Yukon First Nation businesses, and this represented 452 contracts of the 7,238 contracts awarded by YG. I thought to myself that this is a lot of contracts, but I have been assured by my deputy minister that this is for all manner of contracts, down to relatively modest-value contracts. Perhaps more importantly, from a metrics perspective, 7.8 percent of contracts measured by dollar value were awarded to Yukon First Nation businesses. This represents approximately \$48 million of YG's approximately \$617-million expenditure over that period of time. As we heard about today, two community development agreements were finalized as well.

So, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin is correct that the objective, when the Yukon First Nation procurement policy was launched — under the stewardship of the former Minister of Highways and Public Works, now the Minister of Community Services, and then when I came into this position — was to work toward awarding 15 percent of all — or higher — government procurements. There is still work to be done.

Mr. Hassard: Probably my final line of questioning for the day is about drivers' licences. I brought this up with the department officials at the briefing, so I'm hoping that the deputy minister is right on top of this one. With regard to class 5 drivers' licences, we understand that there are some 50 people on the list waiting to get a driver's licence, and it's three or four months. At the briefing, the deputy minister told us that, in fact, Highways and Public Works had just finished a competition and they were confident — I think that she said "confident" and I hope I'm not putting words in her mouth — that there would be another driver trainer hired shortly and that this should take care of the backlog — or hopefully start taking care of the backlog.

One of the other questions was around the ability to go to a different community to take your driver's test. The example was that there were only four people on the list in Haines Junction, so a parent wanted to take some children in her vehicle to Haines Junction to do their driver's test there because it would be quicker there as they were going to do it in mid-March. The parent was then told that, in fact, no, she can't do that because they have to get their driver's licence in their home community, which, as I explained to the Highways and Public Works officials in the briefing, didn't seem to make a lot of sense, because I got my driver's licence in Teslin, which doesn't mean that I can only drive in Teslin, whereas the Member for Copperbelt North got his in Whitehorse and is still

allowed to drive in Teslin. It didn't seem to make a lot of sense, so I was just hoping that maybe we could get some clarification on that particular item, and also if there is maybe an update on whether that person has been hired as a driver trainer in the hope of getting that backlog whittled down more quickly.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With respect to the first question and acknowledging that there currently is a backlog of road tests based on a shortage of driver examiners, I can advise that the competition has closed. Assuming that certain candidates have qualified and can go through the interview and hiring process, we will make best efforts to hire as soon as possible.

On the second issue, the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin is correct. I am advised by the department that there is no requirement to book or take the test in your home community, which may create some challenges for the department. But I am advised that, if there are any follow-up issues with respect to that, I would certainly urge the member opposite to reach out to my department, reach out to my deputy minister, but that is the information we have from Motor Vehicles branch.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate that information from the minister and the department. My last question for the day would be: Has Highways and Public Works considered, or would they consider, contracting out that driver examiner to the private sector? Because we know that there are driver training schools here in Whitehorse — that's just a question or a thought or an idea, I guess. I will leave that with the minister and again thank the officials for being here. I appreciate their time.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the member opposite will likely know, the driver examiner positions are union positions, but I have been advised by the department that if these challenges continue, then the next step would be a conversation with the union to try to resolve this impasse. Certainly, we understand the member opposite's point that there may be some logic, some utility, to his suggestion, but the first hurdles are the ones that I have just indicated, which are that they are union positions and that the union would have to be communicated with, but certainly, in the last few months, I have heard about the frustrations we spoke about in Question Period today from the Tourism Industry Association, Yukon Chamber of Mines, Wilderness Tourism Association, and other groups, that we do want to move this to unclog this log jam, and we want Yukoners and new Yukoners arriving to be road tested as soon as possible. So, I will take the member opposite's suggestion under advisement, and I believe I have put forward the position of the department so far.

I would also like to thank my officials for their input today, and I look forward to the Committee of the Whole debate — sorry, unless there are any questions from other members — but otherwise clearing this department.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works?

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

Mr. Hassard: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Pelly-Nisutlin has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 55, Department of Highways and Public Works, 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 \$3,780,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$37,481,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$41,261,000 agreed to

Department of Highways and Public Works agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 7, Department of Economic Development, in Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Economic Development

Hon. Mr. Pillai: First, I would like to welcome the officials from the Department of Economic Development who are here to support me today. Deputy Minister Justin Ferbey and our director of Finance, Beth Fricke, will be here to help provide information to the Legislative Assembly. I will just start with some prepared remarks.

This supplementary budget, of course, has one really minute change to the budget that we had tabled. I will just give a little more information concerning that.

Deputy Chair and honourable members, as Minister of Economic Development, I rise today to produce the *Supplementary Estimates No. 2* for the 2022-23 fiscal year. At the Department of Economic Development, our work is focused on assisting our partners in building a prosperous Yukon by: creating and fostering economic opportunities; pursuing economic initiatives with a shared vision of prosperity, partnerships, and innovation; and forging,

maintaining, and expanding partnerships with First Nation governments in the economic development of the Yukon.

This supplementary budget request includes additional funding to support the department's Labour Market Development branch.

It is clear that the work of the Labour Market Development branch is greatly needed to address the ongoing labour shortage. So, we are asking for \$741,000 for the Labour Market Development branch, related to a new, two-year agreement with Canada to fund the Skills for Success program. The objective of the Yukon Skills for Success project is to improve labour market outcomes for people in the Yukon with a focus on underrepresented individuals seeking support to advance toward their goals. The project-specific objectives are to increase the number, variety, and quality of services, tools, and training resources available for service providers, individuals, and employers to measure and develop skills for success; to increase the number and variety of opportunities available to prepare individuals for jobs that are in demand; and finally, to acknowledge the significance of First Nation ways of knowing, doing, learning, and being — with respect to the Skills for Success model — and advocate for their inclusion within.

More broadly, the labour market branch supports workers and employers by providing funding for training and development, and administering programs, which include Building UP, which supports projects that increase labour market participation, and Staffing UP, which provides funding support for employers seeking assistance to find, hire, and keep workers.

In closing, we are asking for a supplementary budget increase of \$741,000 for the Department of Economic Development, and really, that concludes our scope for this year's *Supplementary Estimates No. 2*. I am open to speaking to that, and I am sure that we may talk about some other initiatives at the department that have been occurring over the early part of this fiscal year, so I will cede the floor to the opposition.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this line in the supplementary budget with regard to Economic Development today. I will begin, just on the subject matter that the minister began with, which is labour mobility. In the fall, the Premier will certainly recall fielding questions from my colleague, the Member for Porter Creek Centre, about the MOU between the Yukon and the Philippines with regard to labour mobility. At that time, the minister indicated that there had been some delays because of a change in government in the Philippines, and so, I would like to ask for an update on the implementation of that MOU and, in particular, the development of the terms of reference.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Specifically speaking to the MOU, I will give a bit of a snapshot. On March 18, 2022, the Yukon and the Philippines signed the memorandum of understanding on the employment and protection of Filipinos under the Yukon nominee program. Shortly after that, there was the conclusion of a federal election in the Philippines. Within that transition period of the new leadership of the federal government in the Philippines, the department that had overseen the work —

which was the Department of Migrant Workers — sorry; the previous department had now become the Department of Migrant Workers, and that was formed in February 2022.

As the member opposite has outlined, there was a bit of transition at a federal level within a very significant-sized country. We are in a bit of a holding pattern, waiting to get the right direction from the Philippine government, and beginning to engage on that work again.

The Department of Economic Development is working to finalize the implementation of the guidelines of the MOU with the Department of Migrant Workers. What has happened since: we had representatives from the department — and I want to bring this back, but I believe, in the last 10 business days, there have been discussions in Vancouver on this point. I will bring that back to the House.

There has been one significant change, which I think is positive as well. The Consul General of Australia, whom we were dealing with throughout this process, was a real champion on behalf of the Philippine government and has now become the ambassador. I just received a letter to my office giving validity to that change. I heard it was coming, but now it is underway. We are going to be working through the ambassador's office in Ottawa as well.

The request from my office to the department, firstly, has been to expediate this process. They are aware of that. We want to get this done.

Secondly, we were invited, at one point, to have some engagement in the Philippines to have a signing done and to look at other opportunities for recruitment in the Philippines for some of the shortages in our labour market. That is something that we are contemplating undertaking, so it is not just about getting the MOU in place. Getting the framework — there are some components to that we think are very important. One I can signal is ensuring that, when individuals from the Philippines come, they are properly prepared for things that are specific to our climate and culture, climate being, of course, some inclement weather at times, or challenging weather for individuals who have not grown up here in the Yukon — but just making sure they know what they are getting into.

Secondly, there is a commitment that has been really well-received. You will see it highlighted in our immigration strategy, which will be out later this spring, but it is really focused on the fact that we want individuals to have a strong understanding of First Nation culture — a lot of organizations call it “First Nations 101”, and it is being delivered by the university at some times, and then by other contractors in our community. So, we want elements of that to be integrated into the MOU — not into the MOU, but sorry, into the curriculum that will be delivered, we will call it — the orientation materials. So, that is something as well we want to be able to talk to folks on the ground.

The other thing I would just like to mention, when it comes to the importance of that relationship between the Yukon and the Philippines — we are watching what other jurisdictions have been doing in some of their recruitment efforts. We did want to be on the ground last year, in February. We, as a government, felt it was appropriate to reschedule that, based on

the fact that the federal election, which was concluding in the Philippines — we wanted to watch that process conclude before we were meeting with officials, of course, or previous officials, in Manila or Cebu. We now, moving forward, think it's important to be there, but also to look at, you know, what Manitoba is doing right now on some of the recruitment, when it comes to nurses. We are also looking at some of the undertakings from provinces, like Newfoundland, where they are really being proactive in their international work.

What they are doing is bringing leaders from their post-secondary institutions to the Philippines, or to India, so that they can look at the curriculum that is being delivered for programs, like an LPN program or an RN — registered nurse — program, and they have the ability to review that material; they have the ability to suggest changes to that material, and I think that would help alleviate bottlenecks on recognition of foreign credentials.

So, that is a dialogue that we would like to have. In my initial conversations with the university, when the current president had taken on that role, I and the assistant deputy minister — I think was with me at that point, from Economic Development — we did discuss the fact that we think it's important that the university is playing a vital role in this conversation, and we think that it would be important to have some business leaders, as well as some of the academic leaders, together in these discussions.

So, I will just flag that we do believe that the engagement with the Philippine government is very important. We are frustrated with the fact that we couldn't move as seamlessly as we wanted to. We, of course, are going to respect the electoral process that took place. We are the first jurisdiction of any province or territory to undertake an engagement at this level. I did meet with my counterpart from Manitoba, who is from the Philippine diaspora, last year in New Brunswick, with the deputy minister, during our immigration ministers meetings in Saint John, New Brunswick. They were interested in looking at what we were doing.

So, we know we have something that is cutting-edge. We know it's important to conclude it, and we think now that there is stability within some of those departments, so that we can make sure that we proceed on this extremely important work. I will come back to the House — maybe during mains, we can continue that thematic around where we were and what we found out in the last couple of weeks in the discussions at the Consul General's office in Vancouver.

I'll hand it back to the opposition.

Mr. Dixon: Are there terms of reference for the MOU?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to make sure that I get a sense of what was concluded in the work. At least one of the individuals who had undertaken those discussions at the Consul General's office last week is currently, I believe, at immigration ministers in Halifax today — our assistant deputy minister and her director — so, let me get back to the House. My sense was that they were really going from the meetings in Vancouver, at one point, and then making a move to Halifax, and yes, the department is just working to finalize the implementation guidelines.

I want to know exactly where that work is, but I haven't had a chance to sit with the department since the meetings that occurred in the last number of weeks.

Mr. Dixon: So, the implementing guidelines — my understanding is that they would be approved by the joint committee. Who is on the joint committee?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: My understanding is that it is representatives from our department's immigration unit and representatives from the Philippines — the department that we are working with, which is called, I believe, the Department of Migrant Workers.

Mr. Dixon: Is there an equal number from the Philippines government as the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will table in the House the scope and terms of reference for the group. I know that there was representation for both, but I want to make sure that I'm giving accurate information to the member opposite. I will find out what the ratio is and how many seats are there for each organization.

Mr. Dixon: Just so I heard the member correctly, he said that he will table the terms of reference for the joint committee — is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, what I will do is table the scope that outlines the representation that is on the committee that was just asked about. As the work is concluded, I am very comfortable with tabling any material that has to do with this particular undertaking, unless there is some sort of NDA in place — I don't believe that would be the case, so I will ensure that the work that's there — we can table the implementation guidelines — not a problem. Without taking a look at the completed implementation guidelines, I will not know if there is an appendix attached to that showing the actual breakdown of the representation, but I think what we really want to know here today is: Who is on the committee and what are the implementation guidelines? As that work is completed, I will make sure that I bring that to the House and table it on behalf of our government.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the minister's willingness to share that information. Just so that I am clear, are the implementation guidelines complete?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The work is not complete. After the previous conversations, we are just now waiting for information to come from the Vancouver office to complete that work, and then I will have an opportunity to bring it to the House in the near future.

Mr. Dixon: When would we expect — like, when we look on the implementation of this policy, I appreciate that there are still some short-term things that need to occur. When would we expect the first Filipino applicants to be moving through this newly established process?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I definitely don't want to get into the world of hypotheticals when it comes to a large federal government that is embarking on a relationship with a provincial-territorial government, as ours, for the first time. I don't want to give inaccurate information. What I can say is that we want this process to move as quickly as possible. I am proud of our team for undertaking something that has never

been done in this country. I think that it is important to note that the many Filipino individuals who make the Yukon their home are individuals who we support strongly. Our trilateral agreements between Canada, the employer, and Yukon government lay out strong terms to ensure that individuals are supported, that their work life here is one that has a foundation of respect in it, and that individuals are improving their quality of life and are not being put in a situation to be taken advantage of. I think that those are some of the key pieces of our work anyway, but it is also about making sure that — two things, from my recollection — and I can go back. One is that there was a fee that was being charged. That was one of the key drivers of this. There was a fee that was being charged. I want to premise this by saying that I don't have the exact number in front of me, but from memory I think it was about \$2,000 that was being charged to individuals when they were coming here. It was under the concept that they would be going back to the Philippines at some point, and the cost was being transferred on, in some cases, I believe, to the private sector here.

So, the nominee would make a decision to come here, the agreement would be put in place, and there would be a fee charged to this individual before they left the Philippines to come to Canada. The private sector members in the Yukon would then be paying this fee, understanding, though, that the individual was coming to the Yukon through our nominee program with the hope of going into a PR program to inevitably become a citizen of the Yukon and a citizen of Canada. Within that, we didn't think it was appropriate. The private sector worked with us. We listened to the private sector. We tried to support this, and it was really about ensuring that the fee was no longer charged to those individuals from the Philippines who were coming here. That was a key piece.

Some of the five major points were: the memorandum of understanding improves coordination between the Yukon and the Philippines; it improves the ability for Filipinos to be identified and recruited through our nominee process, which we think is important to streamline our ability to meet our labour market challenges; it supports the safety of Filipino nominees to the Yukon through requirements for Yukon employers under the Yukon nominee program, which I just touched on; it formalizes the Yukon-Philippines cooperation on labour mobility and the Yukon nominee program through the creation of the joint committee, which the member opposite has touched on — and I will get back with a clearer understanding of which individuals, and how many individuals, are sitting there from both sides; and it waives the existing fees, which I mentioned, applied by the Philippines to the Filipino YNP applicants; and lastly, it clarifies the interaction between the YNP and the Philippines, and it pre-screened and vetted the pool of qualified Filipino workers. That really will reduce the amount of red tape that those workers have to go through before they come here. So, there are a number of benefits — the fees being one.

As we have more information on this process that we have undertaken and will put in place — the start of the question simply was: When is this going to happen? I can say that our team members were there in the last two weeks. We know that there is an interest to get this completed. We know that a lot of

this work is getting done through some of our processes — maybe not as effectively as we want to have it done — but once we conclude this work in the near future — or as pieces of it are concluded — I will bring that information to the House, and I am happy to share with the member opposite.

Mr. Dixon: What role has the Canadian Filipino Association of the Yukon played in the development of this?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Many of the ideas that have come to light in this work are what we are getting from conversations from the Filipino community at large. I think that is important to say. There are a lot of individuals who have gone through these processes and have identified some of the challenges. There are many Filipino nominees who have shared with our department members the challenges that they have had making the transition — or the many opportunities, but also information that would have been helpful for them.

In the early stages of this work between our officials and their officials, I know that I attended a meeting with the Canadian Filipino Association of the Yukon and there was a discussion at that time to ensure that we kept a dialogue going on this work. We invited the president of the association, Aurora Viernes, to the signing. She travelled to Vancouver and was there with us, as well as another individual who is now the vice-president of the association. There is another current vice-president of the association who I keep in close dialogue with on a number of things concerning this work, but not only this work — the hopes and dreams of this community and priorities of the community. I made a commitment in my role, not only as Premier but as minister responsible for immigration, to continue to have that dialogue. So, again, I want to ensure that they have an opportunity to have dialogue, but a lot of the work was at the officials' level, back and forth. But I know that, even subsequent to taking on my role as Premier, Aurora Viernes, who is the president, has sat with me and we have talked about a large scope of things concerning forward-looking work that we plan to do, making sure that we have representatives from the community with us if we do decide to have work done on the ground in the Philippines.

Mr. Dixon: I will switch gears now. With the remaining time that we have today, I would like to talk about the port of Skagway. There was a recent announcement coming out of the borough of Skagway around a new agreement between Yukon and Skagway, so I will begin by letting the Premier provide a bit of an overview, from his perspective, about what that agreement will do.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I thought that the member opposite was going to say: Good job, folks, on that big undertaking that helps to secure access to tidewater for at least 35 — not 50 — years.

But we will just get into the policy discussion.

The Government of Yukon recognizes that the Skagway ore terminal is a valuable export option for the Yukon mining industry. Control of the ore terminal will again revert to the Municipality of Skagway in March 2023. That is when the White Pass lease lapses. Skagway's plan for redevelopment will eliminate its ore export capability, and the ore loader is scheduled for demolition in October 2023.

We are currently in negotiations with Skagway. That work has been ongoing. What we saw just over the last week is that there was a decision made at the municipal government level in Skagway to accept a draft terms sheet. The draft terms sheet laid out a number of requests from the Yukon government, and it identified a path forward for the Yukon government to work with the municipality on advancing an infrastructure project. The infrastructure project focuses on something called a “marine service platform” — MSP. It is about 227 feet long. It has a T-shape for those who are listening. It is a place that you can tie industrial boats to, and it gives an opportunity to add to the infrastructure of the Skagway waterfront.

This has been a very important undertaking. I am going to say that I have mentioned it in the House before. There are a number of individuals from the Department of Economic Development: deputy minister, assistant deputy minister, directors, and policy folks who have really been focused on this work. They know how important it is for the Yukon, and they know how important it is for Canada.

As minister responsible for Economic Development, my job has also been to ensure that the federal government in Ottawa understands how important this is, not just for the Yukon, but for Canada. Sometimes you have to remind folks at the federal level what is happening on the ground, whether it is on the east coast, on the west coast, or in the north, and how important this work is. So, it is a unique situation, in that we have companies that are extracting critical minerals in the Yukon, but they have to ship across an international border, into a small community, to get access to tidewater.

It is also a sensitive undertaking. I know that there were some comments by the opposition, and it has really been about how we, at Economic Development, or how we, at the Yukon government, engage with the community. So, I just want to put on the record that my perspective on this engagement is really — it is a focus on respect, and it is a focus on understanding the historical impacts that previous projects in the Yukon and the previous supply chain may have, or have had, on the community of Skagway. It is important to understand the interaction between both of our communities, and it is important to understand some of the legacy impacts that still have to be remediated.

So, first, I will start with some of those impacts. The same way that the Yukon government and the Government of Canada are working on remediating the Faro mine site, there is still an understanding in Skagway that there could be some existing work from that same project that has to be remediated. The focus, as we have been told, is on the bottom — the floor of the harbour. Of course, lots of Yukoners spend much of their summer in Skagway; they recreate there. That is a really important place, not just for the people of Skagway, but for many Yukoners. I know lots of Yukoners — probably, they work extremely hard throughout their professional career, and they get to spend their time exactly on that harbour, in their boat, if they are so lucky. They have had a successful career and have worked hard, and they get to enjoy some of their more relaxed years.

Right there, there is an understanding in the municipality that there is a lot of cleaning that has to be done. I have been asked by the media, “Does the Yukon government have any liability around the scope of that work?” The answer is no, we don’t. As I understand it, that is a conversation between the municipality of Skagway and a company that is still doing work there, which is called White Pass.

We all know White Pass from their important work of bringing tourism visitors now back into the Southern Lakes area of the Yukon, and they still hold access to a number of pieces of land and an easement on their railway that comes into the Yukon and into Whitehorse.

There is a lot of concern there. What I am getting from the community of Skagway is that they want to ensure that future activity will not lead to the same consequences. That’s one thing that — for those other government officials, or anybody who is listening today — that is something that we have to consider: how people in the town of Skagway feel.

We counter this conversation — not counter, but we add to this conversation by saying that we think a lot of people in Skagway come to Whitehorse and the Yukon for the great amenities that we have. They come to our stores, and they spend money. They come, in some cases, to get access to particular health care. When I think about that, what I am getting at is maybe dental. Sometimes people come from Skagway, because there might be only one or two people who cut hair in Skagway, and they come here to get their hair cut.

We believe that Whitehorse is an important part of the lives of many people in Skagway.

We, on this side of the House, believe that a balanced economy that’s being driven well by our mining industry is helping to ensure we have all these things that the —

Deputy Chair: Order.

Mr. Dixon: I appreciate the Premier’s overview there. When I asked the question, I should have been more specific. I appreciate that the minister wanted to cover some different areas, but I was particularly interested in the details of the agreement, because the agreement is going to be, presumably, signed by the Yukon government, at some point, now that it has been approved by the borough of Skagway.

The minister referenced the terms sheet that makes up that agreement. Of course, that has been available for the last few weeks on the borough of Skagway’s website. Of course, I know that a number of folks from the Yukon mining industry have reviewed it, have been discussing it, and have been asking questions about what it will mean for the mining industry here in the Yukon going forward. As we stand here today, obviously, there is only one user of the ore-loading facility right now, which is the Minto mine. Obviously, Hecla’s Keno mine would employ that dock as well once they are back in operation, but it means a lot to the industry as a whole, despite the fact that there are only one or two users currently. There is a lot of concern that has been raised about what the agreement and what the future infrastructure that’s going to be developed there might mean for the industry going forward.

Those concerns, I think, can be lumped into two categories: one is access and the other is functionality. When it comes to

access, I do certainly acknowledge that what we have seen from the agreements so far does a good job at ensuring ongoing access for the industry, but on the second piece, there are both near- and short-term concerns about the functionality of what is being proposed at the Skagway port. In the short term, obviously, there will be an impact on Minto mine — immediately, as soon as later this spring, if and when the current ore loader is dismantled. Then, of course, the question that comes after that is: What will replace the existing ore loader, and how will it look and work?

I appreciate that, as I understand it, the design of that future loader is only at a 60-percent design — or at least, the marine service platform and the ore dock are at a 60-percent design — but, nonetheless, there is some concern and a lot of questions about what this will mean for the industry. Alas, I think we will have to save that for another day.

Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Copperbelt North that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:25 p.m.