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HANSARD

Wednesday, March 22, 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

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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Wednesday, March 22, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Speaker: Under Introduction of Visitors, the Chair would like to introduce: Maxwell Harvey, the Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Yukon; Dustin Fredlund, Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Nunavut; Stephen Dunbar, the Chief Electoral Officer of the Northwest Territories; and Aleksander Essex, from Western University. Please join me in welcoming them to the gallery.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: For the tribute to Bob Hayes, there are family and friends in the gallery, and so I would like to introduce his daughter, Kelly Milner. His wife, Caroline Hayes, who resides in Smithers, British Columbia, will be listening in, I understand. Also, we have Grace and Dave Mossop, Brian Pelchat, Doug Larsen, Philip Merchant, and former friends and colleagues, either current or retired from YG, Christine Cleghorn, Manon Moreau, Diane Gunter, Bengt Pettersson, Peter Knamiller, Ron Sumanik, and Barney Smith. Welcome to the Assembly.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If we could welcome just a few other folks, I see Chris Milner, who is the acting president of Yukon Energy, and also some neighbours from town and out in Tagish, Anne and Juniper Midler — if we could welcome them, please.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Clarke: For the ministerial statement on energy retrofits, from the Department of Highways and Public Works, we have: Chaz Williams, energy technical specialist; Jonathan Osborne, who is a project manager; Muhammad Shanjer, who is also a project manager; and Michal Janus, also a project manager with the Department of Highways and Public Works.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In remembrance of Bob Hayes

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to pay tribute to Robert, also known as Bob David Hayes, who passed last December. Bob was a lifelong champion of conservation, and his accomplishments have enriched the Yukon's and the world's

understanding of wolves. He researched wolves in the Yukon for two decades as the Yukon's wolf biologist. Bob was respected for the quality of his scientific research, his respect for traditional knowledge, and his commitment to stewarding wildlife and our natural environment. His work is considered to have greatly enhanced Canada's understanding of wolf ecology, their predation of moose and caribou, and the effects of wolf management.

Bob's career demonstrated his passion for wildlife and the north. After finishing an honours biology degree in the 1970s, he moved north to work for the Government of Yukon. His work with wolves helped him pursue a master's degree from Simon Fraser University. He went on to be named the Canadian member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's wolf specialist group, where he served for nearly a decade.

Mr. Speaker, Bob also became the Kluane regional biologist in the mid-1990s, where he worked closely with First Nation governments and local communities to co-manage wildlife. During his decades as a wolf biologist, he studied hundreds of radio-collared wolves and conducted several long-term wolf-prey studies.

He left the Yukon government in the early 2000s and became a consultant, using his knowledge to shape numerous conservation and forestry plans across the territory. In his retirement from government service, he continued to be involved in wildlife management issues and went on to author *Wolves of the Yukon* and a series of novels known as the Zhòh trilogy.

Outside of his work, Bob had a love of music and was one of the founders of the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival.

Above all, Bob loved his family. He and his wife of 50 years, Caroline, enjoyed venturing with their daughters, Kelly and Aryn, and grandchildren, Aidan, Ava, Pippa, Molly, and Elias.

Bob appreciated people and different cultures, whether this was working in the field alongside First Nation partners or in Croatia during his retirement. Bob delighted in meeting and learning from people with different perspectives and experiences. We remember Bob for his kindness and humour, his love for the life he lived, his dedication to conservation, and his appreciation for the beauty of the world.

Mr. Speaker, Bob once counselled a young biologist to approach his work like a wolf does in the forest: Go sniff around, range far and wide, and keep your eyes open. Find your pack and hang with them; you can help each other. Mr. Speaker, you do not have to be a biologist to find relevance in that advice.

Today, we are joined by members of Bob's family, friends, and colleagues. Thank you for being here today. We take this moment to remember him and to recognize the impact that he had on our territory, our country, and in the scientific community.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to honour him and to celebrate his life.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Official Opposition to pay tribute to Bob Hayes. I would like to thank the minister for his comments also.

Bob was a mandolin player and a huge part of the Kluane Mountain Bluegrass Festival — being a founder — and he took the artistic director role for many, many years. Since Bob's arrival to the Yukon in 1975, he dedicated his career to the diverse range of animals that call the territory home. He studied ducks, falcons, caribou, moose, and mountain sheep.

As many of you know, Bob's passion and career were clearly centred around the wolf. He worked as a Yukon wolf biologist for nearly two decades. Bob's non-fiction book *Wolves of the Yukon* was composed using his personal essays and narratives and follows the history of the Yukon wolf from the end of the ice age to the present.

Following the release of his book, Bob took a different tack and created *Zhòh: The Clan of the Wolf*, a storyline around a wolf pup found by a group of children on the Arctic tundra 14,000 years ago. His history became a trilogy, including *Zhòh: The Spirit of the Wolf* and *Zhòh: Destiny of the Wolf*, which has been translated into German and recorded as an unabridged audiobook.

Mr. Speaker, Bob cared about wildlife and wildlife populations and understood how those populations interacted with one another. This was the key when it came to making decisions throughout his career. He spent time with elders learning traditional history of many of our animals and earning him a very well-rounded knowledge base.

Bob lived in Haines Junction for many years. As the minister talked about his career with YTG as a biologist — I had the opportunity, as a member of the Alsek Renewable Resources Council, to work with him. His expertise in his field helped us in making sound management decisions.

After retirement, Bob started Bob Hayes Consulting and acted as an independent chair of successful community-based working groups: fish and wildlife plans, First Nation land use plans, strategic plans for organizations, traditional knowledge workshops, habitat and protected areas plans, and public meetings regarding fish and wildlife issues. This allowed Bob to continue to focus his passion for the Yukon and to lend his knowledge and expertise.

I would also like to pass on my condolences to Bob's family and friends who are here today and listening.

Applause

Ms. White: Today, I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to celebrate Bob Hayes. I think that we win at life when we develop lasting relationships that are based on our shared values and interests, mutual respect, and humour. Bob had all of that, and in the weeks since his passing, reading tributes written by his friends and family, we have been given a glimpse into the man that he was. He was a great and loving man.

We marvel at the love story he shared with Caroline that spanned more than 50 years and how that love radiated out to those around them. I look at the women that his daughters have become and I see in them the loving influence of their father. I

see his influence in his grandkids and everyone who knew and loved him.

He lived his life with open doors — a love of music and storytelling and a passion for the outdoors and the wild world. He was an author, a biologist, and an explorer. Bob was a true Renaissance man, so we are grateful for the influence he had on so many, and we are grateful for the influence he has had on our territory. We celebrate the life he truly lived.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Kent: I have a press release from Minto Metals to table, dated March 16, 2023. It's entitled "Minto Metals provides update on Skagway port developments".

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees? Petitions.

PETITIONS

Petition No. 17 — response

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise to speak to Petition No. 17, tabled in the Legislative Assembly on March 8, 2023.

I would like to thank the member opposite and all the supporters of this petition. We understand and have compassion for Yukoners impacted by chronic kidney disease, including their caregivers and loved ones, and are committed to supporting each and every one of them.

Approximately 50 Yukoners have chronic kidney disease and are supported through BC Renal by an interdisciplinary health care team and a visiting nephrologist. Ten individuals in the territory undergo dialysis treatment at home, either through peritoneal dialysis or through home dialysis.

As Yukoners have access to strong home dialysis support through our home care and other programs, we continue to support this option as we investigate how to serve each Yukon patient. When Yukoners require hospital-based hemodialysis, they can access supports while they are receiving out-of-territory care through the medical travel program.

At this time, guidelines for the development of a dialysis centre do not recommend developing a hemodialysis centre in the Yukon. The Yukon does not have the advanced or highly specialized health infrastructure to accommodate all dialysis patients in such a centre. Some individuals requiring dialysis would still need to relocate or travel, even if the Yukon had a hemodialysis centre here in the territory. This is a reality of rural and remote settings throughout Canada and not just an issue here, unique to the Yukon.

Nationally, we are aware that smaller scale dialysis centres can and do experience operational challenges from supporting smaller populations. In addition, population size and sufficient patient numbers are needed to ensure that safe and effective care can be delivered. Establishing services around insufficient patient numbers could result in substandard, unsafe, and unsustainable levels of care and can lead to difficulty in

recruiting health care providers and ensuring that they are able to maintain their professional competencies. This is not what we want for Yukon.

The Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health concluded in a review that independent dialysis, such as peritoneal dialysis and home hemodialysis, are as effective as hemodialysis provided in a hospital setting. As part of the 2023 confidence and supply agreement, we will create a working group to consider how we can improve services for Yukoners, including investigating the Northwest Territories' model of hemodialysis services. We look forward to undertaking the work of researching delivery models for hemodialysis services through this new working group and through the Department of Health and Social Services. We will also continue to work with our health care providers to review evidence to ensure that Yukon patients who require dialysis are supported and to identify opportunities to enhance dialysis programming and develop a Yukon solution.

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

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate's fourth annual First Nation education conference.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to act proactively to prevent possible flood damage to the north Klondike Highway by doing a condition assessment of beaver dams on Horse Creek and its tributaries, including on the two lakes above Mud Lake, to determine if those dams are at risk of breaking during the spring melt.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to create a public health lodge in Whitehorse for rural Yukoners who are attending medical appointments.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to review the pioneer utility grant program to ensure that the program is fairly meeting the needs of Yukon seniors and elders.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Energy efficiency retrofits

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I rise today to share what our government is doing to reduce the carbon footprint of our

public infrastructure. Each of us, government included, has a role to play in building our clean, green future. Investing in renewable fuel sources, such as solar and biomass, is crucial to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The importance of these fuel sources is reiterated in the Yukon green infrastructure program released by the Department of Highways and Public Works in 2020. This program strives to make Yukon government assets more resilient to climate change while reducing our carbon footprint. Today, I want to update this House on some of what we are doing to reach this target.

With respect to biomass, we introduced a new biomass heating system at Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse, which is scheduled to be completed this spring, and we will be expanding the biomass heating system at the Whitehorse Correctional Centre this year. These two systems alone will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 500 tonnes each year.

Solar power also represents an important renewable alternative to fossil fuels, an efficient and economical way to generate electricity. That is why we are investing in the construction of two solar array systems at the Klondike and Ogilvie grader stations on the Dempster Highway this summer. These solar systems will offset more than 100,000 litres of diesel fuel each year and reduce emissions by approximately 280 tonnes.

We are also conducting feasibility studies to identify other renewable energy projects across the Yukon.

Mr. Speaker, we are working hard to adapt existing infrastructure to increase energy efficiency. We are auditing our buildings to determine what retrofit work is needed to make them more energy efficient. In 2022 alone, we carried out 30 certified energy audits on our high-emission government buildings in Whitehorse. I would like to highlight two retrofit projects in particular: the upcoming Yukon University roof project and the recently finished replacement of the Andrew A. Philipsen Law Centre skylight. These projects contribute significantly to the energy efficiency and longevity of both buildings while also improving occupant comfort. The new Yukon University roof will improve thermal efficiency, reducing the building's greenhouse gas emissions by approximately seven percent. Similarly, the replacement of the skylight at the Andrew A. Philipsen Law Centre improved the building's thermal performance and is estimated to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 23 tonnes per year.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to prioritize sustainability in our infrastructure and share our progress with Yukoners. Addressing the climate emergency will take a coordinated approach from everyone to meet our goals. The challenges we face are real and urgent. Through hard work, collaboration, and aggressive targets, we can make a difference.

Mr. Hassard: I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to respond to this ministerial statement, and I thank the minister for the update on these projects. However, while I do appreciate the update, I have a few questions.

The minister said in his statement — and I will quote: “... we introduced a new biomass heating system at Elijah Smith Elementary School in Whitehorse, which is scheduled to be completed this spring...” So, while it seems that the Liberals are talking about biomass in schools, one has to wonder why they stopped using the pellet boilers in the Elijah Smith school in the first place.

As well, I would like to know where the Liberal government is on signing an agreement with the Teslin Tlingit Council on providing biomass heat to the Teslin school. I ask this because, a couple of years ago, TTC installed a biomass system and, at one point, even provided free heat until Highways and Public Works actually had it shut off and went back to burning diesel fuel. As well, Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, YG removed a perfectly good biomass system from the Andrew A. Philipsen law building here in downtown Whitehorse — that the minister was just speaking about — and instead installed propane.

So, why did a government that is promoting biomass and green energy do something like this?

As well, Mr. Speaker, where is the \$30 million per year for retrofits that this Liberal government promised in their campaign in 2016? So, again, while I do appreciate the projects that are mentioned, I believe that the government has a long way to go before it starts doing a victory lap.

Ms. Tredger: Retrofits are such an important tool in reducing our emissions, and I am particularly excited to hear about the changes that reduce our energy needs. I have heard people put it this way: The greenest kilowatt hour is the one we don’t need. This is such an important part of *Our Clean Future*, and it was also a major focus of the Climate Leadership Council’s recommendations.

One of the council’s recommendations is to increase the target for emissions reductions from all government- and Crown corporation-owned buildings from 30 percent to 75 percent by 2030. That is a significant increase from the 30 percent that is currently committed to in *Our Clean Future*. I know a 75-percent reduction sounds ambitious and maybe even unreasonable, but we have been talking a lot about climate change in the last few days. I have talked about how the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released probably their last report before we hit 1.5 degrees of global warming. I have talked about the desperation and how our window to avert, or even mitigate, catastrophe is slipping away. No one wants to be accused of being too dramatic when we are talking about climate change, but at this point, I am not sure we can overstate the problem.

The goal is so simple: We just want a liveable future. That is what we are talking about when we ask for urgent, immediate action. We just want a liveable future. So, yes, a 75-percent reduction in government building emissions is ambitious and will take a lot of effort, but we have to do it; we absolutely have to get our emissions down. So, I would like to know if this government is planning to reduce their buildings’ emissions by 75 percent by 2030. I know we have been told that, even though there is no formal response to the climate leadership

recommendations coming until August, there is work going on behind the scenes. Can the minister update us? Is he planning to accept this recommendation, and what work has started in order to increase reductions from 30 percent to 75 percent?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Thank you for the comments from the members opposite and for their observations and questions. Despite what we have heard from the opposition, our government has made significant progress in addressing climate change across the territory. A crucial part of this progress has been listening to Yukoners, including Indigenous partners, municipalities, and business owners, and hearing first-hand about the types of support needed to fight climate change across all sectors. This approach is reflected in the suite of initiatives that our government offers Yukoners interested in reducing their carbon footprint.

I know that my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, is working hard to advance a number of these programs and services, for example, the better building program. This program provides loans of up to \$50,000 for residential and \$100,000 for commercial buildings for upgrades that reduce annual energy consumption. Helping Yukoners make energy-efficient retrofits to buildings and homes is a commitment under *Our Clean Future*, and it is something that we address through a suite of programs and services.

Our work continues to support businesses and individuals in contributing to our clean future. We know that protecting the planet is everyone’s responsibility and government is no exception. This is why climate action continues to be a priority for this government. Since holding office, we have made significant progress to transform our assets, including our buildings and offices, as well as how they operate.

As I indicated, we are excited about the progress toward implementing the two biomass and two solar projects mentioned earlier. Together, these projects will offset 780 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year. We know that progress like this will help to reach the targets outlined in *Our Clean Future*. This builds on many other commitments that we are on track to achieve.

In 2021, we conducted 51 energy assessments of government buildings. In 2022, we completed an additional 30; also that year, we completed 11 retrofits to reduce energy in our buildings. This is concrete progress that we have made toward meeting our climate goals. Determination, effort, and collaboration — this is how our government will continue to tackle climate change. We know that Yukoners expect us, as government, to lead by example, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Land use planning

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, I referenced a paper written by a business law firm that focuses on the Yukon’s mining industry. That paper was about the recent Yukon Supreme Court decision on a project in the Beaver River planning area. The title of that

paper is *Clear as Mud*. We understand that this paper has been making the rounds throughout the mining industry, and yesterday, I asked if the Yukon government was planning any other ad hoc land use planning initiatives. The minister didn't answer yesterday, so I will ask again.

Is the Yukon Liberal government considering any other ad hoc subregional land use plans?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you for the opportunity to rise again and say again that our focus is on regional land use planning. I have no other plans currently — or there are no other plans currently — on doing subregional land use planning, but there is a lot of local area planning that goes on. I don't know what the member opposite — how he sees that — but that is happening.

I always remain open to being in conversation with First Nations, if they wish to explore other approaches to land use planning. So, currently, there are no other plans to do subregional land use planning, like that which is going on right now with the Beaver River. Lots of effort toward regional land use planning, and in principle, I will just emphasize again that the Premier has asked me to accelerate land use planning across the Yukon.

Mr. Kent: So, the title of that paper is *Clear as Mud*, and that is the process that this minister inherited from his predecessor at Energy, Mines and Resources. The paper says — and I quote: "... [it] will make it increasingly difficult for companies doing business in areas covered by the Yukon Final Agreements to know what can or cannot be permitted when there is no chapter 11 land use plan..." in place. This has created uncertainty around the Yukon's permitting regime, given that we are nowhere near completing regional land use plans.

So, what is the minister doing to reassure companies and investors that this process, which started under the last minister, won't affect the investment climate in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: You know, Mr. Speaker, if there is a reason that land use planning is taking a little longer, it is because the Yukon Party got us to the Supreme Court — and lost, for that matter — around land use planning. That did slow things down. We have made a commitment to land use planning, and we will work in a much more respectful fashion with First Nations than has happened, and we will continue to carry out that work. We believe that this is important for our mining industry, because — and this was the conversation that I heard at Roundup this past year, but I have been hearing it for several years now, that we believe that mining needs to be respectful of our environment, of our social programs — meaning our communities — and governance — which means government-to-government relationships — for example, successor legislation.

So, there is a whole bunch of work that we are undertaking as a government, and I want to thank the industry for working with us. It is a lot of work, but it is important for the Yukon, and I believe that the industry sees this as the future of mining and the direction that we should head together.

Mr. Kent: Clear as mud. Back in 2018, the former Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources told Yukoners that

this new process was a — and I quote: "... new way of doing business..." His promised two-year timeline for completion has been blown out of the water.

The government website says that the final draft plan won't be ready until December 2023, so we could be well over six years from the initiation of this process before the plan is actually finalized. We have seen an industry leader openly wonder whether or not the Yukon was even open for business anymore. Now an international law firm describes the process here in the Yukon as "clear as mud".

Can the minister point to any new investments in the budget, or policy changes, that will repair the damage done to our investment reputation by the Premier?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Such an interesting narrative coming from the former minister of mines from the Yukon Party. Of course, at that time, we saw a reduction in investment in the mining sector. We saw people running scared because of the conflict that had happened with First Nation governments. Of course, that is something we have worked on, and we made sure we brought people together.

So, I would say this: instead of talking about investment in the budget, let's talk about investment from the mining sector directly into our economic ecosystem. What I am seeing, as we talked about yesterday, is the second largest gold mining company in the world that is looking at a project. Actually, the opposition yesterday was asking if we were going to make sure that they have access to electricity.

Then, we have one of the most significant base metal projects also moving forward. The opposition asked, with that new project coming online: Can you make sure they have electricity? Then we have been asked about the grid connection, because the second largest mining company in the entire globe is coming and looking at investing in the Yukon.

Look, I think anybody who's listening understands that the climate has definitely changed — sitting down and doing reconciliation — once they start to pipe up, you know we are getting to them.

Yes, they know exactly that these are facts. Things are much better than when it was under the Yukon Party. It's about bringing everybody to the table together, and we will continue to do that, and it will continue to drive the best economy in this country.

Question re: Safe at Home project funding

Mr. Dixon: Clear as mud. At the Premier's speech to the Yukon Chamber of Commerce after the budget was tabled, he was asked a question about the Safe at Home project. In that response, the Premier made it very clear that the Yukon government was not going to invest any further money into that project. We know that the Safe at Home Society is seeking further funding for their project.

So, can the Premier confirm that what he told the Yukon Chamber of Commerce was correct — that the Yukon government will not be providing any further funding toward this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, the Safe at Home project — I was asked about the delta in the project cost. Of course, the Safe at

Home Society acquired the downtown former High Country Inn hotel with the intention of providing permanent supportive housing for Yukoners experiencing homelessness.

However, Safe at Home later discovered that renovations would trigger the need to comply with current national building codes. The scope of the project was substantially changed from the original project which was funded. Let me state that all of the due diligence for that particular project was undertaken by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. An appraisal and building condition assessment were required by the CMHC, but because the reports were based on non-invasive reviews, the resulting reports did not identify some of the significant issues with the building.

Safe at Home Society is working with its partners to explore the most cost-effective ways to bring this housing project forward.

To the question, what I said is that we had \$1 million from the Yukon government out of a \$60-million budget that was focused on this. I think we have spent a little over \$380,000. As I stated in that chamber meeting, this particular project — which is the revitalization of that structure — we have put a hold on at this point, as we wait for reporting. I will wait for question 2.

Mr. Dixon: The Premier said that there is a hold on this project. Okay, since it's clear that the Yukon government won't be stepping in to provide any additional funding, from what the Premier has just told us, my question is: Has the Yukon government made any request to the Government of Canada for additional resources in their upcoming budget?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The activity that we have undertaken is: First, there have been multiple meetings between the president of Yukon Housing Corporation and Romy Bowers, who is the president of CMHC. I personally travelled and sat with the federal minister of housing, flagged this as a significant priority for the Yukon. In that meeting, Ms. Bowers was also present.

We have continued to be at the table with CMHC as well as the society, and we have had multiple conversations. We're waiting to see what CMHC's decision would be. We think that the delta between the original cost and where we are now is very significant. We have a number of things that we have talked about that we want to build in Dawson City, in Watson Lake, and here in Whitehorse, as well as some smaller structures across the Yukon.

At this particular time, without having access to the federal budget, we have really committed a number of our funds already. So, that's where we stand. We have the support of Health and Social Services. We're using the structure right now for some interim measures. We think that was something that was appropriate at this time, until we see what happens between the society and CMHC.

Yes, to answer the question, we have pushed hard for support for the Safe at Home Society.

Mr. Dixon: So far, the Yukon government and the CMHC have spent a significant amount on this project, but we know that — as the Premier has noted in his response — there

is a significant gap remaining. So, if there is no new money in next week's federal budget, what will it mean for this project?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: One of the things that has been a little bit difficult to listen to is the Leader of the Official Opposition cheering against Yukoners and cheering against this organization, which is what we have heard — cheering against them the whole time.

We want to stand behind these organizations. It takes a lot for a group of volunteers to stand out and to try to work alongside a government to rectify these problems. What I would say at this point is that, whether it is going to be in the federal budget or there is carry-over funding, we are waiting to see. Again, if there are no funds committed from CMHC and Safe at Home Society needs to make a change, then we will see what that looks like.

Again, we think that the structure — likely, this is the primary use that has been identified. Our team will continue to look at other options as we wait to see a final decision on the funding. But again, we are hoping that CMHC can come to the table to help the society; it is their budget. We have wanted to support them, and that is where we stand at this particular time.

Question re: Sexualized violence in schools

Ms. White: I want to be clear that I ask the following questions with the consent of the affected individual. In January of this year, the Yukon NDP, along with many government officials, received an e-mail from a Yukon student telling her story of abuse. This young woman was sexually assaulted by a fellow student, and although the assault had been reported to administration as well as the RCMP, she was forced to spend the next few years sharing the same space as her abuser. Why? Because there are seemingly no policies in place to protect victims of sexual assault from their abusers in a school setting.

So, can the minister clarify: What policies are in place to protect students who have been harmed by other students, whether the harm has occurred in school or outside of school?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to such matters on the floor of the Legislative Assembly. The health, safety, and well-being of our students and staff are always our first priority.

There is a need to proactively and responsibly address concerns of student-to-student harm. There is an absolutely clear expectation that all members of the school community must not engage in bullying, abuse, or other unacceptable behaviours, as outlined in the safe and caring schools policy. So, that is a policy that is followed within our schools and our school system. Peer-to-peer harm is taken very seriously, and we commit to, of course, always examining the need for stand-alone policy in certain areas to address this issue.

If serious incidents occur in school, of course, we always follow emergency plans and responsive protocols. That includes working with the RCMP and other agencies, as well as providing support to families involved. We have developed communication guidance to school administrators in providing clear and consistent communication to families as well.

Ms. White: When I wrote to the minister directly about protecting students from harm by another student, I was

optimistic. I truly expected a simple “Yes, we will be developing a policy”; instead, the response was a laundry list of principles, procedures, and policies that kind of have to do with the issue, but not quite.

We know that there is a student protection policy, the sexual orientation and gender policy, and the safe and caring schools policy, but none of these addresses the situation of a student assaulting another student. There is also a student protection plan, but it only addresses students harmed by adults and gives no guidance when a student is harmed by another student.

Will the minister work with women’s organizations and Victim Services to develop a policy that clearly lays out what happens in the event that a student is harmed by another student in order to protect the victim while on school property?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, the safety and well-being of students and staff is our first priority. As I stated, there are policies that are in place. I am also the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and work very closely with equality-seeking organizations throughout the Yukon. I have worked very closely with the Minister of Health and Social Services and Justice on the development of the sexualized assault response team and those services. I can talk more about that as well, which definitely relates to the type of situation that the member is speaking about.

I, of course, do not have — nor do I think it would be appropriate for me to speak about specific cases on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, so I can speak about this being a very high priority for me personally and as the Minister responsible for the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and Education. Again, we follow the safe and caring schools policy. We have also worked very intensely on the safer schools —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. White: So, the thing is — the policies that the minister has referenced already existed when this young woman was assaulted and none of them helped. This young woman had to attend school in fear of other students. She was shunned by her classmates and was driven to the point where she felt that her only result was suicide. Many tools could have been used to make sure that the victim was supported instead of being blamed: trauma-informed sessions with students, education on sexual assault, help groups, just to name a few. Instead, a student was left navigating the system that let her down on her own to the point when it almost broke her.

In her letter, the young woman stated — and I quote: “In my experience and opinion, the Yukon government and the school does not take sexual assault seriously.” I appreciate that the minister cannot speak about a specific case — and I am not asking about a specific case. I am using it as an example. What I am asking is: Why don’t students deserve to be protected in school in the case of sexualized violence from their peers?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, this is a highly sensitive matter that is being spoken about on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, one that I do not have permission — nor would I ever think to speak about it in any detail on the floor of the Legislature. We certainly have taken — and do continue to take — the safety and well-being of students in our schools who are

under our care as a paramount responsibility, one that I take very seriously. I have had a lot of opportunity to speak about that on the floor of the Legislature. We have undertaken a tremendous amount of work in the area of safer schools. The safer schools action plan as well is another area to look to. We released this last February, and we are working toward completing the 23 action items that we committed to — and the safer schools action plan to be completed this spring. Much of that work speaks to safety in schools, of course. We are also looking forward to a lot of other actions that may, of course, look at the specific policies.

Question re: Atlin hydro expansion project

Ms. Van Bibber: Last month, the president and CEO of the Taku Group of Companies confirmed that the latest cost estimates for the Atlin hydro project were now \$330 million. He also confirmed that the funding gap was \$106 million.

Yesterday, the minister confirmed that he made a request to the federal government for more funding for this project. If we do not see an additional \$106 million in the federal budget on Tuesday, what will it mean for the future of this project?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Maybe I better clarify a few things. First of all, Mr. Speaker, part of the additional funds that the Taku River Tlingit and the Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership requested from the federal government included contingencies — some of those, for example, around the Canada infrastructure bank loan and interest rate — so some of those amounts depend on certain things. The funding gap on the main part of the project, I think, was closer to \$60 million. I would have to check that to be sure, but the question is: What will happen when we get there? I am going to wait to see the budget; it comes out next week, and we will see how we are doing there.

But we have a 10-year renewable plan and we are already working to update that plan, so we will keep doing that work because, for us, the future is to move away from fossil fuels and on to sustainable renewable energy.

Ms. Van Bibber: In the event that the federal government is not willing to provide additional funds to this project, how much more is the Yukon government willing to invest in this project beyond the \$50 million that it already committed?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If the question is: Have we contemplated closing the funding gap? — the answer is no. If the federal government came close to closing the funding gap and there was still some difference remaining, would we look at this? I am sure we would, but these are all what-if scenarios.

I will continue to say that the Atlin project, in providing winter energy for the Yukon — that is a project led by a First Nation where the purchase price of the energy is less than half the price of paying for diesel per kilowatt hour. That is a good project, and we still believe in that project. I am disappointed that the Yukon Party does not, but we will see where the funding comes to with the federal budget and then we will review it internally with Yukon Energy and our partners, the Taku River Tlingit and Carcross/Tagish First Nation.

Question re: Animal shelter support

Mr. Istchenko: When speaking to the media yesterday about the need for increased funding for the animal shelter, the minister said this — and I quote: “There have been some preliminary discussions between the Yukon Department of Environment and the City of Whitehorse, and we certainly invite the City of Whitehorse to have a more active role.”

The minister went on to explain that other northern capitals, like Iqaluit and Yellowknife, provide much more funding than the capital city here. Can the minister explain how much more funding he expects the City of Whitehorse to provide toward the functioning of animal rescue services?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I said yesterday, the Department of Environment, in late February, provided \$135,000 of additional stop-gap funding in order to support the Mae Bachur Shelter — humane society — in Whitehorse in order for them to continue their valuable work. The contribution that has been provided by the Department of Environment in this fiscal year is between \$275,000 and \$300,000. That is, by provincial-territorial standards, an extraordinary amount of support, but we certainly do support the great work that they are doing.

As I also said yesterday, over the course of the last five, six, or perhaps as long ago as 10 years, there have been points where the delivery of their valuable services has been in question because of a variety of factors, but I certainly applaud the hard-working volunteers at the humane society. We will continue to work with them to ensure that the delivery model that we have going forward is less likely to result in the challenges that prior boards have faced.

Mr. Istchenko: In the case of the Humane Society Yukon, the services that are provided span the whole territory, so this is much broader than just the City of Whitehorse. The minister has made it clear that he is looking for more funding from the City of Whitehorse, but this is clearly a territorial issue and requires leadership from the Yukon government.

Can he elaborate on what his expectations are for the other municipalities and communities in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The discussions with the City of Whitehorse have commenced, and I certainly look forward to those discussions between my officials and the officials at the City of Whitehorse. There is a better model to be identified with respect to the delivery of the incredibly valuable services that the Humane Society Yukon provides. As the member opposite will very likely know, the majority of the services that the Humane Society Yukon provides is for Whitehorse and environs.

I don’t discount the fact that there certainly are services provided for abandoned pets in other communities, but from an all-of-budget perspective, the majority of the valuable work that the Humane Society Yukon provides is for the community of Whitehorse, the City of Whitehorse, and environs — as one would expect, because that is where the population centre is for the Yukon.

Yes, did I say that the City of Whitehorse could step up? Absolutely, but those conversations are just starting. I look forward to those conversations continuing in the spirit of

collaboration and problem-solving that I anticipate continuing with the city administration.

Question re: Yukon River crossing at Dawson City

Ms. Van Bibber: This past weekend in Dawson, we heard from several people in the tourism industry about the challenges that the industry faced last season as a result of the *George Black* ferry. Last year, there were multiple times when the ferry was out of commission, and visitors and locals alike were unable to cross for extended periods.

What steps is the government taking to ensure that the *George Black* ferry is properly serviced and ready for the upcoming tourism season and that we won’t see a repeat of last season, with the ferry out of operation so frequently?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I don’t believe that “so frequently” is what occurred, but okay. The *George Black* ferry typically operates between May and late October. The opening of the season for the ferry is based on water levels, which must be high enough so that the ferry can be safely launched.

The safety and well-being of Yukoners and visitors is always our first consideration when operating the ferry. As the Member for Porter Creek North indicated, last summer there were some unexpected impacts to ferry operations. In August, the ferry operations were temporarily halted due to a mechanical issue with the propeller and shaft. Our crews worked quickly, and the ferry was operational again within a few days.

After the ferry was pulled for the season, which was on October 17, 2022, extensive repairs were completed to help ensure normal operations for this upcoming season.

We are finalizing upgrades to the propeller shaft and conducting routine maintenance of the *George Black* ferry over this winter. The primary engines of the *George Black* ferry are in the process of being refurbished and will be in place for the 2023 season. Highways and Public Works has also produced essential spare parts to limit downtime in the case of a breakdown. In addition, Highways and Public Works also has a pair of backup engines.

We are aware of the challenges, and significant efforts are being made to —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Van Bibber: The tourism industry has made it clear to us that ensuring a consistent and reliable crossing of the Yukon River in Dawson is critical to marketing Dawson to tourism companies that bring in these visitors. While we know that the Yukon government is planning a bridge sometime in the next decade, there needs to be near- and medium-term solutions. When I asked about this on March 9, the minister said — quote: “... the *George Black* ferry has to be looked at, and any possible redundancy, which may have to be built in.”

Can the minister tell us what sort of redundancy the government is considering for this crossing?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The redundancies that are in place for this summer are the redundancies that I just indicated, which is that the primary engines for the *George Black* ferry are in the process of being refurbished and will be in place for the 2023 season. As well, Highways and Public Works has produced

essential spare parts to limit downtime in the case of a breakdown, and importantly, we also have two backup engines.

As the member opposite will know, Yukon Highways and Public Works hosted two engagement sessions for Dawson City residents on March 16. The sessions focused on what is working and what is not and what is important to residents when planning for the future of the crossing. Highways and Public Works also invited to present to the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Elders Council and hosted an engagement session with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in citizens while in Dawson on March 15. These sessions were well-attended, and we received a great deal of helpful feedback from residents.

We will be sending out a follow-up survey to Dawson residents to get further feedback from the engagement. After we receive the results, we will be creating a “what we heard” report that will summarize what we heard from the engagement. This important work is ongoing, and we will continue the process of determining a —

Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Van Bibber: Can the minister tell us if and when the Yukon government would consider purchasing a replacement for the current *George Black* ferry?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: That question, of course, as most of the questions today, invites speculation, and speculation is ill-advised in this business. However — and as I said in my prior responses, the diligent crew at Highways and Public Works in the Klondike area — and a shout-out to all of them, a shout-out to the team, as well, for clearing the north Klondike Highway in mid to late September, when the permafrost slumps caused blockages on the highway. I am advised that was a herculean effort, and it was quick, and the road was cleared in a much faster manner.

But, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the issues with respect to a possible Dawson City Yukon River crossing, the issues going forward, of the *George Black* ferry, but the professional crew at Highways and Public Works in the Klondike is making best efforts to ensure that there are many redundancies built into the operation —

Speaker: Order, please. I lost track of time; sorry.

The time for Question Period has now elapsed.

We will now proceed to Orders of the Day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Clerk: Third reading, Bill No. 207, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I move that Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 207, entitled *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23*, be now read a third time and do pass.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the conversation that we have had on the second supplementary in Committee of the Whole and general debate.

A quick update on the overview — I will be very quick here in third reading. It is an increase of \$29 million in new O&M spending, no increases in capital spending on a gross basis. We have talked about the reasons why. The increase in O&M spending is paired with \$4.3 million of new recoveries for O&M projects and \$10.2 million in new recoveries in capital spending, resulting in a total of \$14.5 million in additional recoveries.

The supplementary estimates also include \$26.1 million in additional revenues. The largest sources of revenues for the Yukon government are from the increases in income taxes and mineral royalties. These changes to the budget mean that we have an adjusted forecast surplus of \$43.9 million, up from the \$33.04 million in the first supplementary estimates. I appreciate the expeditious process through the supplementary budgets, and I look forward to the passing of this bill.

Mr. Cathers: I would just note that, as with all budget bills, since they are confidence matters, we will not be supporting the government in that vote because we do not have confidence in their government.

I would note, as well, that concerns within the current fiscal year, as we are wrapping it up — I will not repeat everything that I said at second reading on this, but I do want to touch on a few areas that continue to be concerns for us and for other Yukoners who are affected by them.

That includes the continued inadequate funding for our hospitals. This fiscal year, as well, saw the government months behind in payments to physicians, with thousands of billings by physicians for health services outstanding beyond 90 days, despite the government previously committing to pay them in a timely manner. It saw, as well, late payments to pharmacists. It saw a government finally acting to try to respond to the nursing shortage by announcing bonuses, which caused some consternation and resulted in a series of grievances being filed against the government by nurses related to those. It is also a year that we saw government after — previously, the Liberals abandoned any government efforts and the government position dedicated toward recruitment of family doctors. Finally, they were embarrassed into acting, but I note that the Yukon Medical Association acted first to create a physician recruitment position, and the government finally, after being embarrassed by the fact that they had failed to act themselves, stepped in to provide assistance, but only provided a portion of the funding for that important position.

The hospital, as I have touched on before, according to the numbers provided to this Legislative Assembly by the hospital witnesses last fall when the chair and CEO appeared here in the Assembly — they told us — and again quoting from November 22 of last year: “... annual O&M ... for ... fiscal 2022-23 is \$103.5 million. It is expected that is a core increase of approximately 3.3 percent, as well as additional funding for other — I will call them ‘one-time expenses’ — and that does not include any additional funding for pandemic-related impacts.”

The witness then said this about the latter item — that being pandemic impacts — and I quote: “That is something that

we are working with government on. We don't know what has been committed yet for pandemic funding. In the last two years, though, I can say that it has been fairly significant — in the range of probably almost \$6 million of additional funding in each of the last two years..."

So, again, for the fiscal year that we're currently wrapping up, the hospital witnesses told this Legislative Assembly, in their own words, that the O&M budget for this year was \$103.5 million. The chair also told us that this budget hadn't factored in inflation. And to understand the impact of inflation on an organization of that size, I would point out that, at 6.9-percent inflation, the impact of that is in excess of the equivalent of \$7 million toward the budget, and although, of course, it's not a cut applied by government, it has effectively the same impact because of that lost buying power due to unprecedented high inflation.

So, those impacts combined are significant, and that adds to the \$14.5 million in a hole in the hospital's budget that they have, based on the difference between what the hospital witnesses told us their budget was last fall and what is currently in the supplementary estimate, which, in the line item for Yukon hospital services, shows only \$88.9 million.

The minister made a reference later that suggested that they may have provided some additional funding to the hospital that is not reflected in the budgetary documents, but we look to the government to provide any evidence of that fact and note that the number the minister quoted was still short of the number that the hospital witnesses told us was their budget for O&M for the current fiscal year.

I note, as well, that the government in this current fiscal year signed an agreement with the Yukon Medical Association, but despite that, we have heard that they are months behind in actually honouring the increases in that agreement, and since some of the amounts owed to physicians began on April 1, 2022, we are coming up on the one-year mark very quickly with the government still not having made those payments to physicians.

Again, while the government likes to point to the fact that there are challenges nationally in recruiting health care professionals, the government doesn't need to make the problem worse by failing to pay doctors, by failing to honour its commitments to nurses and to pharmacists, and by shorting the hospital millions of dollars in necessary funding for the current year. All of that has made the problem worse and has created challenges within the health care field that directly fall at the feet of this government.

So, with that, while I could go on for much longer, I will wrap up my remarks here today.

Ms. White: As you know, we have a commitment, and we will, of course, be voting in favour of the supplementary budget. We look forward to further debate in Committee of the Whole on the mains.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I just want to speak to the process at large with the Committee of the Whole. I think the new systems that we put in together, as the three political parties here in the Yukon, are working very well to manage our time when it comes to the debate in Committee of the Whole, so I appreciate everybody's participation in a new schedule. I do remember some very long afternoons in opposition where lots of phonebooks were being read and other things, so it's nice to see the conversation in a truncated yet, at the same time, a very specific, focused direction, so I appreciate that.

In third reading today, I appreciate the comments from the Leader of the Third Party. There wasn't anything new from the Yukon Party and their Yukon Party math, and what we heard from the Member for Lake Laberge was basically verbatim exactly what we discussed already. We have already effectively countered all of the Yukon Party's fun with numbers and misdirection there, so, I don't have anything to add as far as that conversation.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Point of order

Speaker: Point of order, the Member for Lake Laberge.

Mr. Cathers: To accuse a member — in this case, me — of misdirection for quoting the numbers that are in the government's supplementary budget, I would suggest is straying pretty far for the Minister of Finance and is probably in contravention of Standing Order 19(h), Mr. Speaker, suggesting that another member has uttered a deliberate falsehood when, in fact, that member was just quoting the government's own budget.

Speaker: Minister of Finance, on the point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, I am just making the point that we have had this conversation many times. We have countered all of the partial information that the member opposite pushed forward, and we believe —

Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Silver: — this is a dispute among members.

Speaker's ruling

Speaker: I just want to remind members not to make argumentative statements during their points of order. There is no point of order.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the ruling. I appreciate the conversation in Committee of the Whole. Let's get this puppy voted on.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.
Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.
Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.
Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.
Mr. Dixon: Disagree.
Mr. Kent: Disagree.
Ms. Clarke: Disagree.
Mr. Cathers: Disagree.
Ms. McLeod: Disagree.
Ms. Van Bibber: Disagree.
Mr. Hassard: Disagree.
Mr. Istchenko: Disagree.
Ms. White: Agree.
Ms. Blake: Agree.
Ms. Tredger: Agree.
Clerk: Mr. Speaker, the results are 10 yeas, eight nays.
Speaker: The yeas have it.
 I declare the motion carried.
Motion for third reading of Bill No. 207 agreed to

Speaker: I declare that Bill No. 207 has passed this House.

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Bill No. 208: First Appropriation Act 2023-24 — continued

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Community Services

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Madam Chair, it is great to be here this afternoon to discuss the budget for 2023-24. I have with me my officials here. I have John McGovern and I have Matt King, who will help me answer the questions this afternoon. I am sure that there will be many of them. I am not going to take up an awful lot of time in the beginning with any speeches or whatnot. I am looking forward to the questions, and I will pass it over to my colleagues on the opposite benches.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the minister for letting us jump right into our questions this afternoon. I want to thank the officials from Community Services for being here today and, of course, for the briefing that was provided to the opposition parties.

I want to start off with maybe a little bit of a higher-level discussion on municipal issues. Can the minister update us on the CMG? We have heard that there has been some work on this from some municipalities, so I would like to ask: What is the status of the current CMG formula, and when does it expire? Is there going to be a planned review of the CMG, and if so, when will that happen?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The comprehensive municipal grant provides core funding support to municipalities. The grant is calculated through a formula, and it captures a number of key factors, including inflationary pressures. The formula was reviewed and updated by the government in 2017-18. Grant funding has continued to increase annually under the current formula. For 2022, the comprehensive grant totalled more than \$21 million for municipal governments, and in 2023, we project that the grant will total more than \$22 million — an increase of more than a million. Based on the current formula, we anticipate that funding levels will continue to increase.

The Association of Yukon Communities has requested a comprehensive review of the grant to ensure that the purpose of the formula is still being met. Community Services is continuing to work in partnership with the association on this process.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister tell us when the current CMG agreement expires?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It is a legislative grant, so it doesn't expire. However, we did agree to go into negotiations with the AYC. The joint working group has been established and is working with the AYC on that project.

Ms. McLeod: It is my understanding that the CMG is generally negotiated on a three-year basis. I am wondering when the current expiry is before the next round of negotiations will kick in.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Well, whether or not the grant expires or not, the negotiations have begun. We have a joint working group, and we are working to negotiate a new agreement.

Ms. McLeod: The minister referenced the AYC requesting a review of the CMG. I would like to know what the Yukon government's position is on this and whether or not they are considering that. I will leave it there.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The comprehensive municipal grant is the Yukon government's block funding for municipalities and the cornerstone of our financial support for vibrant, healthy, and sustainable Yukon communities, which has been a cornerstone of our government since we were elected in 2016. The funding provides the necessary resources for communities to fulfill their obligations under the *Municipal Act* and other legislation to provide citizens with required municipal services. As I said earlier this afternoon, municipalities will receive more than \$22 million in grants to be spent on priorities of their choosing. This is an increase of \$1.1 million over past years' comprehensive municipal grant, and we are currently in negotiations with the Association of Yukon Communities, municipalities, and generally to find out how we can improve — if it is meeting the needs of the municipalities and how we can improve it.

Ms. McLeod: Now, the minister has said that there will be a \$1.1-million increase to the CMG this year over last year. Is that increase a result of a built-in escalator? At one point, it was three percent. So, is that where that \$1.1 million comes from?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Growth in municipality has a bearing on the increasing size of the grant, as does the consumer price index. I am sure there are other factors, as well, but those are the main ones.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you, Madam Chair, and if you could ask the minister to speak into his mic, because I didn't actually hear that response. Carry on, please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I apologize to the member opposite if she can't hear me. I will endeavour to speak clearer and louder. Cost of living increases are factored into this; it's an annual growth rate. As to the size of the municipality itself, the growth in the municipality also leads to an increase in the comprehensive municipal grant. I hope that is clear. Got it?

Ms. McLeod: So, the minister has said that the government, the department, is beginning negotiations and is looking to ensure that the CMG is meeting the needs of Yukon's municipalities. Can he tell us what aspects of the formula are on the table?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said, the Community Affairs branch has formed a joint working group with the Association of Yukon Communities to examine the efficacy of the current comprehensive municipal grant formula to prepare a report to the association and the Yukon government. This work is ongoing. I am not going to presume — speculate — on what factors, at this point. We haven't had any issues raised — to my level, anyway — from the Association of Yukon Communities. We are going to wait to see what their concerns and thoughts are on the comprehensive municipal grant, and we will go from there with the working group.

Ms. McLeod: I have a question now about the *Municipal Act*. Now, we know that there have been some issue-specific changes to the *Municipal Act* over the past few years. Is the government contemplating a comprehensive review of the *Municipal Act*?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: At this moment, no, we are not.

Ms. McLeod: I have some questions now, I am going to move on to the new \$50-million fund in this year's budget that was spoken about briefly in these Chambers already this year, and I am hoping that the Minister of Community Services can share some information about it.

Are there any parameters for this fund, such as who can apply for it and what sort of projects it can fund?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I really do appreciate the question from the Member for Watson Lake this afternoon on this matter, because there are some real misunderstandings about the \$50 million.

The \$50 million is a contingency fund. It's not even within Community Services' budget at the moment. It's there; it has been identified in the budgeting process because we know that wildfires and floods are becoming much more pronounced, and we want to make sure we have a buffer in case we have a really, really bad wildfire season — that CS can then pull on to pay for those expenses.

We don't know what they are yet, so we put a marker in the budget for \$50 million, which is anticipated will cover the cost of that. It's not a program. It's not something that municipalities can access. It's basically money that has been set aside in the event of a catastrophic wildfire season that we can pull on in case of an emergency. That is really what it is. It's to cover a really, really bad fire/flood season. We have money we can then pull on and use to serve Yukoners and protect their houses and their properties.

Ms. McLeod: Given the minister's comments, would it be fair to say that it is entirely up to the government as to how this money gets spent and where it gets spent?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's always up to this government, to this Legislature, to determine how the money is spent. The members opposite can vote for it or vote against it. We saw them vote against it just a few minutes ago. It's always up to this government to determine how monies that we have in our control are spent.

Ms. McLeod: I am wondering how a community gets the government's ear when they believe that they should have some of these funds spent in their community, either for flood control, damage control, or fire measures.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, this isn't money that is for any particular project. As a matter of fact, if we had to access funds in CS, it would have to be appropriated as necessary to CS in a supplementary budget that would come before the House and do this, but to the greater question about how municipalities might access funds, that is the daily work of the department. We have community advisors in every single municipality. I have regular conversations with the mayors of municipalities around the territory. If they have needs, they can certainly come to us through either me, Deputy Minister King, or through the community advisors to get money.

I know that the Department of Community Services has worked very closely with some municipalities to access federal funds, sometimes working in harmony with our First Nation communities as well — from the federal government — so we will actually facilitate those discussions as well, but they can certainly come to me, Deputy Minister King, or a community

advisor and make their case to me about what they need, and we will do that.

As far as some of the emergency funds, they are allocated on a federal basis, and again, we can certainly connect the dots, connect the communities to the appropriate federal funding agencies.

Ms. McLeod: I will leave it for now; we may come back and revisit that.

I am going to move on to the matter of a letter from AYC. I have a couple of questions about this December 14 letter to the Yukon Legislative Assembly from AYC. In that letter, AYC recommended that Yukon should develop a rural land development strategy, emphasizing the need for an increased supply in market and non-market housing in communities outside Whitehorse. How does the government respond to that recommendation?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: If I could ask a point of clarification, is this the report that was done in 2015?

Ms. McLeod: No, this has to do with a letter from December 14 of last year from AYC requesting the development of a rural land strategy.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We certainly recognize that the Yukon communities are growing quickly and there is a need for a range of lot types to support their growth. We are working on land development projects in partnership with every Yukon municipality. We are partnering with Yukon First Nations and private industry to meet lot demand, and we appreciate partnering and collaborating with municipalities and Yukon First Nations in this work.

In the next year, we are looking forward to more lots becoming available in Carmacks, Faro, Dawson, Haines Junction, Mayo, Teslin, and Watson Lake. Currently, these projects are in varying stages, including feasibility, planning, implementation, and surveying.

Ms. McLeod: While I can appreciate that there is work going on in Yukon communities, the question was about having an overall development strategy, and I would like the minister to comment on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have been fairly explicit in this House about municipal responsibility, and currently, lot development within municipalities is a municipal issue. So, I don't want to presume that we will certainly come over with an overarching template for all municipalities. That is really not our role, as the Yukon government. We are, in many municipalities, the lot developer. So, we will continue to develop lots from the municipalities. It is up to the municipalities to plan where they want their lots developed. For example, Whitehorse is going through an official community plan process which identifies the next stages of development. That is their process, and we will certainly follow the process laid out by municipalities. Yukon government, at this point, serves almost — well, we serve as the lot developer to implement the plans that they bring forward to us.

Ms. McLeod: I can appreciate that the rules for lot development and land development are different for Whitehorse and outside of Whitehorse. That, of course, is why AYC may be looking for a strategy on this.

I appreciate that, yes, the OCP for various municipalities lays out where they would like to see development happen, but at the end of the day, it's still up to the Yukon government to make that happen. So, I believe it is a very relevant question.

The letter also recommends that AYC be more involved with the federal infrastructure funding programs. Has the minister considered changing the way municipalities engage with federal infrastructure funds?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Recently, I sat down with the Association of Yukon Communities, and we discussed the association's interest in administering the gas tax on behalf of the Yukon government.

During that discussion, I certainly relayed to the president of the association that I was not formally opposed to that, but you can imagine that there is a lot to work out in such a request. I certainly, as a minister, don't want to make the process more cumbersome or increase more red tape; I want to make sure that it is efficient. I know that we have a department that does administer the gas tax on behalf of municipalities and First Nations right now, and I want to make sure that we are not impeding or duplicating responsibilities.

I certainly have to take into consideration the views of First Nations, who also access what was formerly called the "gas tax" through the Yukon government. So, there is a lot to work out. As I said, I am not fundamentally opposed to it, but there are some severe challenges that really have to be worked out. So, our officials are talking with the association to find out what their thoughts are and how this might actually come about, but there are some significant challenges with the proposal, and we are exploring it.

Ms. McLeod: So, the minister considers that there will be challenges in having this conversation. I am wondering what those challenges are. I did hear — and I don't want to put words in the minister's mouth, but there was kind of the suggestion there that having AYC involved here would cause more red tape. So, if the minister could just explain his comments on that and let us know whether or not the First Nations have been engaged in this conversation.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I had this conversation with the president of the Association of Yukon Communities a couple of weeks before I came into the House this session. So, it is a fairly new discussion we are having. In terms of identifying the challenges, that is what the officials are going to work out, both internally and with the Association of Yukon Communities. So, you know, that is really why I want to explore this. I don't really have a good read on it at the moment. I foresee that there could be some significant challenges.

I really want to explore that with the association, and once that work is done, I will be able to make a more informed decision, but this is a new proposal, and until we explore it both internally with the Yukon government, with First Nations, and with municipalities, I am not entirely sure of some of the so-called "tiger traps" that we might face going through this. So, I am going to wait to get that assessment, and once I have it, I will be better informed to be able to talk on the floor of the House about what those might be.

Ms. McLeod: So, as the Minister of Community Services, what are the challenges that he sees with this process or with having this discussion broadening the application of this fund?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I certainly hear the Member for Watson Lake knocking, but you can't come in. I don't know, and I am not going to speculate here on the floor of the Legislature this afternoon. I frankly am going to have the department and the municipalities and the First Nations explore their thoughts. We will look into this, and once I have that information of this brand-spanking new proposal, I will look into it and then have more information. This time, I don't have it, and I haven't heard it from any of the players, so I am waiting for that work to be done.

Ms. McLeod: I am going to move on. I want to talk about the Canada community-building fund — and they keep changing names of these funds, so pardon me — formerly known as the “gas tax fund”. The Yukon government collects a certain amount of money for administering this fund. How much does it collect, and what is that money specifically used for? My question is whether or not that money is specifically used to fund the administrator position in the department.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Canadian community-building fund — I would agree with the Member for Watson Lake that the gas tax is certainly an easier moniker, name, title, or program name. So, the Canadian community-building fund flows through the Yukon government to municipalities and First Nations for eligible projects at their discretion. Unincorporated communities access the funding through various Government of Yukon programs.

So, there are actually three tiers: Unincorporated Yukon communities can access it, municipalities, and First Nations. Currently, all those requests come through the Yukon government. We have people in government who have ties to federal government contacts, and they actually help facilitate the connections between the fund, municipalities, and the federal government — and the proper agencies — to make sure that the funding goes through. We also do all the reporting on those funds, which totalled, as I said, in 2022-23, just shy of \$17 million. We ensure all the reporting is done for the municipalities before submitting to Ottawa, so there's a lot of work that we do there.

I will say to the Member for Watson Lake that the actual deal — we hold the \$17 million in the Yukon government in trust for municipalities, First Nations, and unincorporated communities. We then roll it out to the various benefactors through a funding arrangement that was agreed to by resolution by the AYC in 2014-15, I believe, and also, that deal was agreed to by the Association of Yukon Communities, the Yukon government, and First Nation governments. That resolution that was passed by the Association of Yukon Communities setting up the allocations of the money also tied in the support for the administrative position.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister tell us what portion or what percentage of \$17 million that the government is holding on behalf of Yukon municipalities and First Nations — what

percentage or portion of that remains with the Yukon government?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Allocation of the funding as set by the agreement between the Yukon government, the First Nations, and Association of Yukon Communities by resolution is provided on a formula basis but held in a Government of Yukon revolving fund until projects are approved and expenses incurred by the ultimate recipients.

Unspent allocations carry over. So, even though the money accrues annually, some municipalities don't spend their money; they actually carry it on. So, we have to manage an awful lot of that to-ing and fro-ing. Unspent allocation carry-over by ultimate recipient in the revolving fund — current total balances in this fund are \$73 million. Basically, seven percent goes to unincorporated communities, 25 percent goes to First Nations, and 68 percent goes to municipal governments. The current balance of \$73 million — seven percent is allocated to unincorporated communities, 25 percent is First Nation communities, and 68 percent is municipal allocations.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that and I understand all of that. My question remains — whether or not the Yukon government retains any portion of the gas tax fund in order to administer the fund. I would like to know what that percentage is or the amount.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, the amount of money from the fund that we retain for administration is 1.7 percent.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that.

I am going to move on now to the matter of capital spending. Of course, this is something that affects our communities in a very major way. The budget shows \$61.4 million worth of investments in infrastructure across the territory, and this includes funds for local projects like community centres, recreation centres, fire halls, and EMS stations. The budget speech also mentions public works buildings and community infrastructure, like sewer and water.

So, can the minister provide us with a breakdown of what these investments are and where they are located?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, we have examples of projects in a number of different places here that we can talk about. In our budget documents, budget highlights, on page 7, it has a wonderful map that shows community projects across the Yukon identified by location and what they are, so the member opposite can find that online. If you go to yukon.ca, you can get the budget highlights, which goes into quite a lot of detail about that stuff. We also have our five-year capital plan, which is another great resource to look at the projects that are allocated and what is coming down into the future on our funding.

Currently, we have approved projects such as: a water plant in Burwash; arena replacement in Carmacks, which we recently opened and that went ahead; public works building, fire hall, and EMS in Carmacks; water and waste-water downtown upgrades phase 2 in Dawson City; public works building and fire hall in Faro; and infrastructure upgrades phase 2 in Haines Junction. Highways and Public Works has a YG energy retrofit project at Property Management. They also have a Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement in Highways and Public Works. There is some funding going there for approved

projects. We have in Mayo public works facilities and upgrades in the fire hall and reservoir; in Old Crow, we have a new public works facility; in Pelly Crossing, we have an early childhood development centre; in Teslin, we have a fire hall; in Teslin, we have a public building green energy retrofits project going on; there is a public works facility in Teslin; there is a municipal centre and green energy retrofits in Teslin; we have an admin building retrofit in Watson Lake; we have a new public works fire hall building in Watson Lake, which recently opened; we have a services building in Whitehorse; and we have the city hall energy upgrade in Whitehorse. Those are some of the projects that have been approved under our projects.

Ms. McLeod: I feel like this is a bit of *déjà vu*. I recall being here last year and not being able to get a list of the projects or the money that was spent. Now, the minister may direct us to the “five-year capital plan” — as this government calls it — but the minister has said many times that this is a moving target — things flow in; they flow out. It is not a document that we can rely on.

So, it is difficult to come to a budget debate when you can’t get the accurate numbers within the debate in order to have a discussion about it. So, I am wondering just how it is that we can get a list of these projects with their associated costs.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: If I can just ask for clarification from the member opposite — so, they want a list of projects with the associated costs? Is that the question?

Ms. McLeod: Yes, that would facilitate some discussion on those projects.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I said, I just gave a fairly comprehensive list of some of the investment projects. A lot of the projects that we are getting are transfer payment agreements with municipalities and First Nations, which is why we have an envelope of funding for these funds. We work with municipalities and First Nations to tell us which projects they anticipate going ahead with. As we just found out last night, the City of Whitehorse has come up with their new budget and actually lapsed a number of funds last year, which means that they wouldn’t have come to us for the funding.

So, there is a list of projects that have been applied for, but whether or not those projects are currently advancing at the behest of the First Nation or the municipality — it is in the municipality’s hands whether or not they are going to proceed with those projects.

We can tell you what the projects are, but we don’t really have a comprehensive list of — it’s difficult to tell the member opposite, in this budget, which projects are going ahead and which aren’t, because it’s going to be at the discretion of the municipality or the First Nation. As I said earlier, the Yukon government projects in the budget are outlined in our five-year capital plan.

Ms. McLeod: I find this method of budgeting — if we can call it that — to be less than transparent. \$61.4 million is not a small amount of money. I refer back to the five-year capital plan where projects flow in, they flow out, and nobody can really count on what’s in there. How in the world are we supposed to debate \$61.4 million if nobody knows what’s in it, nobody knows what’s going to be spent, and projects at the

twelfth hour can come and go in this budget? Could the minister explain that?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In the budget, there is a small communities fund line item for \$9 million. The projects impacted by that line item are: a water plant in Burwash; arena replacement in Carmacks; public works building, fire hall, and EMS in Carmacks; water and waste-water downtown upgrades phase 2 in Dawson City; public works building and fire hall in Faro; infrastructure upgrades phase 2 in Haines Junction; Yukon government building energy retrofits; Nisutlin Bay bridge replacement; public works facilities upgrades and fire hall and reservoir; new public works facility; early childhood development centre in Pelly Crossing; a fire hall in Teslin; a public building green energy retrofit in Teslin; a public works facility in Teslin; a municipal centre green energy retrofit in Teslin; administration building retrofit in Watson Lake; a new public works fire hall building in Watson Lake; a services building in Whitehorse; and a city hall energy upgrade in Whitehorse.

If the municipalities, First Nations, and communities come forward with those projects, that money will flow. Otherwise, it will be held in escrow until they do actually pass it through the budget and proceed with the project.

There is also a \$48-million Investing in Canada infrastructure program — another envelope of funding — for the projects that are approved for that envelope that will proceed if the projects go ahead from the municipalities. They are: a lagoon project in Beaver Creek; a boat launch recapitalization in Beaver Creek; a landing boat launch in Burwash Landing; a school in Burwash; lagoon upgrades in Carcross; a Champagne and Aishihik First Nations land development in Haines Junction; City of Whitehorse asphalt overlay; a City of Whitehorse compost facility upgrade; a City of Whitehorse downtown reconstruction of Cook Street; a City of Whitehorse public transit station hub; a City of Whitehorse Robert Service parks building; a City of Whitehorse transit services bus midlife refurbishment; Dawson City north end development; Dawson City reservoir replacement; Dawson City Dempster fibre; Faro water, sewer, roads phase 2; in Faro, Frances Avenue subdivision lift station; in Whitehorse, Haeckel Hill wind farm; in Haines Junction, infrastructure upgrades phase 3; in Haines Junction, a water well replacement; in Haines Junction, Kluane wind project; in Haines Junction, a water treatment plant upgrade; in Mayo, arena upgrades; in Mayo, water phase 3, area 3; in Mayo, water treatment plant geo-exchange system upgrades; in Mayo, water treatment plant well field expansion; in Whitehorse, a Mount Sima ski hill electrical and snowmaking upgrade; in Whitehorse, a Mountain View Golf Course upgrade; in Whitehorse, a water treatment plant controls upgrade phase 3B; a Pelly Crossing pool facility; in Pelly Crossing, a water distribution facility; Pelly Road upgrade in Whitehorse; Robert Service School modular classrooms expansion; in Whitehorse, a Selkirk Street storm water project; in Whitehorse, a shelled space development, secure medical unit; in Keno, Stewart-Keno transmission line rehabilitation; in Watson Lake, phase 1 water, sewer, and road upgrades; in Whitehorse, transit buses for 2022; in Teslin, TTC

community hub; in Old Crow, an elders complex; in Beaver Creek, a White River community centre potlatch house; in Whitehorse, a gymnastics and climbing facility; and in Whitehorse, a skate park upgrade.

This is a heck of a list. It is great stuff that is going on in the territory — across the territory — from Old Crow to Watson Lake and all points in between. The amount of infrastructure that is going out is just incredible.

We also have a southwest Whitehorse fire risk reduction project. In Whitehorse, we have a waste management facility upgrade and a transfer station. In Whitehorse, we have the grid-scale battery storage, so green energy projects as well. There is an awful lot of projects here that we have just discussed. Those are the ones that are captured by the \$47-million Investing in Canada infrastructure program and the roughly \$9-million small communities fund.

Ms. McLeod: I appreciate that information. It is certainly a list that we will come back and revisit. I am picking up a certain — I don't know — reluctance, maybe, to identify those projects and the money that is associated with it, because that is what a budget is. Whether it goes forward or not is another matter, but here we are, trying to discuss a budget — and a big one.

Now, if the minister wanted to, he could provide us with a list of these projects and the associated money ahead of debate. I have asked for that before; it has not happened. The minister is free to comment on that if he wishes, but I find this process to be anything but transparent.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I didn't detect a question there; I heard a comment. I guess that, on this, we disagree.

Ms. McLeod: I guess my question is: Why would the minister not provide us with this information ahead of the debate?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, my apologies — muscle memory. I have just had that request from the member opposite. I get it. The members opposite were granted a budget briefing, and it is my understanding, in talking to my deputy, that the opposition will often ask for this information during the budget briefing. They didn't get that request this year. I am not sure why that didn't happen.

Ms. McLeod: I didn't get it last year either when I asked for it, so I am seeing a trend here, but I am going to move on, because once I review the Blues on this, I will be revisiting every line item, so be warned.

I am going to move on to recycling. Last week, my colleague asked the minister about the possibility of developing a blue bin recycling collection program with the City of Whitehorse. Can the minister provide some clarity on where those discussions are at and what model of collection program they are considering?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I appreciate the question from member opposite. As I said in Question Period, we are currently in discussions with — we have heard from Raven Recycling just a week before this session began. I met with Raven Recycling twice. I have met with the City of Whitehorse and Raven once; one of those times was with the three parties. Our officials have been there. There is a working group that has

been established to explore this matter. I really do appreciate the opposition's interest in this matter. I am glad to see they have finally taken an interest in waste management and recycling, and I do appreciate that change in direction, but at this point, it's too soon. We are still exploring issues, and when I have something to report, I will certainly come back to the House and let the House know what we have discovered, but it's very early days.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister tell us how much the Yukon government pays in diversion credits, and will the government still provide those credits after Raven closes its doors to the public drop-off next year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will answer the concrete question: \$750,000 in diversion credits is what the Yukon government currently pays into that fund, and for the rest, we don't know — while Raven has said that they are going to close down, we don't know if that is actually going to happen on deadline, because if we have a concrete plan, I have heard from the Raven Recycling association that they may extend their deadline a little bit if we have a concrete plan in place. So, the rest of it is kind of speculative, and I won't speculate here on the floor of the Legislature, but we do pay about \$750,000 in diversion credits.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. I am going to move on now to pools. Now, I understand, from correspondence from the minister to the local MLA, that the pool in Ross River is now ready to open, pending the hiring and training of an operator and a lifeguard. So, can the minister confirm that this is the case? Because of course, last year, we were told that the pool was going to open, and it didn't — so, if the minister could confirm that it is ready to open and that this hiring and training will take place before the summer season.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can confirm that, yes, Madam Chair.

Ms. McLeod: Okay, I just have a question about the training, such as: Where does that training come from? Who provides it, and is lifeguard training offered to all communities with seasonal pools in advance of the aquatic season?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, we hire individuals who are lifeguards and train them on how to manage the pools. So, we need to find trained lifeguards — we don't train lifeguards in the run-up to the swimming season. We find lifeguards who are trained and train them in pool management and teach them how to use the facilities.

Ms. McLeod: I'm going to move on a little bit to everyone's favourite topic: dumps.

Where is the government at in terms of regional landfill agreements? Who does the government have agreements in place with now, and what are the dollar amounts of these agreements?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Our officials are working very well with the Association of Yukon Communities and municipalities across the territory on the next stage in the rural landfill regionalization plan, but we are still in negotiations. My understanding is that we are very close to an agreement, and I

really don't want to get into specifics until the agreements are actually signed.

Ms. McLeod: When does the minister believe that these negotiations will be completed and the agreements in place?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Very soon.

Ms. McLeod: That nails it down.

How much is in the budget for these agreements this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The current funding is \$618,000.

Ms. McLeod: Thank you very much for that.

We have been raising concerns since the government made the decision to shut down solid-waste sites in Keno, Johnsons Crossing, Silver City, and Braeburn. I believe that, through CASA, there was a commitment to revisit that decision, so what is the government doing in terms of consultations with these communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have agreed to revisit those communities and have conversations with them.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister provide us with a bit of a timeline on when we expect that to happen?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have instructed my department to explore this. We will have more to announce when we get those meetings set up with the communities in question.

Ms. McLeod: I am going to move along to fire and a question about fire trucks. So, are there fire trucks being replaced this year and in which communities?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Yukon Fire Marshal's Office has bought two fire trucks this year. One is going to the Hootalinqua volunteer fire hall this spring and is expected to be in service before July. The new truck will replace a 2004 fire pumper that requires some repairs. Once the repairs on that older fire pumper are done, that truck will be reassigned. The Fire Marshal's Office maintains a fleet of 31 — basically, fire-fighting equipment — trucks of various sizes and shapes. We generally budget to replace two a year.

Ms. McLeod: Now, I may have misunderstood the minister, but I thought he said that there were two trucks being replaced — one was going to Hootalinqua, and where would the other one be going?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: That was a question I had, as well, reading the information that had been prepared for me. We will get back to the member opposite.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister. I look forward to that update.

Staying on fire and fire halls, can the minister give us a breakdown by community on which fire halls are active? I understand it may be easier to give us a list of those that are inactive. For instance, I believe the fire hall at Upper Liard is inactive, but there may be others, if the minister could just tell us about that, along with the number of volunteers per hall that is active.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: First things first. The second fire truck is going to go where it is needed. We have not yet identified a community where it will be deployed, but we will talk to the communities. The oldest, the most in need of a replacement, will be replaced with the second truck.

As far as volunteer fire departments go, we have Beaver Creek. We have a volunteer in Beaver Creek. We have four in

Burwash. We have five in Carcross. We have 20 in Golden Horn. We have 19 in Hootalinqua. We have 15 in Ibx. We have 12 in the Klondike. We have seven identified now in Keno. We have 15 in Marsh Lake. We have 20 in Mount Lorne. We have eight in Ross River. We have seven in Tagish. For the Summit team, we have 31 volunteers. For SHOT Yukon, we have 22 in various fire departments. We have one identified in the Upper Liard region.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for those numbers. I did not hear Watson Lake in there, but I wasn't sure if maybe the minister was including that under the heading of "various fire halls". I am not sure, but I would appreciate a full list.

What is the amount that each fire hall receives in terms of funding? I understand that some of that funding was rolled directly into the CMG, but not every community has a CMG, so what would be the funding that's allocated for fire halls?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: So, first of all, Watson Lake. Watson Lake wasn't included, and neither were Dawson or Whitehorse. They are municipalities and run their fire departments themselves. They are a municipal responsibility. I don't have those numbers at hand. They are not volunteers. Those are municipal fire departments. So, that is the Watson Lake question.

As far as how much we spend on the volunteer fire departments across the territory, approximately \$1.1 million is budgeted for the Fire Marshal's Office this year. That includes the operation of the community fire halls' honoraria and travel for volunteers, as well as program administration costs. Again, that was \$1.1 million for that program for the volunteer fire halls across the territory through the Fire Marshal's Office.

We also have — I can say that the Fire Marshal's Office is the agency responsible for training two municipal fire service members and employees so that they can perform life-safety inspections and fire investigations. In municipalities where this training has not been taken, the Fire Marshal's Office will work with those municipalities to support providing these services, but again, those are municipal responsibilities. We'll support, but it does come under the municipality's bailiwick.

I will also say that there are some numbers that I just read out — for example, Keno now has seven active fire volunteers and Ross River has eight active fire volunteers. That is an increase from zero, and that is a really impressive increase through the work of the Fire Marshal's Office. We have developed and implemented a scene safety response unit program in Keno and Ross River, which has led to those increases in recruitments. They started training for this program also in Pelly Crossing. This innovative program provides an initial response to fire and life-safety incidents, with the goals of minimizing risks to the public, preventing the spread of fire to adjacent structures, and serving as a liaison to mutual aid partners directly from the scene.

So, that's really great work on the part of the Fire Marshal's Office, stemming from the rural fire services review that we did about 18 months ago now.

Ms. McLeod: I am going to leave that there. I would have some other questions, but I think my time might be running short here. So, I am going to move on a little bit to talk

about honoraria for those volunteers. What is the current rate and when was the last time that it was increased?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The budget currently has \$495,000 to provide honoraria and travel related to training and fitness testing for 198 community volunteers.

Ms. McLeod: When was the last time there was an increase to that honoraria?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: My officials are looking into that ancillary question.

Ms. McLeod: Okay, thank you, Madam Chair, and I look forward to that update. Do the volunteer firefighters get an honorarium while in training?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: There is an honorarium paid to firefighters who are training. That honorarium is \$22 an hour, for up to four hours of training.

Ms. McLeod: So, I am just kind of curious what the length of the average training is for a firefighter and whether or not that is four hours in total, or four hours a day, or four hours a year, because four hours doesn't sound like a lot of time, given the comments that I have heard from volunteer firefighters.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: It's \$22 an hour for a four-hour block. That's generally doled out per week. They may train two to four hours per week. There's no limit on the amount of training they can do in a year, but that's what they get paid as their training allowance.

The training differs per specialty that they are actually working on or the type of training they are getting. The length of time it takes to get the training differs, of course. Some will be more intense. We have the Ember Academy. Some training happens in the communities. We have a trailer that goes around and trains folks in their own community. Sometimes the training is held in Whitehorse, in which case the training will take place here.

As I said, the training is paid at \$22 an hour per four-hour block. There is no limit on how much training they will do in the course of a year.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that. We'll leave that.

We are going to move on now to EMS, one of my favourite topics. Can the minister give us a breakdown of the number of volunteers by community?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are looking for that information. I don't have it at my fingertips broken out like we had last year. We are looking into that. I will get the information for the member opposite in terms of what it is.

I will say, though, that the budget for volunteer firefighters actually increased from last year by \$150,000 from what it was. So, there has been an increase in support for volunteer firefighters year over year.

Ms. McLeod: I thank the minister for that update there.

Are there any plans to replace any ambulances in any of our communities this year?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The short answer is yes. There is an asset retirement planned for ambulances throughout the territory that we follow. The long answer is: EMS is no longer in Community Services; it has been transferred to Health and

Social Services and is now reflected in the Health and Social Services main estimates. We are actually going through that transition right now, so we are sort of betwixt and between, but EMS is now captured by Health and Social Services' budget, not ours.

Ms. McLeod: That is mighty tricky of you, to get out of debate on that. Okay, well, we will just go through EMS then and find out where we can go with these questions, because I am here with you today.

So, we have raised at times in the past the lack of coverage for periods of time in our communities, and of course, this is a matter of grave concern. Previously, we have been told that, in the absence of staff or volunteers, that coverage is carried out by volunteers flown to communities from Whitehorse.

So, can the minister tell us how many times that has happened?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Okay, let me attempt this. In communities like Watson Lake, Emergency Medical Services uses a combination of Government of Yukon paramedics and local community responders. There are sometimes situations when there is no local ambulance available. That is the reality of a system that relies on volunteers. There is always a contingency plan in place to ensure coverage. The 911 program ensures that there will always be someone from Emergency Medical Services who will work with the client, regardless of the local availability of the service. Emergency Medical Services maintains aggressive recruitment and new staff orientation programs and are always looking for volunteers and professionals.

In Watson Lake, we have four full-time primary care paramedics working seven days a week. That is during the day. We also have four auxiliary-on-call positions and six active community responders in Watson Lake. Watson Lake had 98-percent coverage in 2021 and 97-percent coverage in 2022. In the month of January 2023, we had 100-percent coverage. "Coverage" means a local ambulance is available at that time. Our goal is 100-percent coverage, and we are constantly working to meet that objective.

If there isn't an ambulance available or if incident volume exceeds available resources — that happens sometimes and is not unique to the Yukon; it can happen with all emergency services locally, nationally, and internationally — we have a variety of ways to manage these situations, reduce the impact on patients, and prioritize critical care. To ensure coverage, EMS may reposition people and ambulances, call the nearest units, use a medevac, or work with the client to figure out alternative transport. Our dispatchers are highly trained to triage calls and deliver medical instructions over the phone before the arrival of an ambulance. Their goal is getting the right resource to the right place at the right time.

Ms. McLeod: Now, of course, there are many problems associated with EMS and our community, and this is evidenced by the discussion that is going on in the public sphere these days. So, we don't have time today to get into that aspect of it, and just before we go to break and I turn it over to the Third Party, I have a question about whether or not our EMS

volunteers are paid for their training and if the same sort of training rules apply to them as for the firefighters.

With that question, I want to thank the officials for being here today, and I look forward to seeing you again.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: If I was having fun, I could go in all sorts of directions with this, but I won't have fun this afternoon; I will answer it straight. We do pay our paramedics for training, and of course, it is in transition, so I guess the fun I was going to have is that I don't know how my good colleague will treat the training or not. I certainly pay my volunteers. We will see what Health & Social Services does, but yes, we do pay our volunteers.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 51, Department of Community Services, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Ms. White: It is a pleasure to be here today with the officials as we discuss the mains for Community Services.

The first question I want to ask is actually building a bit on the questions from my colleague for Watson Lake. It is with regard to fire services in an unincorporated community — that being Old Crow, Vuntut Gwitchin. Government has a huge amount of investment going in right now — a well-deserved investment in that community — but the fire truck hasn't been operational there in over 20 years, so I wanted to know what the plan was from the Community Services perspective about fire and Old Crow.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: In Old Crow, we have no active volunteers for firefighters. The Fire Marshal's Office is having community meetings in communities that don't have any volunteers. We are trying to recruit, as we have done in Keno and in Ross River. So, we are hoping to start a volunteer fire department in Old Crow. I know that when we were up in Old Crow recently, we talked about this with members of the First Nation, but we currently don't have — I have just been told — scene safety response units — that is what we are trying to do. Now we have it in Ross River and Keno. We are starting to get one in Pelly, and apparently we have that same training happening — scheduled — for Old Crow in May. So, that is the first stage — if we can get some volunteers in Old Crow. Once we get those volunteers and a volunteer fire department started, if we can get some volunteers recruited, then we can start to equip it, but we can't put equipment into a community without the volunteers. This has always been the problem.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that response. I know that, at times, actively recruiting volunteers is challenging, but I do know that the communities do want to see the benefit of having that service available. I know that there was a

conversation, again, with my colleague — I was here and I was listening — but I do have a couple more questions about how things are rolling out in those unincorporated communities. I know that the minister listed off volunteers and the numbers in communities, but what I really want to know is, between Community Services and those communities — and we will start with Keno, for example.

Is Keno feeling the support? I think that we anticipate that we are hopeful that they would feel it, so can the minister speak a bit about the situation in Keno with the volunteer firefighters and what assets and what fire suppression tools they have access to?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The member opposite is absolutely correct. Recruiting and retaining volunteer firefighters is a challenge in the Yukon and really across Canada.

In the last year, the Fire Marshal's Office has done an incredible job reaching out to unincorporated communities across the territory to find a level of fire service that works with them. They are doing this in conjunction with the rural fire services review that we did. The Fire Marshal's Office is providing oversight training and is providing equipment for community fire departments, and this is only possible if we have volunteers in the community who give their time and effort to be trained and be available in the event of an emergency.

Currently, we have 120 fire and rescue volunteers active, meaning they meet all the individual occupational health and safety requirements they have to meet. The delivery of fire services in our unincorporated communities is a challenge, given our remote and small population base. I mean, we are talking about very, very small communities and asking people to come out, which is why I am elated, personally, that we have so many volunteers coming forward in Ross River and in Keno.

Pelly Crossing is coming online, and now we are offering the same training in Old Crow, which is just great. We are committed to working with these communities and getting — I'll call it a "pragmatic" level of service in these communities, because they are setting the tone. Their members have to come forward, and they will have to determine the training that they are willing to take on and the commitment they are willing to give. We are seeing it, as I said, in many of the communities that didn't have any volunteers prior to this.

Now, the member opposite asked me to make a value judgment about how Keno is feeling. I am not going to speak on behalf of the residents of Keno, but we do have volunteers there we didn't have before. The Fire Marshal's Office is working with them. They are going back up there again shortly to work with them. So, yes, they are going to be going up there shortly to work with Keno in April and May and other communities as well. So, the Fire Marshal's Office is scheduling visits to Keno, Burwash Landing, Beaver Creek, Ross River, Klondike Valley, Pelly Crossing, and Old Crow through April and May to discuss different levels of fire service that can be established. That is the starting point. In some cases, these communities have already started to advance, but that is the starting point if we are going to have fire services in these communities.

I have just been told that Keno is equipped with a wildland fire bush truck, which is on loan; a skid tank; and a fire marshal officer's truck is going to be dispatched in the spring. The focus is on scene safety response training, which is suitable to a small volunteer base — a very small volunteer base. I hope that answers your question.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. I had recently sent a notice — or, I guess, a letter — to the minister asking about whether or not the information at the residential tenancy office had been updated to reflect the most recent commitments from the Liberal government in the confidence and supply agreement. I am online right now, and in the letter, it said that a lot of the forms had been updated and that the ones that weren't updated had a clause that said that they hadn't been updated.

I am going to ask the minister if he can let me know when we can expect to have all of those documents updated online, including the handbook. Then, some of those documents, for example, are still online in their original form since 2019. So, I am just looking for information about when those could be expected to be updated.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We are working very, very hard to update those materials. I have just been told that the handbook is going up for redesign — it's in the process of being redesigned, but it hasn't been finished yet, so that work is in place, and the department is working as fast as it can. Of course, it wants to make sure that these materials are updated, but we are talking an awful lot of changes that have to be done, and I have every confidence in the department to get that work done as quickly as it can. So, we have asked; we have the letter that we received from the member opposite. We forwarded that through. They are working on these matters as we speak.

As I said, the redesign is out. I don't know when it will be finished, but it is process.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I do appreciate the amount of work that is done by that office, which actually brings me to my next point: I am sure, just like other members in this Assembly, you have had conversations with the landlord association, and they have concerns around what happens if a backlog of disputes develops in the residential tenancies office, and the question I have for the minister is: If that happens, will there be moves to upstaff that office?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: We have not seen any backlog in our processes to date. Since the changes have come into effect, we are keeping an eye on it. It's a hypothetical, I guess — if things happen, we will have to take a look at it. But to date, the staff are keeping up with requests. Once we have a problem, we will deal with the problem, but right now, we don't have a problem.

Ms. White: I appreciate that. I am sure that will appease some folks who are concerned about that in the future, and I do appreciate that. One of the commitments in the confidence and supply agreement that was signed in 2023 is also a commitment to take out the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* for review, and I wanted to know if the minister had any idea of when we can expect that to start.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The commitment we made was to start that process in June. I have been working with the department. They assure me that this is when they are going to do it, and that's when the whole review will kick off. That is the date we are working toward starting this whole process, but the department has been working on some portions of the act prior to this. So, some work has been done, but we are now recalibrating, seeing what has to be done and what has been done, and we are working to the June deadline that we were given, so that is what we're working toward.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister.

Knowing that there are different approaches that can happen when legislation is being created, does the minister have any opinions of his own as to whether or not the legislation that was drafted here in 2012 was with the idea that housing was a human right, or was it drafted more as housing as a business?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: When I came into this office in 2021, taking over from my good colleague, the Member for beautiful Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes, I actually looked into the act to see what was involved in the redrafting and what sort of act we had. I read the legislation. My opinion is that the legislation that was passed under a previous government was tilted more toward business and not housing as a human right. That assumption has also been related to me from housing groups in and around Whitehorse that I've spoken to. They think that the act is tilted in that direction.

So, I guess if you wanted an opinion from me, that would be my opinion, which is that the legislation we currently have does not contemplate housing as a human right.

Ms. White: I do appreciate the minister sharing that opinion with us.

Just to go back to the issue of community pools, I understand that, of course, there are pools that are owned by Yukon government and pools owned by municipalities, but, for example — well, actually, let's just start this way: Can the minister list which communities have pools that are owned by Yukon government and which were open last summer and which were not open last summer?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Okay, so Community Services owns four pools in the Yukon: Beaver Creek, Carcross, Pelly Crossing, and Ross River. Municipal governments own and operate pools in incorporated communities. So, those are the ones we own: Beaver Creek, Carcross, Pelly Crossing, and Ross River. A number of pools were built in the 1980s by, at the time, Minister Piers McDonald and then Premier Piers McDonald later. He built a lot of recreational facilities back in the 1980s and they continue. I have been talking to municipalities — in my conversations, pools are popular, but pools in 2023 are different from pools in 1980. The health and safety standards around pools have changed. The requirements for oversight, the training, the sophistication, and the equipment — all of those things are degrees more difficult, more expensive, more complicated than they were back in the 1980s.

We built a pool in Pelly Crossing — and we are getting the number now, how much it cost. It is expensive — these are

expensive pieces of infrastructure. They are usually open half a year; they are difficult to operate; they are difficult to manage; they are difficult to recruit people for across the territory.

For the amount of money we are spending on these facilities, you can buy an awful lot of recreation infrastructure that could be used year-round, as opposed to a few months a year.

I have been talking to municipalities and flagging this with them. When I talk to them — because there are a lot of municipalities that want new pools or want to build pools, and I am just reminding them that they are very expensive to own and operate. They are expensive and difficult to run, difficult to staff, and certainly, in some of the unincorporated communities, it is very difficult to get staff, to have them run, and to recruit people to serve as lifeguards and pool operators. Again, this equipment is sophisticated.

I think, going forward, we really have to look to see and consider what is the best bang for our buck in the recreation field — whether it's a pool that's expensive to operate, expensive to run for a few months a year, or whether we should sink those tens of millions of dollars into less sophisticated infrastructure that could be used by more people for a longer period of time.

The Pelly pool has been built. Carcross was open last year. The rest required upgrades and major repairs, so they weren't open. Those are the four that we own.

Ms. White: I am going to take a different stance than the minister just did when he talked about the cost of community pools. My question to him is: Do we think having people learn how to swim in a safe, controlled environment is important? If we look at Pelly Crossing, for example, the kids in Pelly grew up next to a very large river. In Carmacks — the Little Salmon Carmacks are big river people. We can look at Carcross: There are huge lakes. It's just a question for the minister as we continue on the conversation about community pools. Does he think that swimming lessons available to community residents are a valuable investment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Of course. Absolutely. I think swimming lessons are valuable. Is it swimming lessons at any cost? I guess that is the question, and we have to do that, and we have to see if we actually have the volunteer base and the population base to sustain these far more complicated, far more onerous facilities than they were in the 1980s.

Things have changed in the world. I totally understand where the member opposite is coming from. I have had these conversations with people in the community. I totally do support swimming lessons, but do we have to build incredibly expensive, difficult to staff and maintain edifices to facilitate swimming in small communities? I don't know if that is the answer.

Ms. White: We often hear how often the minister travels around and how hard he works — you know, getting out to every community. Has the minister had a chance to visit community swimming pools when they are operating — for example, Faro — in the summertime? Its pool is probably the most exciting place to be in that community. I know that Watson Lake was saddened that their pool wasn't open last

year. But in his tours, does the minister get an opportunity to visit those community pools?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have heard first-hand from community residents about how important — how beloved the pools are. I have heard that from MLAs in rural ridings as well — about how important these — I have had the conversation with rural MLAs as well. I have actually not had the opportunity to visit an operating pool. Pools generally operate from mid-May to August — so, for three months a year. When I do my community tours, they often haven't been working. Many of the pools have been requiring those major upgrades we have had. We have been working through that. So, no, I haven't had the opportunity, except in Mayo. I did see the pool in Mayo and how popular it was when I was up there, but that was a very different kind of pool from the ones that — certainly a lot less sophisticated, in some ways — an open-air pool that the community built itself.

Anyway, I know how popular these pools are — I know that — but I also know how expensive they are; I know how difficult they are to staff; I know how many upgrades they need; I know how difficult it is to get technicians down to fix the equipment when it breaks. I know how difficult it is to train and recruit staff to small communities to run these facilities when they are open and running.

The Pelly pool, for example, cost \$9 million to build, and it will be a very great piece of infrastructure for the community when it opens for three months a year. I think that we have to take a look at these things, going forward.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that answer. From my perspective, it is \$9 million well-invested in the community, and it would be fantastic if it opened this summer. It says, in the minister's briefing notes from last fall, that there were ongoing — it said that Johnston Builders was awarded the contract in June 2021, and the project was completed in September 2022, so I hope that they open. In the same briefing notes, it talks about the pools that require repairs. Again, I am going to put in a pitch that we have lots of water in the territory, and it sure is great if kids know how to swim. Every time a child drowns, that is a terrible thing and something that we could prevent with swimming lessons, which is why swimming lessons are packed so much in Whitehorse at the Canada Games Centre.

I will just put in a pitch that, in conversations with Carmacks, both with the Village of Carmacks and the Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation, they have indicated that their next priority is a pool. I appreciate that we were just there for the rink opening, and again, I think that recreation investment is really important. I appreciate that the minister highlighted that a lot of this recreation was built by the NDP, even if it was back in the 1980s.

I am going to move on to a different topic. When my colleague from Watson Lake was asking the minister questions about recycling and diversion, I just wanted to dive into that right now. So, the minister — I think that he said that, currently, diversion credits are in the amount of \$750,000 — and if he could let me know what organizations that funding goes to and what they are.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I was waiting because we were going to look up some more information, but while that is in process, diversion credits are per tonne rates paid to Raven Recycling and P&M Recycling to divert non-refundable recycling such as cardboard, paper, plastic, and tin from municipal landfills. In 2021, we provided nearly \$1 million in diversion credits in total.

They are a temporary measure until we achieve a more permanent system to incentivize producers to make products less harmful to the environment. Extended producer responsibility is the preferred system being implemented across Canada, where producers and large retailers bear the cost of recycling non-refundables, like cardboard and plastics. Over the next few years, guided by the path set out in *Our Clean Future*, we will be implementing extended producer responsibility so that producers are responsible for the full life cycle of the products they sell.

Recycling is often seen as the best option to protect our environment; however, we encourage Yukoners to consider reducing, reusing, and rethinking wherever possible. I have talked about this in the House before. We are producing an awful lot of garbage, and we really have to think about how we consume, because that is really the essence of this problem. We are buying too much stuff, and we have to start to find ways to do it in a much more responsible manner.

The City of Whitehorse provides \$150,000 in diversion credits to Raven Recycling and P&M Recycling each year.

Last year, the Yukon government gave about \$900,000 in total to the two processors to divert non-refundable, recyclable materials from the landfill. Dawson City and Watson Lake contribute about \$200,000 and \$180,000 respectively each year. Most municipalities contribute to local recycling through staff time or direct contributions or both. Those would be municipalities other than Dawson City and Watson Lake.

So, our system here in the territory is very, very different from in other jurisdictions. We have Raven Recycling as a volunteer recycling not-for-profit that is handling most of the stuff — as I said in the House earlier today and at other times. Raven Recycling is hitting max capacity. They don't think they can handle — they can't take it where it needs to go. They want a full-circle recycling system, with the curbside recycling — well, the drop-off is not reaching everybody who needs to be reached. We are getting about 40 percent — I think they said 40 percent to 50 percent. The task force, the group that we have struck, is looking at this and how it operates and how we can capture more people. That may be a curbside system; I think that is the system that Raven Recycling is championing. We are looking at that, what the cost will be.

The goal will be to capture more people, get more stuff out of our landfill, recycle more. The cost to recycle non-refundables has increased significantly in recent years due to increased labour and trucking costs and lower prices for recycled commodities. Some prices have become negative, requiring processors to pay \$125 per tonne, or more, to ship materials out of the territory for recycling. That is one of the problems that we are facing, one of the problems our recyclers

are facing, and so, that is what we are looking at now to try to fix.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When we have talked about diversion and we have talked about recycling, the minister has held up Dawson City as the first municipality that has taken over recycling, and he has also just talked about extended producer responsibility. Am I correct in thinking that the EPR system will be rolled out under the Department of Environment?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Yes, that is indeed the case. They are the lead on that project.

Ms. White: I do thank the minister for that response, and I am sure that there will be excellent questions about the EPR system.

So, when we talk about diversion credits, the diversion credits are — and this has been a topic in this Assembly before now and will be until there is a time when we don't need to try to assist the processors from diverting recyclables from the landfill. Can the minister walk us through what that process looks like? I think it is a per tonnage — I think that is how it works — and is applied for by the organizations. Can the minister indicate either if he knows what the funding is used for by both P&M Recycling and Raven Recycling and what amount of recycling has been diverted from the landfill, let's say, last year because of those diversion credits?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I have said, the Yukon government provides a lot of money to Raven Recycling and other recycling processors for their non-refundable recycling services. The diversion credits we have been talking about increased approximately \$350 per tonne to \$500 — almost \$600 — per tonne in the last year due to commodity prices falling.

As I have said, Community Services is forming a working group with the City of Whitehorse and processors to come up with recommendations on collection services within the City of Whitehorse. That offer was made in February. The first meeting is planned for this month, so we are working on that.

One of the problems we have with the system is that Raven Recycling, as a not-for-profit, has been doing a lot of this work. They handle it in-house. Government does not have first-hand knowledge about how it operates. Raven Recycling reports back to us anecdotally. We don't have anybody who sits on the board of Raven Recycling. The structure is such that the government pays it, but we don't see how it works. That is what the working group is going to do. When I spoke to Raven Recycling in February, I outlined this to them. They said, "We're really glad. We'll give you all the information you need. We will work with you." The working group has been set up. That's what we are going to do — dive into exactly what's involved in recycling in the territory, because, frankly, while we have been paying the bills, we don't have a very good understanding about what is involved with the whole not-for-profit business of recycling in the territory.

Diversion credits are used to bale and truck south the non-refundables, and last year we diverted 4,000 tonnes of material out of the landfills.

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

Understanding that Raven has made the statement that they will be closing their public drop-off at the end of this calendar year, and based on the numbers of what the minister has just indicated, is he concerned at all that a solution can't be found with the City of Whitehorse to work on a curbside collection program?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Just for clarification, did the member ask if I was concerned that a deal could not be made with the City of Whitehorse?

Ms. White: Correct.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Thank you for the clarification. I will say that we are working with the City of Whitehorse. We are working with Raven Recycling. We have a group set up that has not existed before. Diverting, landfills, and garbage collection and disposal is a municipal responsibility.

We are funding a large part of that because we are funding a not-for-profit as the Yukon government, but the City of Whitehorse is really responsible for municipal waste, so we held a meeting with Raven Recycling and the City of Whitehorse in February. We struck a working group and we are working that through. Can a deal be made? I certainly hope so. When we spoke to them, Raven Recycling told us that if we were making significant progress on some sort of successor to the drop-off, they might be willing to continue the service until the replacement service was in effect.

We are working diligently with our partners — the City of Whitehorse, Raven Recycling, and other recyclers — to try to bring about a successor to the public drop-off that Raven Recycling has maintained for more than three decades now.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer from the minister. It is interesting that, in my time over here, previous governments had waste-reduction targets that they set. Mind you, they didn't meet them, but they did set targets, understanding that everything that is transferred from outside of Whitehorse from the transfer stations comes to the city landfill.

Interestingly enough, the only government to hit their targets for waste reduction was actually the City of Whitehorse. It wasn't the Yukon government at the time. Garbage is big deal and recycling is a big deal, especially when we have a government that is committed to climate change, as we are told they are. I think it should be a concern for all of us that a solution is found, so I will put in a pitch that levels of government work together.

I am going to move on next to the importance of licensing and registering psychologists in the Yukon. I want to know from the minister where we are at in that process.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: One of the very first groups I met with when I came to this post in 2021 was with psychologists. At the time, they made a very compelling case about the need to regulate this industry, which currently isn't regulated at all in the territory — in the Yukon. We are probably the last jurisdiction in the country that doesn't do so. So, you have people here who could call themselves psychologists without any training at all, and that poses a risk to our citizens, and it also poses a risk to psychologists and their reputation, and I understand that. So, we started immediately working on this and exploring ways to get this done. Could we follow the

Northwest Territories' model and try to outsource it to another jurisdiction? That is what was proposed to me; I was excited by that. We looked into it, and legally we could not do that because we don't have any regulations at all, unlike other jurisdictions. So, there is no way to farm it out to a third party.

So, we are working very, very hard, and we are working very closely with the psychologists association on this issue. We are committed to developing regulations for psychologists. The department has rolled out a public awareness webpage on how to select a psychologist. We have talked about this with the psychologists late last year. I believe that it was in November or December when I met with the association and pitched a public awareness campaign. They were excited by that and we have done that. We also have a website that includes a voluntary list of psychologists practising in the Yukon, indicating either who holds a valid licence in another Canadian jurisdiction or is eligible to do so. This is a voluntary page. We are working with the association to get people to sign on to that so that people in the territory know who holds a valid licence in another Canadian jurisdiction. But it is voluntary. We can't compel anybody because we have no regulations in place to compel anybody to do something — it is a vacuum.

Officials are going to continue to work on this with the profession in the Yukon over the coming months. We are having regular meetings. Long term, the department is leading a comprehensive review of the *Health Professions Act* to support enhanced standards and safety of health care for Yukoners, with an aim to improve the overall efficiencies for the regulatory system. It is really a two-track process. We are doing the larger *Health Professions Act* retooling, and we are also working very closely with psychologists to get a regulation in place before that happens so that they actually have the protections and the citizens of the territory are protected, as is the profession. That is really what we are trying to do. I understand the importance of this matter, and the department is working very closely with the association to make that happen.

Ms. White: I am just asking for a point of clarification. Was it the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* that the minister highlighted as being problematic in getting psychologists registered in the territory? I know that it was a trade agreement, but if he could remind me which one it was that he said the problem was with — and if he could expand on what the problem was with the trade agreement and psychologist registration and licensing in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The short answer is yes. We have a legal opinion that says that the *Canadian Free Trade Agreement* prevents us from specifying that you have to be regulated in another jurisdiction, and part of the complicating factor about that is the fact that they have no regulations at all. So, it's very difficult for us to — we can't compel anybody because we don't have any control over them. We have to get that regulation in place. The NWT has a regulation in place governing this that changes the whole — we don't. So, we have to get that regulation in place and then we can.

We have to have some sort of regulatory framework and then we can use a model — another jurisdiction's standards — but until we have the regulation, we can't go to another

jurisdiction. It has to do with the free flow of mobility throughout the country. It is complicated, but we have looked at this; we have had legal opinions, both internally and from other jurisdictions, supporting this position. It is complicated. We are working it through. Believe me, if I could snap my fingers and make this happen, I would. I would have done it 18 months or two years ago.

I understand the issue. There is nobody in this Chamber who wants this more than I do. I really do want to bring this to bear. It is tricky and complicated, and we are working it through.

Ms. White: I would hazard a guess that there are quite a few people in this Chamber who would really like to see psychologists both registered and regulated here in the territory.

That actually is going to bring me to this: There has been quite a number of pieces of correspondence between the Psychological Society of the Yukon and the minister. I am going to read from an e-mail that they sent the minister on Thursday, February 2, because I think that it is important.

It goes on to say — and I quote: “We noticed that the Voluntary Psychology website is live ... and notice at the bottom of the page it clearly states: ‘This is a voluntary list of psychologists currently working in the Yukon.’”

“We have heard from some our members who work within Yukon Government that the voluntary registry form has been circulated and continues to include ‘*eligibility for registration*’. As mentioned in our previous correspondence, we have significant concerns with this term. We would like to re-emphasize that being eligible to be register[ed] as a psychologist, is not the same ... as being a registered psychologist. If you were looking for medical services, would you accept services from someone who was eligible to be a doctor? Or would you want to see an actual doctor whose training and experience had been evaluated and who was required to follow a code of conduct?”

The reason why I am reading from that part right now is that on the government’s website, where it says, “Who’s the right psychologist for you?”, it says under the heading “Finding a therapist”, under “List of psychologists”, it says, “There is no official list of psychologists in the Yukon. On this page, you’ll find a voluntary list of psychological practitioners. They identify themselves as licensed or eligible for a licence in another Canadian province or territory.”

On February 2, this was highlighted by the body of psychologists in the territory as being of concern, and I wanted to know why it hadn’t been addressed on the government website. Was a decision made to ignore that advice or disregard that advice, or does the minister have — what is the minister’s reasoning for allowing the term “or eligible for a licence in another Canadian province or territory” on the government’s website?

Deputy Chair, look forward to this conversation the next time. Seeing the time, I move that you report progress.

Deputy Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Takhini-Kopper King that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair’s report

Ms. Tredger: Mr. Speaker, Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*, and directed me to report progress.

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

The following written question was tabled March 22, 2023:

Written Question No. 36

Re commitment to develop lots (Clarke, Y.)