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Thursday, March 23, 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

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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
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Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
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Speaker: I will now call the House to order.
 We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of a change made to the Order Paper. The following motion was removed from the Order Paper at the request of the member: Motion No. 622, standing in the name of the Leader of the Third Party.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to ask my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly to welcome some guests that we have. We are very honoured today to have with us the High Commissioner of India to Canada, his Excellency Sanjay Kumar Verma, and his wife is accompanying him as well, Gunjan Verma. Thank you both for coming.

As well, the Consul General of India to Vancouver, Manish, is with us — welcome today. Thank you to Andrew Smith, who is here as an advisor from the Executive Council Office, for accompanying them today to the Legislative Assembly.

Welcome.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We are doing a tribute today for the Whitehorse Community Choir's 30th anniversary, and we have several guests.

Please welcome the current conductor, C.D. Saint. The other co-conductor today is actually at her citizenship swearing-in ceremony, Lorène Charmetant. We also have Stella Martin, who I had the pleasure of singing alongside this past summer, and we have Patrick Bradley from the choir and Bonnie Duffee from the choir, and we have Pavlina Sudrich, who is a big fan of the choir — if we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I would just like to add one more guest for the Whitehorse Community Choir tribute. We have Jan Stick, a former choir member and librarian and stage manager.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I will stand this afternoon as well, as the Minister of Justice, and welcome two members of M Division of the RCMP here in our gallery. Welcome to them;

thank you for being here today. We are always honoured when they can come.

Applause

Hon. Mr. Silver: In the gallery today, based on his LEGO building skills, I assume this young gentleman will soon grow up to be an engineer. Please help me in welcoming Leo Thomson-Elias.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the Whitehorse Community Choir

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The Whitehorse Community Choir is celebrating 30 years. Thanks to conductors Barb Chamberlin — currently on sabbatical — C.D. Saint, Lorène Charmetant, as well as accompanists Barry Kitchen and Cheryl Wishart. You can catch the Chamber Choir, Neptunes, Persephones, and Big Choir at their Yukon Arts Centre concert on April 28 and 29. This choir brings so much joy and, well, music into our lives that I have decided to try to write a tribute by borrowing lyrics from Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Taylor Swift, The Carpenters, and many others.

Here goes my medley of praise, with much gratitude, to the Whitehorse Community Choir:

“Sing,
 Sing a song,
 Make it simple,
 To last your whole life long”

“What would you think if I sang out of tune,
 Would you stand up and walk out on me?
 Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song
 And I'll try not to sing out of key”

“I'd like to teach the world to sing
 In perfect harmony
 I'd like to hold it in my arms
 And keep it company
 I'd like to see the world for once
 All standing hand in hand
 And hear them echo through the hills
 For peace throughout the land”

“Whoa, oh listen to the music”

Well “I love rock 'n' roll,
 So put another dime in the juke box baby”

“I've got the music in me,
 I've got the music in me,
 I've got the...”

“Music is a world within itself
 With a language we all understand
 With an equal opportunity

For all to sing and dance and clap their hands”

“A singer in a smoky room,
A smell of wine and cheap perfume
For a smile they can share the night,
It goes on and on and on and on”

“Cause baby, you’re a firework
Come on, let your colors burst
Make ‘em go, ‘ah, ah, ah”

“You better lose yourself in the music, the moment
You own it, you better never let it go
You only get one shot, do not miss your chance to blow,
This opportunity comes once in a lifetime”

“But I keep cruisin’
Can’t stop, won’t stop movin’
It’s like I got this music in my mind
Sayin’ it’s gonna be alright”

“Yeah they were dancin’ and singin’
And movin’ to the groovin’
And just when it hit me
Somebody turned around and shouted”

It was thirty years ago this spring
Wilhelm-Boyles got the choir to sing

“And if you listen very hard
The tune will come to you at last
When all are one and one is all,
To be a rock and not to roll”

“And you can tell everybody this is your song
It may be quite simple but now that it’s done
I hope you don’t mind, I hope you don’t mind,
That I put down in words
How wonderful life is while you’re in the world”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, to the amazing and delightful Whitehorse Community Choir, who are all beautiful dreamers. Congrats on 30 years of music.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to the 30th anniversary of the Whitehorse Community Choir. When we use the word “choir”, what comes to mind is different for everyone, but most common is a large, organized singing group of people — simple as that? No. There is a wonderful system that allows singers to blend voices, usually with a conductor or instructor who will ensure that the presentation is harmonious and has a collective sound. To join a choir, many think you have to have a certain type of voice; however, once blended with a multitude of voices, magic happens and a choir is formed.

It also gives one an opportunity to sing a variety of styles, cultures, develop voice techniques, and hone performance skills. Also, friends are made who have a common interest: music.

The Big Choir, the Chamber Choir, the Persephone Choir, the Neptunes — the Whitehorse Community Choir has been entertaining us for those 30 years, and it’s always a delight. The community at large usually hears the Big Choir at events such as the Remembrance Day service and the smaller choir at many other functions.

We appreciate all their dedication, work, and hours put into making their performances entertaining and beautiful. The next performance will be the spring concert, “Stay with Me”, to be held at the Yukon Arts Centre on April 28 and 29.

Congratulations on this milestone, and we wish you many more anniversaries as you share your gifts with us.

Applause

Ms. Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to the Whitehorse Community Choir on their 30th anniversary.

With a bit of digging, I found out that this choir actually held their first spring concert in 1990, but it wasn’t until 1993 that the choir became a registered society. That first choir had 35 singers in it, and conductor Wilhelm-Boyles was at their head. Since that time, the choir has swelled at times to over 100 choristers — the largest community choir north of 60. Not only has the choir grown in numbers, but it now includes the Persephones, the Neptunes, and a chamber choir.

There have been many incredible conductors over the years, including Henry Klassen, Beryl Peters, Maurice Wearmouth, Rachel Grantham, Barbara Chamberlin, and, of course, the current conductors, Lorène Charmetant and C.D. Saint.

As with any choir, they would be lost without their accompanists, so I want to list a few of them, including Loverna Armstrong, Bonnie Bullen, Brenda Gregersen, Joyce Klassen, Aleta Melashenko, Beryl Peters, Carol Diamond, Carrie Wilhelm, and, of course, their current accompanists, Cheryl Wishart and Barry Kitchen.

This choir has performed across the Yukon. They have even travelled to Ottawa to join a 2,000-voice choir for Canada Day. Even through COVID, the choir sang on, rehearsing online and performing in an online concert.

Their impact stretches beyond the people who sing in it. They have supported local composers by commissioning original pieces for the choir. They have collaborated with orchestras and soloists and once even brought in an electric guitar player to play along with *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

While I have never personally sung in the choir, I grew up in and around the choir, and I have had the pleasure of playing with them on a number of occasions.

I would like to share my favourite memory of the choir, and that is the year that they performed their Voices of the Klondike Gold Rush Concert and Tour. I was still a pretty little kid and my mother was in the choir, so the kids of the other singers and I got to hang out at all the rehearsals. We tagged

along on the trip to Dawson and would sit in the back, quietly humming along to the music during the shows. I remember one evening, my friends and I took out our parents' music folders and we dressed up from our toy box and put on our own little choir show, singing back the music that we had learned from hearing it so many times.

So, congratulations to all the members, past and present — keep on singing.

Applause

In recognition of National Impaired Driving Prevention Week

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of our Yukon Liberal government and the Third Party to pay tribute to National Impaired Driving Prevention Week, which is recognized the third week of March each year to remind and educate all Canadians about the consequences of impaired driving. The Yukon has the second highest rate of impaired driving violations across Canada, making it a serious public safety concern.

Since January 1 of this year, the Yukon RCMP have engaged in 108 criminal impaired driving investigations. Alcohol- and drug-impaired driving in the Yukon are public health and safety issues that we must address by working together. When we think of impaired driving, we think first and foremost of alcohol and drug impairment. Distracted driving and fatigue are also kinds of impairment.

Yukon RCMP, in partnership with the Government of Yukon's integrated restorative justice unit, have developed and launched a Yukon driver diversion pilot program. This is a voluntary program that allows a restorative justice framework and approach to educate drivers. Instead of facing the traditional consequences such as fines or demerits, program participants must take accountability, engage in meaningful conversations around the dangers of irresponsible driving and harm to the communities, and learn about the consequences of unsafe behaviours.

To date, over 80 percent of Yukon drivers given distracted driving tickets for cellphone use have opted in and completed this program. The pilot program is designed to create attentive, safe road users.

Yukon must also be reminded that driving under the influence of medications and drugs is also very dangerous. Many medications can impact a driver's ability to drive safely. The risk increases dramatically if the medication is mixed with any amount of alcohol or cannabis. As legalized and medically prescribed cannabis use becomes more prevalent in Canada, it is more important than ever to ensure that drivers are aware of the possible impairing effects.

We also have strong leadership in the Yukon to bring attention and work to end impaired driving. Organizations such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the annual Project Red Ribbon campaign have been raising awareness about the harm of impaired driving, as well as educating new and experienced drivers.

This month, the Department of Highways and Public Works is running a media awareness campaign about the

impairing effects of medications. I encourage all Yukoners to take action and to commit to safe and sober driving in their daily lives. Be a designated driver, arrange a safe ride home, and call 911 to report impaired driving.

National Impaired Driving Prevention Week serves as a reminder to all that keeping our roads safe from these 100-percent preventable tragedies is all of our responsibility.

Applause

Mr. Hassard: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize National Impaired Driving Prevention Week, which takes place from March 19 to 25. Drivers can become impaired due to many factors. Alcohol, drugs, fatigue, or distraction can affect the reaction time, judgment, and coordination on our shared roads, increasing the likelihood of accidents. In fact, impaired driving continues to kill or injure more Canadians than any other crime and remains the single most important factor contributing to serious road crashes.

According to MADD Canada statistics, 10 people on average in Canada are charged with impaired driving every hour. In 2022 alone, an estimated 1,500 people were killed by impaired drivers. I would like to give a special thanks to the Yukon RCMP and to the Yukon chapter of MADD Canada for the work that they do to eliminate impaired driving.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Kent: I have for tabling a publication from McMillan LLP, posted to the web on February 13, 2023, entitled *Clear as Mud: The Legal Implications of Land Use Planning in Yukon*.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have for tabling a legislative return in response to questions from the Member for Porter Creek North during Committee of the Whole on Tourism and Culture.

Ms. White: Today I have for tabling four news articles: One is entitled "Yukon's medical travel subsidy falls short of hotel costs"; "Yukon's medical travel subsidy still nowhere near enough, critics say"; "Association of Yukon Communities urges better aftercare for patients who travel for medical care"; and, finally, an article entitled "Yukon gov't denies travel subsidy for Dawson City child with cancer."

Speaker: Are there any reports of committees?

Are there any petitions to be presented?

Are there any bills to be introduced?

Are there any notices of motions?

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

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

THAT this House supports the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call to action 88 that reads: "We call upon all levels of government to take action to ensure long-term Aboriginal athlete development and growth, and continued support for the North American Indigenous Games, including funding to host the games and for provincial and territorial team preparation and travel."

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Mayo substance use emergency

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise to acknowledge the Community of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun during this difficult time. The community is facing very challenging times, and they are coming together to address them. My heart goes out to the people of Mayo as they deal with the aftermath of recent violence and impacts from the ongoing substance use emergency.

I commend the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for taking decisive action to protect and support their community and citizens by issuing an emergency declaration. This emergency declaration is an effective and immediate way to ask for support and collaboration between various levels of government and agencies. I hold my hands up to them and commend them for their strength and resiliency, as well as their approach, which is focused on problem solving.

The Yukon government is committed to working in coordination and collaboration with the First Nation, the Village of Mayo, and other organizations to find community-based solutions and supports to help nurture a healthy and thriving community. We will work with the community to chart a path forward that meaningfully addresses the substance use emergency and associated harms in Mayo on a short-, medium-, and long-term basis.

For example, our government is offering to help strengthen policing priorities, host staff workshops for the First Nation in relation to housing procedures, facilitate restorative justice processes, and continue discussions on how we can support the First Nation's vision of an integrated community support team in Mayo.

Our Emergency Measures Organization is available to help write a plan specific to the situations that may require lockdown procedures within the community. This could serve as an extension of all hazard emergency planning already in process between the Emergency Measures Organization, the Village of Mayo, and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. These examples represent only a handful of the proposed short-, medium-, and long-term actions that our government has made in letters to Mayor Trevor Ellis and Chief Simon Mervyn. These proposed actions are intended to start a conversation about charting a path forward and working together in a meaningful way to address the substance use emergency in Mayo.

Complex problems, like substance use and violence, require both collaborative and community-based solutions. I thank the Village of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun for taking the first steps toward finding these solutions together. Your commitment to community safety and community wellness is admirable and we are committed to working together more closely to address these issues in the weeks and months to come.

Ms. Van Bibber: We, the Yukon Party Official Opposition, support the efforts made by the Village of Mayo citizens who recently gathered to speak to the opioid crisis in their community. When a small community can bring out 60 people to a town hall meeting, we know that it is top of mind for everyone. The citizens who spoke were respectful and asking questions that were trying to be part of a solution and not pointing fingers at any one entity. There were hard questions on how to stop people without invading privacy, how the police are limited in their access to property, how to provide healthy alternatives for families, and many told their personal stories.

The Health minister declared a substance use health emergency over a year ago in response to the opioid crisis. Immediately after the violence in Mayo, the NND chief and council declared their own emergency and set out a template on managing their village. Our other communities have done so as well. However, words on paper are one thing; action is another.

Just over two years ago, the former Liberal MLA representing Mayo-Tatchun resigned from the government caucus in protest over the Liberals' neglect of this crisis, and the community has continued calling for help since then.

I would also like to note that the community has been clear that they would like to see an increased police presence to assist on the ground. Today, the Premier outlined the approach that the Liberal government is taking. We hope that this means the community of Mayo will finally start getting the assistance they need and deserve.

We know Yukoners and community members will be watching to see if the government backs up their words with action. Our hearts, again, go out to the community of Mayo at this difficult time, and we hope the First Nation, the greater community, and governments come together with other partners on request to help give Mayo the resources and action it needs to combat this devastating crisis.

Ms. White: Our hearts have been heavy for a long time now. The drug poisoning crisis, alcohol addiction, paired with the root causes like intergenerational trauma, poverty, lack of opportunities, social isolation, and so much more have harmed communities and destroyed far too many families. There isn't a single community, or even a single person, in the Yukon who is unaffected by loss due to substance use in recent years. It hurts.

Yesterday, events were held in Whitehorse and Dawson to bring awareness to the opioid crisis and remember those we lost to overdose. People gathered to offer each other support and

remember loved ones. These gatherings came in the wake of the recent deaths in Mayo.

We know that the heart of the Yukon has been broken, not just with the most recent events, but in losses over the years. Mayo has been feeling and living with hurt and fear for a while now, but the people of Mayo and the people of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun care deeply about each other. We know that this close-knit village is full of good people who will work together to mend Mayo's broken heart.

So, today and every day, we stand with Mayo and all of those affected by loss.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would like to again state that, first and foremost, my heart goes out to the community of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun. As soon as I became aware of what happened in Mayo, I reached out to Mayor Trevor Ellis, as well as Chief Simon Mervyn, to express my condolences and reaffirm our government's commitment to working together to address and overcome the substance use emergency and impacts.

Since then, I and my colleague, the Minister of Justice and of Health and Social Services, have worked closely with the mayor, chief, RCMP, and government officials to determine how we can best support the community. As I briefly touched on, I sent letters to both the mayor and chief proposing short-, medium-, and long-term actions that support our path forward to address the substance use emergency in Mayo. The proposed actions are intended to start a conversation that will help us get there together.

In the short term, the government is offering to discuss a First Nation community safety planning project specific to Mayo. This project can identify community strengths, safety and wellness goals, and any initiatives geared toward safe and healthy communities. Additionally, if and when requested by the First Nation or the community, we are proposing more counsellors who can be made available. This has, again, always been an option. We have offered to work with all partners to determine suitable and safe housing as well as eviction criteria and procedures.

In the medium term, we will continue to collaborate with the First Nation, the Village of Mayo, the RCMP, and government officials to develop a community wellness plan to outline prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and community safety initiatives that could reasonably be implemented. Again, building on this, we will support the Village of Mayo and the First Nation in drafting a plan and procedures specific to potential lockdown scenarios in the community. We will also work toward developing, supporting, and strengthening community policing priorities. Together, we will develop a plan with the safer communities and neighbourhoods unit that could provide support by investigating complaints related to illegal activities. We will also continue discussions with the village and the First Nation on a proposed integrated community support team.

For the long term, our government is proposing to implement and sustain the prevention, treatment, harm-reduction and community safety actions identified in the

community wellness plan, and if new programs and resources are required for actions, we are committed, again, to working together to identify how these can be advanced. We will also evaluate program effectiveness from time to time to adapt the plan as required. Another proposed long-term action item is centred on collaborating with the RCMP and Public Safety Canada to explore options under the community tripartite agreement to enhance community policing initiatives.

We are also proposing to continue to explore aftercare programs to support residents, including restorative justice processes where the victims and community are empowered to voice their concerns and participate in the outcome of how repatriations are made. These proposals demonstrate, again, our government's commitment to the Village of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun in a meaningful and respectful way to address the substance use health emergency in Mayo. Again, I recognize that this will be an ongoing discussion and one that all communities will be watching closely.

On a final note, I would like to stress the importance of community during these challenging times. Again, community means everything here in the Yukon. Together, we must be willing to get involved and take action. Community members need to know that they are not dealing with their problems on their own. People-to-people connections are crucial to disrupting the substance use emergency. As a government, we remain committed to supporting strong, safe, and resilient communities and to working with the Village of Mayo and the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun to create community-based solutions.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Hospital staffing

Mr. Cathers: On January 25, the Yukon Hospital Corporation announced that it had been forced to postpone about 150 surgeries due to staff shortages. Some surgeries have been postponed for months. According to the Yukon Hospital Corporation, there are normally 13 staff to support the operating room, but they had only half the staff required. Even if all the positions were full, there is a growing need for increased capacity of surgical services.

Will the Yukon government commit to supporting Yukon hospitals getting back to full staff levels and to working with them on expanding the capacity of surgical services so that Yukoners do not have to face long delays waiting for surgery?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I certainly appreciate the opportunity to rise today to reconfirm, if necessary, our commitment to Yukoners and to the Yukon Hospital Corporation and its operations and to the way it serves Yukoners by operating three hospitals in our Yukon communities.

The Government of Yukon is committed to working with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to meet the needs of Yukoners through the Yukon's three hospitals and to increasing access to timely, safe, quality, and culturally safe services. This is worth repeating. It is the goal of the Yukon government and the

Yukon Hospital Corporation to increase access to timely, safe, quality, and culturally safe services for all Yukoners.

We work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to ensure that core funding needs are met. It is something that the member opposite refuses to understand, but certainly it is the primary work that we do to make sure that core funding needs are met. We will continue to work with the Yukon Hospital Corporation to identify their needs and to ensure that we are providing the services and the supports to Yukoners to access safe and excellent hospital care.

Mr. Cathers: The talking points from the government say that it's fine, but the budget says otherwise.

This is not the first time this problem has happened. Last July, the hospital announced that it would be reducing and postponing scheduled surgeries for a period of weeks. At the time, the Yukon Hospital Corporation said that it was due to a staff shortage in the surgical services area and other staff were needed to maintain capacity to respond to emergencies. These delays directly affect Yukoners waiting for surgery and require action, not just words, from this government.

What is the government doing to help our hospitals address the backlog of surgeries and reduce the wait times for surgeries going forward?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think it is a disservice to Yukoners to exaggerate for the purpose of political reasons, and, quite frankly, that is exactly what is happening here. The Yukon Hospital Corporation is an important partner as we move forward in the direction of laying out and implementing *Putting People First*. There is more care available here in the Yukon — more services are available here at home.

We have a very close working relationship with the Yukon Hospital Corporation, and there is often not a predictable number of people accessing services at the hospital. Of course, that is a growing issue. Yukon hospital — they are all committed to maintaining safe and quality care, with minimal service disruptions, in an environment with a local, national, and global health care shortage of health care providers.

Hospital staff continue to deliver excellent patient care, and their efforts are ensuring that Yukoners have access to hospital services right here at home. Our government has expanded the services that are available here in the territory at Whitehorse General Hospital and some at the hospitals in Dawson City and Watson Lake, and that work will continue to serve Yukoners.

Mr. Cathers: Mr. Speaker, to add more capacity for surgical services at Whitehorse General Hospital, our hospitals need money. The minister's talking points say that they are giving the hospital what they need, but the budget says otherwise.

In November, the chair and CEO of the hospital appeared here in this Legislative Assembly. They told us that the government-funded part of their O&M budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year was \$103.5 million. The government's supplementary budget includes only \$88.9 million for the year. The government's budget for the upcoming fiscal year includes just over \$93 million in O&M for our hospital. Neither amount covers their core needs.

Will the minister commit to a timeline for providing Yukon hospitals with the money that they need to cover the multi-million-dollar funding shortfall this fiscal year? Mr. Speaker, talk is cheap.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Talk is cheap and, quite frankly, giving Yukoners incorrect information is a disservice to them. In the 2023-24 budget, we are providing \$93.6 million in operating funding to the Yukon Hospital Corporation. This is an increase of 3.6 percent over last year. We work with them throughout the year, despite the fact that this is the core funding, to make sure that their operations, which are sometimes unpredictable, are, in fact, covered in the work that we do with them.

Between the 2016-17 budget year and 2023-24 — the one we are about to see the opposition vote against — the operating funding has increased from \$64.2 million to \$93.6 million, which is an increase of 45.8 percent. This funding increase has supported the hospital's core funding needs, as well as the development of new programs and services that serve Yukoners. We will continue to work with them for the benefit of Yukon citizens.

Question re: Social housing

Ms. Clarke: The Yukon Housing Corporation has implemented a new housing allocation model that has moved away from providing housing in order of highest priority. This change in the tenant allocation policy has raised significant concerns among several groups. It also seems to be contrary to what the Auditor General said when he provided a recommendation to — and I quote: "... ensure that there is access for those in most need of housing and benefits."

Why has the Yukon Housing Corporation adopted a new tenant allocation policy that will give less access to housing for the most vulnerable Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Since 2019, the Yukon Housing Corporation has been working to transform its approach to housing from the outdated social housing model to community housing.

Our board of directors approved the framework for the community housing approach in 2021 with the following intended outcomes: improved tenant experience through intentional fostering of a more diverse housing community; improved health outcomes for tenants through support plans that give them greater access to the services that they need; and reduced costs through reduced poverty and the associated maintenance and refurbishment costs that come with it. We also hope to empower our tenants, making them more likely to move through the housing continuum.

Furthermore, a key component of the community housing plan is to improve information systems to allow us to better identify the proportion of clients on the wait-list who require supportive services, assess the availability of housing with services units — and not just within Yukon Housing Corporation units but across all housing providers — and create reliable data tracking for evictions in progress on stable, successful tenancies.

Ms. Clarke: Here's what the Safe at Home Society said in their submission to the Public Accounts Committee in November: "... the tenant allocation policy is a move in the opposite direction of the OAG's recommendation to prioritize vulnerable Yukoners."

They also said this: "We have come to understand that through YHC's new approach, the most vulnerable Yukoners ... will receive less access to Yukon Housing units than in the previous model." So, why is the Yukon Housing Corporation's new tenant allocation policy moving in the opposite direction of the recommendation from the Auditor General's report?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The transformation was initiated by the launch of the national housing strategy in 2017. The concept and vision of community housing has been embraced by all housing providers across Canada. It recognizes that all subsidized housing is a valuable community asset and should be used by the community where it is needed most.

In 2019, Yukon Housing Corporation recognized the need to modernize and transform our social housing programs to better meet the diverse housing needs of Yukoners and align with the corporate, territorial, and federal fiscal and policy priorities. A community housing framework was developed and approved by the Yukon Housing Corporation Board of Directors in September 2021.

Ms. Clarke: When officials from the Yukon Housing Corporation appeared in the Legislature, they confirmed that a tenant allocation policy was moving away from higher priority groups. This is what the president of the Yukon Housing Corporation said — and I quote: "... we have adopted a tenant allocation policy that is moving away from a points-based system that provides housing in order of highest priority."

Since making the change, they have heard from several groups that do not support this change. Here is what the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition said in their submission to the Public Accounts Committee — and I quote: "... the feedback that some partners have tried to provide on YHC's new tenant allocation policy, for example, is also not being heeded."

So, why is the minister not listening to groups that have expressed concerns about the new tenant allocation policy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The corporation's former approach supported individuals and families with the lowest incomes and the greatest vulnerabilities without distinctions. Our former system perpetuated a cycle of poverty, encouraging poor housing outcomes, disproportionately high eviction rates, and reduced safety and security of other tenants.

Yukon Housing Corporation will continue to apply its threshold income approach with the housing income limits established by the CMHC — Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation — and will continue to prioritize low-income Yukoners. By emphasizing the development of a diversity of tenant incomes and demographics, we will more intentionally promote progress along the housing continuum.

It is also expected that the partnerships available to support vulnerable tenants through support plans will enhance our tenants' housing stability. Again, our mixed-income, mixed-use approach will enhance natural community supports through

a broader socio-economic distribution of tenants within our buildings.

The other thing we will do is that we will spend money on building units. We will spend money to ensure that the right units are here. We will not cancel projects and set money on the shelf. We will not spend the majority of our money at Yukon Housing Corporation on O&M and staffing. We will spend it on capital, and we will continue to have the record-breaking investment that we have seen into these housing units, not like we have seen in the past.

Question re: Medical travel

Ms. White: Last week, the minister dismissed the cost of medical travel and insisted that the new \$16-a-day increase was enough, but Yukoners know that's far from the case. Folks who travel down south are paying hundreds of dollars to cover the real costs of hotels and transportation, and they know that they are paying out of pocket for health care. It's also expensive for folks in communities when they come into Whitehorse. One woman who was pregnant and living in a community was advised to come to Whitehorse for medical supervision. She had to stay in a hotel in town for two entire months. It cost her a whopping \$7,000 up front. For her own health care, she was charged thousands of dollars.

Will the minister listen to Yukoners and cover all medical travel expenses up front, instead of barely reimbursing the cost of a hotel room?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: It is incredibly stressful when a family member or a loved one is ill. It's even more stressful when that person might need to travel for the care that they need and be separated from either their own support system or their loved ones. I understand this. I have been through it myself very recently. It is a very stressful situation, but let's be clear about the purpose of the medical travel subsidy. It is for the purpose of giving patients some increased options and to assist with the appropriate travel destination and the costs that they might have at that location. It is not to cover everyone's expenses. Medical travel subsidies are to assist with a person's expenses, not to cover them.

I think we also need to remember that we are committed to medical travel subsidies. We have doubled them, pursuant to a recommendation in *Putting People First*, almost immediately upon that report. We also made them available to individuals on the very first day of travel. The former government had a medical travel subsidy that was only available as of the second day. I am pleased to continue to talk about this important issue.

Ms. White: What a privileged place to be in to not have to worry about covering the costs of medical travel. Medical travel is health care — full stop. In a territory where people have to travel within or outside the territory to get essential care, medical travel should be considered an integral part of health care, not some add-on that is only partially covered after you pay the initial costs, and it doesn't have to be this way. Even the Liberals agree — at least they did when it was election time. In their 2021 election platform, they committed to — and I quote: "Creating a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents who are attending medical appointments."

So, my question for the minister is really a simple one: Will this government create a health lodge in Whitehorse for rural residents who are attending medical appointments?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I think that Yukoners know, but I am happy to reinforce the concept that we have accepted all of the recommendations in the *Putting People First* report. We have issued our first annual report with respect to *Putting People First*, dated in 2022. It is a checklist of the recommendations that were made and the work that is proceeding on those recommendations. We are working to implement the rest of the recommendations, as we can. I know that, for people in the current situation of needing to deal with medical travel subsidies or care outside of the territory, that is a stressful period of time.

What we can do is reinforce and remind Yukoners that many more services and care options are available right here in the territory as a result of the work that has been done. I can also remind Yukoners that there is a daily subsidy for approved escorts, as well, under our medical travel program. These are all things in place to support Yukoners who are in this stressful situation.

It is also important to know that there are many, many places in Canada where individuals need to travel for care and where there is no such thing as a medical travel subsidy — most places in Canada.

I am happy to continue to talk about this important service for Yukoners.

Ms. White: So, it was a simple question about the 2021 platform commitment, but I will take the minister's long answer as maybe a "no" currently.

So, travelling for medical care is no vacation. It is exhausting — it is emotionally and physically exhausting to be sick away from home, from your family, and your community and sometimes for weeks at a time. It is lonely, and it is expensive. For all those exhausting weeks, this government is expecting folks to stay in a cramped hotel room, often without a kitchen or even a table to eat on.

Yukoners deserve better. A medical lodge in Whitehorse would support so many folks in getting the health care they need. This lodge could have a kitchen, a comfortable space to gather, a playground for kids, programming, and so much more. It could be a place to rest after a long day of medical care, a place to connect with other folks who are going through similar experiences.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is time for this government to keep its promises. Will the minister open a public lodge in Whitehorse for rural Yukoners coming for medical appointments?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I am going to assume that maybe I wasn't clear enough, and I am happy to apologize for that. *Putting People First* is more than just words on a page; it is recommendations that have been accepted. One of the recommendations that has been accepted is the concept of making travel and the experiences just described by the member opposite — which I understand each and every one — are a way for us to move forward in providing those services for Yukoners.

A medical lodge, or some version of that, is a priority; it is a topic of conversation. We are working with our partners to make sure that we are able to achieve the recommendations in *Putting People First*. It is about making real changes and real improvements to our health care system. It is a transformation of Yukon's health care system so that Yukoners can have the best access to health care and social services that is possible.

We inherited a crumbling health care system. COVID-19 did not help; it only made it worse. We, like our colleagues in other jurisdictions, are working hard to rebuild the health care system, Mr. Speaker, so that it can serve Yukoners in the best possible way. *Putting People First* is our road map forward. We know it came from Yukoners; we know it is their priorities, and we are working on it every day.

Question re: Carbon tax exemptions for home heating fuel

Ms. McLeod: The latest stats from the Yukon Bureau of Statistics show that the territorial Liberals' limited attempts to tackle the rising cost of living are not working. The February increase to CPI was reported at seven percent. Mr. Speaker, that is the highest in the country for the third month in a row.

Last year, we suggested that the government suspend the fuel tax to reduce the inflation burden on Yukoners. A member of the Yukon Financial Advisory Panel noted that the Alberta gas tax holiday lowered prices, but here in the Yukon, the Premier dismissed it as a "boutique measure".

So, will the Liberal government take action on inflation this year and suspend the territorial fuel tax to help Yukoners?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, some of the other numbers that came out today from the Bureau of Statistics talked about our economy and how our people — Yukoners on unemployment, for example — how it is leading the country from this time last year, as far as the deduction of people who are on employment insurance. So, one of the best things we can do to help with inflation is to make sure that we have a booming economy.

Also, we have a suite of things that we put into this budget to make lives more affordable for Yukoners, including: funding for food and schools; timber harvest incentives to boost firewood supply; a quarterly top-up of \$150 to eligible recipients of the Yukon senior income supplement; a \$100 monthly increase to eligible social assistance recipients, and the list goes on. Coupled with what the federal government is doing as well — including accelerating Canada's workers benefits, eliminating the interest on student loans, a doubling of the GST tax credit, dental care, and the Health Canada housing benefits for renters — we are taking inflation seriously, and we have a Yukon solution for international pressures.

Ms. McLeod: That advisory panel member whom I referenced in the question, Trevor Tombe, wrote — quote: "Agree or not with the policy, evidence is clear: the tax holiday lowers prices."

Last fall, the Yukon Legislative Assembly passed a motion to urge the federal government to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuel. The carbon tax is going to rise again on April 1, putting more strain on Yukoners struggling to make

ends meet. We have heard from many Yukoners who struggled to pay their fuel bills this past winter.

My question is simple: Will the Liberal government respect the will of the Assembly and lobby the Trudeau government to remove the carbon tax for home heating fuel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is very interesting that the Yukon Party will continue down this pathway when we know that other jurisdictions that had that had it taken away, because it directly counters the carbon pricing on a term of the price signal. Again, we knew that when we went into these negotiations, when we were on the pan-Canadian framework. We knew that when the Yukon Party signed the Vancouver declaration signing the Yukon up for carbon pricing, and we also believe that this is extremely important, because we could have the polluter pay or we could have the taxpayers pay.

Again, what the Yukon Party continues to forget in their narrative is that every single dollar that is collected through the carbon-pricing mechanism is returned back to Yukoners, to First Nation governments, and to municipalities. So, again, that money is being returned, the price signal is being maintained, we are pivoting the country off fossil fuels, and we will reap the benefits of being on the leading edge of green technology, as opposed to the Yukon Party, which would have us be slaves to fossil fuels forever.

Ms. McLeod: I think Yukoners are quite aware that the Yukon Party would prefer to eliminate the carbon tax completely; however, we are making suggestions that we think this Liberal government might actually use to help Yukoners.

When the federal government forced the Northwest Territories to remove their rebate, the Northwest Territories' MLAs threatened to revolt and opposed the move. A joint northern lobby to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuel should be more effective.

Will the Premier take a pan-northern approach and work with the Government of Northwest Territories to remove the carbon tax from home heating fuel?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just to set the record straight, first, of course, there was the signing by the Yukon Party of the Vancouver declaration, where it signed on to carbon pricing.

I commend our Finance minister and former Premier for his work in understanding where we could work within our system to make a Yukon-based system, and that is what we have worked on. That has ensured that we brought money through the carbon pricing mechanism back to Yukoners — more money that has been paid in.

Again, there seems to be a lack of understanding about what happened in the Northwest Territories. We watched this. We knew that would be revoked, based on the signalling. It was revoked. In my conversations with both other premiers, it has not come up. I believe that is because they have a better understanding, probably, than the Yukon Party about what is going to happen with this.

I would ask if this is really about inflation, if it's really about Yukoners. I look back at last year. There was the 150 — \$300 in total we had in relief rebates for electrical bills. We had increases in the pioneer utility grant. We had items in social assistance. This year, we just went through the list of things we

have in our mains budget. We have food for schools, we have the timber harvest incentive — all these things. My question is: Will the Yukon Party vote against all of these supports for Yukoners again? Will they do it for political reasons, or do they care about Yukoners, and will they support these measures?

Question re: Alaska Highway corridor upgrades

Mr. Istchenko: Following the announcement in November 2021 of the massive bipartisan infrastructure deal in the United States, hopes were raised about the possibility of money finally flowing to the Shakwak project of the north Alaska Highway. On November 19, 2021, the Minister of Highways and Public Works said that it was fantastic news and that he was hopeful that there would be some money for Shakwak. CBC Yukon reported that the minister called the announcement “a big relief”. However, we have yet to see any money flow to this project, and once again, we are seeing another Liberal budget that neglects the important stretch of the Alaska Highway.

When can Yukoners — and especially those who utilize the north Alaska Highway — expect to see upgrades?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Alaska Highway from the Alaska border at Beaver Creek to Haines Junction and the Haines Road from Haines Junction to Haines, Alaska, is a stretch we often call “Shakwak”. These sections of the highway are essential for connecting mainland Alaska to Alaska's southeast and to the lower 48. Unfortunately, these sections, so far, have not benefited from significant capital investment since 2015, when stable, predictable funding under the US-Canada Shakwak agreement ended.

While we work continually to secure funding from the US, Highways and Public Works continues to inspect and maintain segments of the Alaska Highway connecting the Yukon and Alaska. Each spring and fall, inspections take place to prioritize where maintenance is required. Some sections of road have been converted from BST to gravel to mitigate the impacts of shifting permafrost. Our government's continued work with the US and Alaskan officials led to the inclusion of the north Alaska Highway in the 2021 *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*. While the act does not commit any specific dollar amount to the reconstruction project, it does allow the Yukon and Alaska to apply for US funding for the Shakwak project. I will continue in my next response.

Mr. Istchenko: So, when the American government made the announcement, there was some excitement that we might finally see some money flow. The minister told CBC that the announcement was a big relief and that he would love to see projects begin as early as “... the spring or summer of 2022...” We know that there has been no action yet. Even worse, the Yukon government continues to disregard this important section of highway. It's our national corridor to Alaska. It's a trade route. The section of Alaska Highway from Destruction Bay to Beaver Creek has become deplorable under this government. Why does the government continue to ignore such an important part of the Alaska Highway?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The first question I would have is: Why did the prior government allow the Shakwak funding to

dry up? I don't think there is a great answer to that question. The member opposite will know that, in December of 2022, the US Department of Transportation announced \$1.5 billion in funding to the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity, also known as "RAISE", the discretionary grant program for 2023.

The State of Alaska, in collaboration and in cooperation with our government, submitted an application to the RAISE grant program on February 27, 2023 seeking approximately \$25 million US for the north Alaska Highway. We are expecting to see a response to that application in early summer. If successful, this grant will allow our government to restore some of the worst sections of the north Alaska Highway and improve this critical stretch of highway into Alaska that has been adversely impacted by thawing permafrost and climate change challenges.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that this is a challenging part of the Alaska Highway, but we are certainly committed to continuing to work with our friends at the State of Alaska to continue to try to access the funding.

Mr. Istchenko: So, last year when I asked about the lack of investment in the north Alaska Highway, the minister told the Legislature that the Yukon government was spending \$1.4 million in capital on the Shakwak. So, in 2021, he said that more than \$500 million was needed to complete the Shakwak.

So, can the minister tell us how much is in this year's budget for the Shakwak and what sections will see capital upgrades? Does he think that the investment that this Liberal government is making in the highway is enough to bring it to an acceptable, safe travelling standard?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have seen unparalleled investment in our infrastructure when it comes to either the airport with almost a quarter-billion-dollar cap ex project and our roads throughout the Yukon, as well as our aerodromes. What I will say is that, within my first 30 days on the job in this role, I met with the US Ambassador to Canada. This is one of the items that I prioritized. The members opposite — just to share with them — although we have seen the appropriation within the US federal system, there is still a prioritization that happens on those dollars.

Again, there are other projects in Alaska. We are ensuring that the Alaskan officials understand the importance of this. I urged — both in my previous conversations with the consul general from the US who sits in the Vancouver office and to the ambassador in Ottawa — that this is, as well, about Arctic security. This is about our ability to ensure that we have the free movement of trade, and this is an essential piece of infrastructure.

So, we will continue to press Alaskan officials. We will continue to have those conversations with the US, but the good thing is — unlike what happened before — we didn't let it dry up. What we did was we urged the federal government to put that pool of money in place. Now it is in place, and we will make sure that we take the right strategy to ensure that we get it allocated here and that we continue to look after our roads, like we have since we started this job.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Commissioner: Please be seated.

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

Clerk: *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23.*

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

Commissioner leaves the Chamber

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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): Committee of the Whole will come to order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, 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 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Department of Energy, Mines and Resources

Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, I would like to welcome the departmental folks here who are going to assist with our question and answer today: including Paul McConnell, our deputy minister, and Shane Andre, who is the director of our Energy branch.

I will have just a few opening remarks — some highlights on the budget — over a few questions that were asked during the supplementary Committee of the Whole budget debate that I said I would try to get some information back for colleagues. Then I will close with one other general comment.

This appropriation, or the budget, for Energy, Mines and Resources is a little over \$82 million, and that is a decrease. That is down about \$650,000 from last year's budget. The operation and maintenance portion of the budget is around \$80 million — just under \$80 million — and that is a \$2-million decrease. As I talked about previously, that was — changes to the federal government and what they are doing around type 2 mine sites. We discussed that during the supplementary budget.

Our capital budget is \$2.4 million, which is up from the \$1 million that it was last year, or just under \$1 million. The increase is due, really, to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada grant funding to continue work under *Our Clean Future* for a new building and additional electric vehicle charging stations.

Those are the big differences. I am sure we will have many questions around the department.

The two things that I committed to trying to get some additional information on or that I have for today — one is how much we have invested in the Kluane First Nation wind project. So far, we have invested just over \$1.4 million. There has been \$2 million come through the Arctic energy fund. That fund is administered by the Yukon Development Corporation, although the funds are federal in origin.

Then there was a question about the timing on the project. I haven't had a chance yet to talk with the Kluane First Nation and ask them what they anticipate for the timing of the project, but the next time I meet with them, I will do so.

The other thing I wanted to just mention is — there was a question about a \$9.8-million increase to quartz mining fees, leases, and royalties. I said it was mostly royalties. In fact, the department has indicated to me that it was entirely royalties. You have to make an estimate of how much money that you think you're going to get back from mining activity, and mining activity was quite a bit higher than expected. We had anticipated just under \$14 million, so that additional \$9.8 million — just about \$10 million — was an increase in royalties.

I will leave comments on the budget to the questions so that we can focus on where colleagues want to go. I just want to say one other thing. Energy, Mines and Resources had an all-staff meeting a few days ago, and I had the pleasure of swinging by in the morning — when I had a bit of a break here — to talk to folks. I have had some conversations with the deputy minister about how the staff are doing in Energy, Mines and

Resources. I said this to them directly at the all-staff, but now that I'm in front of a microphone and putting it on the record formally, I would just like to comment. No matter whether we say — whichever branch it is — Agriculture, Assessment and Abandoned Mines, Compliance Monitoring and Inspections, Corporate Services — including HR, IT, policy, communications — our energy folks, forestry, geothermal, Land Management, Land Planning, minerals, the Yukon Geological Survey — they have been doing a really great job.

Of course, I recognize very well that there will be criticism of us as government. I am sure that's not intended at the department. I would just like to take a moment to acknowledge just how much hard work they've been doing. There has been a lot happening in Energy, Mines and Resources. On behalf of all of us here in the Assembly, I just wanted to acknowledge that hard, hard work.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I look forward to our question-and-answer today.

Mr. Kent: I thank the minister for his opening remarks. I would also like to thank Mr. McConnell and Mr. Andre for being here today to provide support to the minister, as well as those officials who attended the briefing and provided us with the information on the main estimates, as well as the supplementary estimates for 2022-23. I would also like, of course, to echo the minister's comments in thanking all of the department officials for all of their hard work in Energy, Mines and Resources and all that they do on a daily basis to support Yukoners.

I guess maybe I will start with a question about the full-time equivalents in the department, as the minister mentioned that. The number that we received from officials at the briefing was that there are 293.7 full-time equivalents for the upcoming year. The minister can correct me if I'm wrong, but I believe that officials told us that this is an increase of three FTEs from the previous year. I just wanted the minister to confirm that number for us.

Then, when delivering a ministerial statement — I think it was earlier this week — on *Our Clean Future*, the minister mentioned a number of government-wide work-from-home agreements that were in place. I am wondering if he can tell us how many work-from-home agreements are in place for staff in Energy, Mines and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The member is correct. It is an increase of three, but I will add a little bit more information around that. It is three new full-time folks. Two are in our Land Management — the deputy minister had showed me that the work there had gone up by, I don't know, a factor of four or something like that, but it had increased very significantly — and one more person under Compliance Monitoring and Inspections.

We also have three time-limited positions around — they are two-year positions. One is working on the new energy agreement with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations around the relicensing of the Aishihik dam; one is around greener buildings; and one is around wetlands work. So, those are not permanent positions.

With respect to the question about how many of the EMR staff have taken up the work-from-home option, I will have to ask the department to look into that a bit. I know that, within EMR, lots of folks naturally work in the field, so there are a lot of workers who are going out and about in the territory. I have just been informed, Madam Chair, that the total number of EMR employees who use the work-from-home program is 24.

Mr. Kent: I am wondering — maybe the minister doesn't have it, as I think he is receiving information from the department on those agreements, but which branch are those work-from-home agreements? Where do those individuals — what branches do they work in?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will try to get that information, but I will also always be a little bit careful that — I am not going to share individual staff information. So, I will have to make sure that, in the aggregate, it doesn't — we are not worried about that issue, but I will try to get as much information as I can for the Member for Copperbelt South.

Mr. Kent: Yes, obviously, I don't want to compromise individual personal information, but whatever the minister or his officials feel — as much detail as they can share with us without compromising that, would be much appreciated.

I wanted to quickly jump to something that came up earlier this week with respect to the Tagish River Habitat Protection Area. I believe the Minister of Environment mentioned that the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources would be the lead on the implementation committee for that work. I was just wondering if the minister could confirm that I am asking the right minister, I guess, with respect to this issue.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I can do my best to try to answer some of the questions. The Tagish River Habitat Protection Area strategy is now signed, and the next phase is implementation, and there will be both involvement from Energy, Mines and Resources, as well as Environment, around implementation. Of course, Carcross/Tagish will have involvement. I believe the Government of Canada has a nominee. My understanding is there will be a letter going to the Tagish Local Advisory Council, as well as the Carcross/Tagish Renewable Resources Council, and they will each, I believe, be invited to nominate an individual who will be part of that implementation committee.

At the last meeting I was at with the Tagish Local Advisory Council, they had not yet received that letter. I spoke yesterday with the Minister of Environment to find out what the timing is on those letters. They may have already gone, and I am just not aware yet, because — I have to think back — I think the last local advisory council meeting was a couple of weeks ago. So, anyway, we are heading into the implementation phase. I can try to answer questions for the member opposite as I am able, and if there are ones which are better suited for the Minister of Environment, I will just let him know.

Mr. Kent: So, I will focus in on the implementation committee, because as I mentioned, it was the Minister of Environment, I believe, who told this House that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources was leading that implementation committee piece. So, I am just curious if the minister can answer or perhaps commit to getting back to us

with responses. He has mentioned some of the nominees or the groups that will have nominees on the committee. I am just wondering if he has any sense for when the committee will become active and how long it would take for the implementation work to be done.

And then, of course, I know I am not telling the minister anything that he doesn't know, as he is the MLA for that area — there are a number of concerns that residents have with respect to the overall plan, but I think that one of the ones that I have heard the most about is with respect to docks in front of properties that are along the river — on both sides of the river.

So, I am just wondering how those residents will be able to get their thoughts to the implementation committee once it is struck. I guess that would be the end of the question: How will they be engaged, as residents, in this process?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The most challenging issue for the implementation committee and the neighbours will be around docks, and that was also true in the development of the strategy itself. I have to pull up the strategy in front of me, but there are three specific actions that talk about that work, and it's all about engagement. I feel confident that will be happening.

I can say that I have been at local advisory council meetings where they have had folks come forward and talk about those issues. In fact, I don't think that it would be going too far to just mention that a couple of the — well, a few of the — council members live along the Six Mile River, so they are well aware of the competing interests and the various views that are there, and I think that the strategy has struck a good balance of how to engage local citizens, and it is all part of the implementation committee plan.

I don't want to give a sense of timeline, because I think that committee will be meeting soon, and once the local advisory council and the renewable resources council make their nominations, bring them forward, and then the committee gets fully struck, then they will decide on their work plan. But I believe that this is going to be one of the key issues that they will focus on, so I think that we should anticipate that, over the coming summer, there will be work on this, and I think that it will be responsive to hearing from citizens who live along the river or are interested in that very specific issue.

Mr. Kent: I will pass along our exchange on that to the residents whom I have been engaged with as far as their concerns. As I said, not all of them but most of them are concerned about the dock issue. Again, I will share our exchange here today and let them reach out to officials in the departments — Environment and Energy, Mines and Resources — with respect to that particular issue.

I do want to touch on some things in the minister's mandate letter. I attended, on behalf of the Member for Porter Creek North, the briefing last Friday from the Yukon Development Corporation. I asked a question about the work to date on the grid connection project with British Columbia, and they mentioned to me that Energy, Mines and Resources had the lead on this, so I will ask the questions here and, if there was something I misunderstood or if that's not correct, the minister can redirect us to the Yukon Development Corporation debate.

In the minister's mandate letter — and, again, this part of the mandate letter, as the Minister responsible for Yukon Development Corporation and Yukon Energy Corporation — it says that he is to begin the initial work on a grid connection project with British Columbia by: engaging with First Nations; updating the previous cost estimates and early engineering work; and, finally, exploring business models, partnership opportunities, and financing strategies.

I know the minister mentioned that he received this direction from the new Premier just prior to the AME BC's Roundup. I am just curious if he can tell us where he is at with these three specific initiatives that are connected to the grid connection project with British Columbia.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Let me start with the balance of the work between Energy, Mines and Resources and the Yukon Development Corporation, including the Yukon Energy Corporation.

We had some work coming up with the federal government, with Natural Resources Canada. They are doing a series of regional energy and resource tables. The Yukon is in the next round and that is coming up. Right after the last session — I can't remember if it was in the last days of November or the first days of December — I mentioned that I travelled with Tlingit Homeland Energy Limited Partnership to go to Ottawa to talk about funding, but I also took the time to meet with Minister Wilkinson. I let him know that we are going to be moving on the grid connect issue. I talked to him about — well, under that regional energy and resource table initiative, they are talking about nation-building types of things. I said to him that I thought this was one of those opportunities — that it is a nation-building type of scenario. We had a very good conversation. It was a very preliminary conversation. It was just sort of introducing the topic and letting him know that this was likely to be a direction.

As the Member for Copperbelt South notes, the Premier asked me to start talking about it publicly just as we were heading down to Roundup.

In terms of the two — Energy, Mines and Resources and the Yukon Development Corporation — we have put some of this preliminary planning work and the early phases under Strategic Initiatives within Energy, Mines and Resources to work closely with the Yukon Development Corporation and, of course, Yukon Energy Corporation.

We want this initiative to build on Yukon Energy's 10-year renewable strategy. It is not to replace it; it is to go beyond. So, we are doing work to talk with the federal government. With respect to other groups, we will be having the discussion at the next Yukon Forum to initiate conversation formally with First Nations, but we had a lot of good conversations informally at Roundup with both northern British Columbia First Nations as well as Yukon First Nations. That is a key part of this, as the member opposite noted, within my mandate letter.

I will also say that there have been a couple of developments with respect to BC Hydro that have made the project slightly more favourable from British Columbia's side of things. For example, BC Hydro just made a decision a couple of months ago to upgrade their line between Terrace and Prince

George that will assist with this, so Yukon Energy has been having good preliminary conversations with BC Hydro.

I will leave it there for now, and I am happy to answer more questions for the member opposite.

Mr. Kent: So, the BC Hydro line upgrades — that is between Terrace and Prince George, I believe the minister said. That is the development with BC Hydro — or are there other developments, or is that just the only one?

Earlier this week, the minister told this House — and I will quote from Hansard: "We have also now embarked on a dialogue with Yukon First Nations, British Columbia First Nations, the Province of British Columbia, and the federal government on a grid interconnect with British Columbia." So, I just wanted to confirm — I think the minister has mentioned that there have been informal discussions with Yukon and BC First Nations and he has met with federal ministers about this. Were there also conversations with the Province of British Columbia down at Roundup? Then I think he mentioned formal discussions with Yukon First Nations beginning at the next Yukon Forum. So, what are the plans for more formal discussions with the BC First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: First of all, with respect to the question about the BC government, I did have a meeting with Minister Osborne, my counterpart from British Columbia. We talked about this and, well, quite a few files. I was there with the Minister of Environment and the Minister of Highways and Public Works.

I know that the Premier has had, I think, multiple conversations with Premier Eby. I would have to find out just exactly when those are — I am not sure of timing, but it was in and around the time of Roundup — and they have all been positive. I will just say that we have a very good relationship — a working relationship — with British Columbia. On almost all files, it is very constructive.

I will also add a thought about BC Hydro. In talking with the Yukon Energy Corporation, they said to me that they felt that BC Hydro — in the last iteration, when the grid connect had been looked at, BC Hydro, at that point, was not as interested in the project, but what I have been told by Yukon Energy is that currently things are more favourable. I don't know all of those ins and outs, so I will leave that until we have Yukon Energy back in as witnesses.

This project is a very, very large project, and it will take significant time to even plan out and line up. With respect to BC First Nations, how that happens is we will work to build those relationships and then move into a more formal dialogue with them. It's in the building stages right now. I don't have reports on it as of yet, but I can say that, from each conversation that I had with those nations when they approached me at Roundup, they were all pretty keen to be involved in the project.

I also have had early conversations with industry to talk to them about the project, and those have all been positive as well. So, there is more to come in time. Right now, we are just on those initial steps.

Mr. Kent: We will come back to that, I'm sure, as time goes on, because obviously, it sounds like there is an awful lot

of work still to be done with respect to that project. Of course, the clock continues to tick toward the climate change and greenhouse gas emission reduction goals that were set out in the *Clean Energy Act* of 45 percent below 2010 levels. Obviously, this is a project that I think can significantly assist with us moving toward those goals.

I just wanted to jump over from that into the mining intensity targets. I am reading from the 2023 mandate letter for the minister. This was part of his Energy, Mines and Resources responsibility. It is to work with industry and stakeholders to develop a framework for mining intensity targets that includes programs to support the Yukon's mining sector to sustainably and competitively produce the materials needed for the global green economy.

I know there was a "what we heard" document released earlier this Sitting, but I am wondering if the minister can give us an idea of timing for the mining intensity target work to be finished and then also let us know what programs he is looking at to support the Yukon's mining sector.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We did a lot of engagement with the public, including Yukon mining companies and the chamber, et cetera, but what I hadn't done, and what I still want to do, is to reach out to some of the major mining companies that may be considering the Yukon now and into the future as a place to invest in to have the conversation with them as well.

I had hoped to have the target in place before now. I am working hard with the department to finalize that work so that we can get the target out there, and we can then begin to work on the rest of it.

The Member for Copperbelt South asked about what ways we are looking at. Some of the things that mines have already done that count are — for example, at least two of the large mines, since our other baselines have come into play, have connected to the grid, so that is effectively displacing quite a bit of diesel. Then, as I said the other day, we have a couple of things under *Our Clean Future* that are already there as actions and will assist with mines. One of them is renewable fuels; another one is carbon pricing. So, for example, one of the actions under *Our Clean Future* is to recognize that, since carbon pricing is in place and has an impact and is starting to shift us off of fossil fuels, that will be true for mines as well.

There are other things. Another one that I would have to look at more closely but is part of the mix and is led by the Department of Finance is the output-based pricing system. Then, we have other ways that we are discussing with mines; for example, we have a mining exploration camp project that has chosen to put in some off-grid solar. I am told by colleagues at the Energy branch that their projection is that the price of solar will continue to drop over time and that price starts to make it more and more accessible.

Of course, we have quite a bit of experience under *Our Clean Future* looking at off-grid communities. If we are talking about Watson Lake or we are talking about Beaver Creek or Old Crow, all of those communities, in some ways, are similar to mines in that sometimes those mines are remote and are not near our grid, so what will the choices be about how we can assist them to get off fossil fuels or reduce their fossil fuels?

Then, the last one that I will mention right now is that there is technology on the horizon, whether it is large electric equipment or just in general — if you are designing a mine around reducing the use of fossil fuels, whether that is a placer mine or right up to a hard rock mine, then within that design of the mine, you start to think differently about the movement of rock and material or even what types of engines you are purchasing over time. So, all of those things are looking at ways in which to reduce emissions over time, and that is the suite that we sort of have in front of us right now, but we will continue to work with both the Energy branch and the chambers to consider how the industry is moving broadly and how we can support them in that move, as they work to transition off fossil fuels.

Mr. Kent: So, as the minister knows, obviously, these mining companies — particularly the ones that are off-grid — will need alternatives to transition off fossil fuels. When we asked the minister — I believe that it was earlier this week — about some of those off-grid projects, like Kudz Ze Kayah or Coffee or even the majority, I believe, of placer mines in the territory that are not connected to our grid, the minister mentioned that he would explore ways — I don't have the exact wording, but that he would explore ways to help those mines connect to the grid so that they would have access to clean power — and again, the generation side of things aside, that we need to deal with the transmission aspect.

So, I am just hoping that the minister can explain that a little bit further for us. What did he mean when he mentioned that he would be happy to help those mines that are off-grid now to connect to the grid at some point in the future?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, I meant just that, but I will try to flesh it out a bit. Usually, when you think about connecting to a grid, it is a pretty straightforward analysis. It is how far do you have to go against the type of energy requirements that you want.

Sometimes, though, you start to see that there might be additional things going on. For example, if you — right now, maybe it is not in the cards for Kudz Ze Kayah or Coffee, but if you started to see other projects coming online nearby, then sometimes that can make it work. Sometimes, it is not a grid connection, but rather, it is a microgrid. So, sometimes, it is possible to have some generation nearby. We have some technologies on the horizon that look pretty flexible, in terms of being deployable in remote locations — for example, geothermal. So, there are technologies out there.

Then, of course, I already mentioned solar. When you have an off-grid situation, which means that you have some fossil fuel generation, then renewables like solar and wind suddenly become much better than on-grid, because you already have the system that is going to be there when there is no sun or wind, so you have a natural backup system. So, there are a range of possibilities out there.

If you look under *Our Clean Future*, I think what we have sort of said is that we should explore all of them. In fact, we are still doing work on small, modular nuclear. Now, we are not the lead province or territory — I mean, that is mostly led by Ontario and New Brunswick, for example — but we will still keep our eyes on those types of technologies to see whether

they come to — whether they fit for us. My sense is that the best bet is really around renewables, because the price is dropping so quickly over time.

Mr. Kent: I guess a follow-up question, then, for the minister with respect to the solar, wind, and geothermal options that he mentioned for some of these off-grid mines — obviously, Kudz Ze Kayah and Coffee are both through YESAB, and are advancing into the licensing phase, so perhaps those are the best examples to use.

Has there been any work done to help inform those companies of the solar or wind potential close to their mines?

I believe that the Yukon Geological Survey is doing some work with respect to geothermal studies, so has there been geothermal potential identified closer to the bigger mines that are currently off grid? My understanding is that they will be using natural gas or diesel or blended fuels to meet their power requirements. I am just curious what kind of renewable studies have been conducted close to those sites.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The way I would like to talk about this is that, whenever we meet with mining companies, we talk about the availability of our Energy branch. I encourage them to always be in conversation with Yukon Energy if they are on grid or if they wish to be on grid or if they are thinking about it. That's true of our current mines. That's true of the mines that are in planning stages.

So, I do know that there has been a lot of back-and-forth. I will also say that, in my experience, the mines have a lot of smart folks — mine planners, engineers, et cetera — who have some pretty strong knowledge about these systems already, but we are there to try to assist with conversations. It's pretty far ranging. I was just asking my officials, and it's around many things — from the fuels that they are using right down to demand-side management, which is a conversation that we have had here in the Assembly just recently, because it's true for mines as well. They can look for ways to try to need less energy, period.

The Geological Survey has been doing work around the territory — sort of trying to map out. Some of that has been, for example, looking for geothermal potential, but some of it is just sort of using straight geophysics work. We have some agreements with the federal government to do more of those types of investigations by the Geological Survey. As well, we have private sector companies that are exploring things like geothermal. At the presentations that I have seen from them, they believe it is pretty transferable. The potential is there in all of these sites. The question is just how quickly it would pay back against the investment. Luckily, our mining companies are pretty good at drilling. That's something that they already know quite well.

It is a ranging conversation, and I have, at every turn, indicated to the mining companies that this is the direction that we need to go as a territory, and I am looking for them to work with us toward that goal.

Mr. Kent: I just wanted to follow up with the minister on the geothermal assessments. Are there any geothermal assessments being conducted by the Geological Survey? I think he mentioned some private companies doing some work. Are

there any being done close to these two hardrock mines that are kind of next in line — that being Coffee and Kudz Ze Kayah?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will check in with the mines themselves and the private sector company to see whether they have any plans together. I wouldn't necessarily be aware of that right away, because that could be from one private sector company to another private sector company.

With respect to the Geological Survey, I don't believe that we did drilling in the areas of those two mines, but the work coming up that is planned by the Geological Survey is not based on drilling; it's just geophysical work and it's going to be more broadly based. I will inquire to find out if that includes areas that would be nearby Kudz Ze Kayah and Coffee, but my understanding is that it will be a broader coverage of the territory.

Mr. Kent: I look forward to receiving that information from the minister when he gets a chance to get it.

It was in response to one of my colleague's questions earlier this week, but the minister mentioned the opportunities for renewable diesel. I just wanted to confirm with him what he means by "biodiesel". Are we talking about the same things?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are sort of two families of fuels that you can think of. One is biodiesel. Biodiesel typically is a blend of diesel with some other organic-based diesel — typically canola, for example. That is what biodiesel is, and that is probably the one that most folks know about, but the one that is more likely to be the solution is called "renewable diesel", which is synthetic, organic fuel that has similar properties to diesel. These are very technical things, and at some point, we could try to provide a technical briefing, as we get closer to these. I think that our target for this — in *Our Clean Future* — is 2025, because we see that there is some ramping up to do. I will leave the technical side to it, but, because the question is specifically about what we are talking about, there are sort of two fuels that are considered.

Mr. Kent: I appreciate that from the minister. I am curious if the minister can give us an idea of cost comparison with what is used now — I will just call it the "regular diesel" that is used now — by communities and others to generate electricity. What is the cost comparison of biodiesel and the renewable diesel that the minister talked about? Obviously, those considerations are things that will have to be made by these private sector companies because they need to be profitable. So, if those costs are too prohibitive, then switching may be difficult for them.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I understand completely the question that the member is asking, and I am going to share the information that I have, but I also just want to put a bit of a caveat on there. We all have watched prices at the pumps. We have seen them swing up and down quite a bit, and so I want to be careful that there are differences that we see. Between now and when those fuels get closer to us in our marketplace, there could be changes.

The first thing to note is that — we talk about renewable diesel, and right now the price is roughly, here — to have that diesel coming here — is about \$3 a litre, which is significantly higher. However, Imperial Oil has stated their intention that

they plan to build a plant in Fort St. John and that it will be a plant that is solely focused on biodiesel. So, there are two reasons why we anticipate the price should come down relative to that number that I just gave you. The first one is that it's closer than where we are sourcing the fuel from right now, and the second one is that they will be producing it at a volume which we anticipate should bring down the price.

Another thing to note is that if there is a renewable diesel, it's not going to have the carbon price in it because it's made from renewables. It's organic-based. Thus, as the carbon price comes in and as it ramps up over time, what we will see is that standard diesel prices would increase and so, at the same time, it will not impact the renewable diesel prices.

So, we know that price is a consideration. We feel that it is too early to see exactly where it's landing, but it is definitely a price consideration.

Finally, I think we should also talk about the price of the pollution itself. Climate change has costs associated with it, and for — well, for as long as I have been an engineer and a climate scientist, those costs have been considered externalities — not our problem. I don't think that this is the way that it can or should be. So, when we look at the price of fuels, if we say that it is too much, we need to also then say to ourselves that we should anticipate other costs — like the Shakwak, degrading permafrost, and the cost to keeping up those highways or from other impacts that are happening.

Our anticipation is that if we don't address climate change — don't make this transition away from fossil fuels — then the costs will get dramatically higher for all governments around the world dealing with the impacts of climate change.

Mr. Kent: The minister quoted a \$3-per-litre number. Can he just let me know if that is for biodiesel or renewable diesel, or is it sort of — I guess, is that the same? Then, what benchmark number for — you know, recognizing that this is a snapshot in time right now what benchmark number is it for just the diesel that is burned now that is not bio or renewable? I am just wanting those numbers for cost comparisons.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't want it to be a quote, as in: "This is the exact price". This is what the department is giving me as a ballpark of the price. So, if we can please just understand that this is a roundabout. I am trying to remember what the last time I filled up my vehicle was, because I have a diesel vehicle. I think it — well, was it \$2.30 a litre? Anyway, it is over \$2, let's say, right now for diesel, so that is a ballpark price there, and biodiesel is not that much different. The price that I was quoting — quoting; there it is — the price I gave — the \$3 — was the ballpark price for renewable diesel right now, and the plant that is coming in Fort St. John for Imperial Oil is a renewable diesel plant.

Mr. Kent: I would expect that the largest greenhouse gas-emitter in the territory is probably the Yukon government, with all of the buildings they own, obviously, and the vehicles and the fleets. So, I am just curious if the minister can confirm that for me, because it is a guess on my part, but can he confirm that the Yukon government is indeed the largest greenhouse gas-emitter in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: In the past, when there has been a separation out of emissions that are attributed to the Yukon government against the overall Yukon emissions, they were in the range of 10 percent — that neighbourhood. It always depends on how you cut up the pie, but we are roughly 10 percent, but it might be as much as 15 or 20 percent. The problem is, I don't have current numbers. I could ask the Department of Environment, as it is the branch that does the accounting for emissions, and it's usually a year or two lagged, but the Yukon government is not the lion's share of the overall emissions.

Mr. Kent: I'm not saying Yukon government — I guess, as a single entity — if you take the mines as single entities, rather than as an industry — as single entities go, the Yukon government, at 10 or perhaps 20 percent, I would suggest, would probably be the largest single-entity emitter of greenhouse gases in the territory.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Again, you always have to take these with a grain of salt, but the latest estimate we have for the Yukon government, as a single entity, is six percent of emissions. The latest estimate we have for mining, as a whole sector, is 10 percent of emissions.

Mr. Kent: I am not talking about mining as a sector; I am talking about the individual mines as single entities. We are not talking about sector-specific. Six percent is the Yukon government's emissions. That's the number that the minister gave us.

Obviously, there is a lot of work going on to reduce those emissions. Are the Yukon government-specific emissions — and I don't have a copy of last year's interim report for *Our Clean Future*, but are those Yukon government emissions tracked separately so that Yukoners can see where the government is at with reducing their emissions to meet the climate goals that have been set in the *Clean Energy Act*?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, those numbers are tracked, and I will confirm it. I believe that they have been published. We certainly want to share that information, so I will just check with the department. They are in our last report from this past summer, and we put out annual reports.

Mr. Kent: So, just quickly then, I am hoping the minister can confirm for me — also in those reports with respect to the Yukon government are the amounts, that they are either below or potentially above the 2010 levels. Obviously, the targets that are set out in the *Clean Energy Act* are reductions below the 2010 levels, so is that something that is reported in the interim reporting so that Yukoners can see where government is with respect to meeting the climate goals?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Within *Our Clean Future*, each action has tracking on it. There is an action to reduce government emissions. I think it's 30 percent by 2030. We have had a suggestion around that, so we track all of these and try to measure all of them. I am not sure with the — I forget what the latest number is — we produce graphs for each of more than 100 actions. In fact, I know we don't, but we sort of aggregate data broadly. I think that there is a really specific question here about whether that information is produced in the annual report.

What I will say is that the Department of Environment, which has the lead for producing that report, is looking to try to share the information with Yukoners. I will just take it as a suggestion that this is one that the Official Opposition believes would be good to try to give that specific graph to, but the data is there and the number is tracked.

Mr. Kent: So, I just wanted to confirm then — well, I guess that the first statement I would make is that, yes, as the Official Opposition, obviously seeing what the Yukon government is doing to reduce their emissions would show other industries and other Yukoners what leadership role the government is taking with respect to their own backyard, essentially.

But I do want to just circle back with the minister on the numbers that he mentioned. Did he say that the Yukon government's target for greenhouse gas emissions is 30 percent by 2030? If he can confirm that number, and then, I believe that he mentioned — I think that it was last week in a question from the New Democratic Party that the target for the mining industry — the mining intensity targets — would be 45 percent by 2035. So, I will just give him a chance to confirm those two numbers for us.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I thank members for their patience. I just looked up in *Our Clean Future* to see what it says exactly.

First thing, this target that I am talking about is sitting up in the preamble around the discussion on homes and buildings, and we say that we will do energy retrofits and install renewable heating systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Government of Yukon buildings — 30 percent by 2030.

I will also note that the Climate Leadership Council has suggested to us that we increase this. I will also note that we have our various teams within Energy, Mines and Resources, Environment, HPW, and Community Services. It includes quite a few groups, but in particular for this action, Energy, Mines and Resources and Highways and Public Works use adapted management with the plan. Like we have always said, the plan will continue to be updated and improved upon. That's the number that is there. We will have other actions that will ask us to do more, but that is that number, as it is reported right now.

Mr. Kent: So, I guess that the question then that we will follow up on with the minister is with respect to the overall targets for the Government of Yukon. Again, I don't think that he mentioned the diesel consumption through heating, transportation, or other things, but the number that he gave us was 30 percent by 2030, and then the number that he gave last week in the Legislature for the mining intensity targets is 45 percent by 2035, I believe.

I think that we would be looking for a bit of an explanation on why the intensity targets for the mining industry are much more aggressive, it appears, in the interim. Obviously, net zero by 2050 is the overall goal, so why doesn't the government have a similar interim target as what they are going to be placing on the mining industry.

I am going to pivot to a couple of other questions that I have. Again, I am going to go back to the minister's mandate letter. One of the items that is mentioned is making the necessary amendments to the *Clean Energy Act* and developing

the accompanying regulations to establish a renewable electricity generation standard and to regulate renewable fuels.

So, I am wondering if the minister has any idea when we can expect those act amendments to the floor of the Legislature, and then will the accompanying regulations be developed afterward or concurrently with the amendments to the act?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, I know that this is one of those points where I will try to be as clear as I can with the opposition. I did say that the target of 30 percent by 2030 for us is being looked at and we are considering where we can go. All of these things sort of leapfrog along.

But frankly, if you want to compare — to try to get a 30-percent reduction in seven years against a 45-percent reduction within 12 years, those are pretty similar, actually. So, I have always said, and I will continue to say, that these are ambitious and hard-to-achieve targets, which are also important.

I know that we try to be careful with language — so, the member opposite will describe these as being “imposed on” industry, and I will say that this is how we wish to work “with” industry. I think it is all of us — and across all of our society — who are looking to make this transition away from fossil fuels, and I think it is very important. I don't think that it is unique to government or industry or individuals; I think it is all of us. So, we are all in that together.

The other question that was asked was about timing for some of the other pieces. For the renewable electricity targets, I think those are most likely to come within the next year. With respect to renewable fuels, our timelines for those are a little further out, so I am not sure on those timelines yet, but the target for that action is 2025.

Mr. Kent: I am going to jump over to some questions with respect to land use planning. Earlier today, I tabled a document from McMillan LLP. We talked about it a couple of times in Question Period earlier this week. Again, the title of the document is *Clear as Mud: The Legal Implications of Land Use Planning in Yukon*. It refers to the Yukon Supreme Court decision of January 31 with respect to the First Nation of Na-Cho Nyäk Dun and a lawsuit against the Yukon. The judgment, of course — I don't want to ask specific questions about that lawsuit because the Yukon government, as I understand it, has appealed that decision.

I guess my concern, from a Yukon perspective, is that this publication from McMillan LLP has been posted online since February 13, 2023. I'm just wondering when the minister became aware of it and if he has reached out to the firm so that they can update this brief to reflect the fact that this Yukon Supreme Court decision has, in fact, been appealed.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The member tabled the document today, and I pulled it up on my computer. It talks about implications of land use planning here in the Yukon. It looks like an opinion piece to me from this firm. I think they are out of territory. I haven't spoken to the person who wrote this. I don't know whether the department has been in touch with them, but I don't think so. Of course, lots of people out there will write articles about us. I am happy to have a look at it. I

will stop there, and if there are other questions, we will see where we go.

Mr. Kent: Yes, obviously, this is a legal publication from a law firm. My understanding is that they deal with clients in Canada and internationally, so they have a fairly broad reach. Again, I guess my only question for the minister is if he or his officials would reach out to this firm so that they could update this — so that it reflects that this Yukon Supreme Court decision is, in fact, under appeal. As I said, this was posted on February 13, prior to the appeal being launched. They mention that in the document.

It doesn't sound like the minister has had a chance to look at the document. Once he gets a chance to read it and his officials get a chance to read it, hopefully there will be some outreach so that this can be updated — so that some of the implications, especially in here, don't do any further damage to our investment reputation for those who subscribe to this particular website.

I do want to ask the minister about the accelerated land use plans. He talked about this in answers with respect to this earlier this week, so I'm just curious if he can give us an idea of how that work is proceeding. Obviously, the Dawson plan is making its way through its final round of consultations, I think, and work. We know that, but what other areas are being prioritized, and how much money is in the current budget to pay for that accelerated land use planning?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I just looked back at Hansard from yesterday. The Member for Copperbelt South and the Member for Copperbelt North both repeatedly referenced this article. If we are talking about reputation, then I worry that this is where these things come from. When the members decide, through Question Period, to suggest that this article is an indication that we're not doing a good job, they themselves are drawing attention to this article.

I am not sure that I track every article written about the Yukon or written about mining across Canada. Let me just turn to this. The member referred to it as "a publication". I am just looking at the articles they have on here. "Trademark of Foreign Owner invalidated on Basis of Bad Faith"; "Fanning the Flames of Liability: The Ontario Court of Appeal Considers Product Liability";

"A Look at Some Key Findings by the Alberta Securities Commission in Re Bison"; and "Québec: Bill 96's Impact on Franchise Businesses". This is not a publication as though it is something — it's journalism, effectively. It's opinion pieces.

I will read the article. I will check whether or not there are some facts that I could help to update folks on, but I challenge the Yukon Party, because I think they used Question Period yesterday to seek to raise this issue and draw attention to it.

The Member for Copperbelt South tabled the document today and is then suggesting that we wouldn't want to hurt the reputation of the industry, and when I stood to respond to those questions yesterday, I talked about how I felt the industry was doing — was a strong industry doing meaningful and important work for Yukoners.

Okay. I'm sure we'll get into it a bit back and forth. With respect to regional land use planning, of course, the Dawson

plan is ongoing right now, and I am looking forward to working directly with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in on that plan. Second of all, I have written to each of the other — well, there are four other plans encompassing, I think, nine or 10 other First Nations, and I have written to those First Nations to indicate to them that we are keen to move with them on regional land use planning. So, the department is following up with all right now, and I will leave it there.

Mr. Kent: When it comes to this legal bulletin presented by McMillan LLP and written by lawyers, I guess it's up to the minister and his government and his colleagues if they want to ignore it, but it is something that I believe gives a black eye to the industry here, and there is some out-of-date information in it that I would hope that, perhaps, the minister could reach out to them to get corrected — that, in fact, the Yukon government has appealed the decision and, in fact, it was indeed members of the Yukon Chamber of Mines, not the board, not the organization, but members of that organization who forwarded this legal bulletin to us.

So, again, it's up to the minister and his colleagues whether they choose to take it seriously or not, but again, I think it was serious enough, obviously, for us to bring up in Question Period, and that's why we did it.

With respect to the land use plans and the acceleration plans, again, I am not sure if I got an answer from the minister. How much is in this year's budget to accomplish the acceleration of the land use plan?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The budget for land planning for this coming fiscal year is \$1.8 million. That is dominantly to do with regional land use planning, but there is, as I mentioned yesterday, also some local area planning that is going on too.

Mr. Kent: Hopefully, the minister — if EMR comes back or not if he could get us a breakdown of how much of that is for regional land use planning, how much of it is associated with Dawson, and how much of that amount is associated with accelerating the land use planning initiatives.

I do want to jump over to some questions on the prospecting and exploration side. When it comes to prospecting — and, again, we have talked about this earlier in this Sitting — at last year's Geoscience Forum, the presenting geologist from the Yukon Geological Survey mentioned that we were at a 57-year low in new projects. So, I am wondering if the minister can give us any sense of budgetary expenditures in the 2023-24 budget that could be used to address that. Obviously, there is the Yukon mineral exploration program. It looks to me like that has been capped at the amount that it was last year, so I would be looking for any new additional spending that would help reverse that disturbing trend that was identified by a government geologist at last year's Geoscience Forum.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: There are always different ways that we will look at information. I will share some of the information that I have, but first of all, Natural Resources Canada always gives a forecast for mineral exploration. It's a forecast, so it's good to check to see how it's going. This year, the forecast is for \$144 million, which is lower than the estimate of \$163 million for last season, but we have also seen

that both hardrock and placer were up. Placer production was up. It went up to \$150 million; it was at \$139 million.

Earlier in my opening remarks to you, I said that royalties around our quartz went from a projected \$13 million or \$14 million up an additional \$10 million. We know that there was last year's investment in — where the numbers came out for 2022 was \$1.4 million invested: 25 hardrock, 17 placer exploration projects. These projects anticipated a spend of just under \$4 million last season, so that is significant. Finally, I will just say — and I know that — I totally understand that the members opposite — you know, it is their job to criticize, but if we look for something outside of the Yukon to try to indicate how we are doing or how the industry is doing — let's not talk about it as government; let's talk about the industry.

The Fraser Institute listed the industry in the top 10 last year, so that's pretty good — top 10 jurisdictions in the world. So, "Well done, industry" is what I will say. I know that the point is to criticize us as government, but I worry that it does carry across as though the industry is not doing as well. I think it is doing very well.

Mr. Kent: Just to be clear, Madam Chair, when I mention that we are at a 57-year low in new projects, it is not me saying that; it is not something that is coming from my colleague from Pelly-Nisutlin. This is what the Yukon government — a Yukon Geological Survey geologist — told the Yukon Geoscience Forum last year, and that should be a number that concerns the minister and concerns his colleagues.

That is why I was asking if there were any investments in this year's budget — any additional investments — that would address that or hope to address that. I mean, that is — what we need in the industry is a strong pipeline of projects, from prospecting to early-stage exploration through advanced exploration and development and production — those types of things. So, this is a concern at those early-stage, new projects.

So, again — not me saying this; not me criticizing. This was from the Yukon Geological Survey geologist presenting at the Geoscience Forum. So, it is an individual who works for the minister and is a scientist and a well-respected geologist as well.

I would hope that the minister and his colleagues would take that seriously and use some of the financial levers or policy levers they have to take a look and see how they can reverse that trend.

I do have another question with respect to a 2021 Liberal election campaign promise, and that is with respect to a mineral exploration fund. So, when I look back at the 2021 mandate letter for the minister, it was obviously from the previous Premier, but it said that he was to create a mineral exploration fund to support junior mining companies operating in the Yukon. Economic Development would have the lead with support from Energy, Mines and Resources.

So, last year, what we saw was a news release that went out for a request for proposals to develop this fund. I went and looked on the Bids and Tenders website and that RFP was terminated after the press release and its initial release. Then, when I reviewed the minister's renewed mandate letter for 2023, it had disappeared, so I am curious what has happened

with this Liberal election commitment to create a mineral exploration fund and why the RFP was terminated and if we can expect to see it back. It doesn't look like it, given the new mandate letter, but I will leave it to the minister to let us know.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The program that Economic Development is working on — they did put out a tender. They didn't get back bids that would allow them to do the program when they put it out, which was last year, so they are planning to consider how best to proceed now that it wasn't successful.

We do have a mineral exploration program. We are continuing to support it. The funding is \$1.4 million. It is in this year's — and last. There is work that is happening, of course. Last year, we had \$1.4 million in the budget, and I think we deployed \$1.35 million — so just \$50,000 left on the table for that — so we are investing in exploration.

I do appreciate the work of the Geological Survey, and there is always a range of views that are shared. I was not in the room when that particular presentation was given, but I did, of course, hear about it from the team at EMR. We will continue to support mineral exploration.

Mr. Kent: So, I think what was contemplated to be created in the minister's mandate letter from 2021 that has since disappeared is different from the existing mineral exploration program, so we will follow up with the lead minister from Economic Development later on when his department is up for debate.

As my time winds down here today, I am going to turn the floor over to the Third Party after the 4:15 p.m. break, but I do want to ask a couple of quick questions about forestry.

Can the minister update us on the work around the timber supply analysis for the Southern Lakes area in and around Whitehorse? That plan was signed off a number of years ago, but we're looking to get an update on when the timber supply analysis will be complete. Hopefully, there will be some harvesting opportunities for some of the fuelwood as well as other small micro-mill operators so that they can access that. Then, again, to go back to a 2016 Liberal platform commitment around southeast Yukon, I have asked successive ministers about that — but I am looking for an update on that timber harvest plan, as well. If the minister is able to do that, I would appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I'm sorry. I missed the latter part of the question from the Member for Copperbelt South. It was Southern Lakes — and what was the other one?

Mr. Kent: The first planning area was in Southern Lakes — in and around Whitehorse, obviously — and then the second part of the question was the southeast Yukon. That goes back to a campaign commitment from 2016 that was made by the Liberal Party, but I don't know that it has ever been fulfilled, so I'm looking for a status update on that. I guess, as part of that, recently, First Kaska opened a log-home building plant in Watson Lake, and I'm curious if the minister can let us know if they were able to secure timber to feed that venture.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I will have to get back about Southern Lakes. I just don't have the information in front of me at the moment. With respect to southeast Yukon, we have been in high-level conversations and working to set up in-person

meetings with the Liard First Nation. I have talked directly with Chief Charlie and he is interested in having me be part of some of that conversation. But the branch has been in conversation with the nation, as well as the main harvester in the area. That would be how to do more significant development in and around Watson Lake.

But we are working on some specifics — for example, on Poison Lake and on Scoby Creek. As well, we stay in touch with both the Wood Products Association and the local harvester. From time to time, we have been asked to support applications for permits at the north end of the Stewart-Cassiar Highway but down in British Columbia, so we always try to coordinate with that wood access as well.

Chair: Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter before the Committee is continuing general debate on Vote 53, Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any further general debate?

Mr. Kent: As mentioned before the break, I am going to turn the floor over to my colleague, the Leader of the New Democratic Party. I just wanted to thank the minister and the officials for the discussion here earlier today. I have quite a few more questions, and hopefully we get a chance to get EMR back to the floor before the end of the Spring Sitting so I can get those on the record.

Ms. White: I thank my colleague for his questions today and, of course, welcome the officials to the ever-exciting afternoon debate on the main budget.

The first thing I actually want to get into is probably no surprise to anyone. I want to jump right into elk.

When we talk about the elk-agriculture conflict — and I say “conflict” because if you are a farmer in an elk-affected area, I would suggest that it is an ongoing battle, so I would just like to get started with that.

I know that, last year, there was money budgeted for fencing, and I know that a lot of that money didn’t go out, and there is a series of reasons for that. Maybe we could start by talking about the fencing subsidy or the fencing dollars that exist in this year’s budget and what the expectation is for those.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: When we were on the supplementary budget, I’m pretty sure the member asked about the fencing amounts from the current fiscal year. The note that I got to add information says there was about 3,000 feet of fencing and a little under \$30,000. The amount of money we have in the budget for this year is \$250,000.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that.

I want to discuss the process — and it has to do with when fields are damaged by the elk — the application process to either get them reseeded or to repair the fences. Can the

minister walk me through what that initial application may look like, and then are people able to reapply once they have accessed that money — let’s say, even in the same fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, I think that there are two distinct processes: One is around fencing, and one is around damage — I will have to check with the department. I mean, when it comes to fencing — you know, we did not utilize the funds that we had allocated, so if someone came for it, yes, I think we would be keen to try to move more money. If we were out of funds, then I think that would be a different question. So, I don’t believe that — given how much we were undersubscribed this last year, then I would suspect that we would be fine to take additional applications.

The question around how — I have just been told by the department, Madam Chair, that we even — yes, people are able to reapply. With respect to the question of damage, I will have to get more information about how that process is handled, but I know, for example, that when I was in conversation with the Ministers of Agriculture, one of the ways that it is dealt with or supported by the federal government is through the Canadian agricultural partnership funding. We just signed that new agreement with them.

Some of it, I think, are things — the department is letting me know that the branch works with farmers — go out, take a look, see how it’s going, like what is happening — and try to support them with flexibility.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. The elk issue is one that is very interesting, because I would suggest that it goes both between EMR, which is responsible for agriculture, and then Environment, which may be responsible for the animals. So, there needs to be a close working relationship there, which — when I had the tour of the farms, both of the deputy ministers of the day of both departments — EMR and Environment — came out.

So, I want to know what kind of changes have happened since that tour. Like, I know that there were different solutions that were being suggested at the time, but can the minister walk us through the changes that have been identified and since, I would imagine, working with the Yukon Agricultural Association?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I was really disappointed to miss that tour. I think that I was up in Dawson. By the way, I will talk to the Agricultural Association directly, but we have a new deputy minister, and maybe it’s time for the ministers to go have another look.

We hit the end of the other two-year project, and the group has reconvened. The Member for Tahkini-Kopper King is correct, that it is Environment and EMR; it is also the Yukon Agricultural Association, and it is also the Fish and Game. Those are the four main players at the table, so we brought a group together again to talk about some of those — what we could try to do as next steps to try to improve on this problem.

So, we are recruiting a coordinator. I am just checking with the department; I think that the intention was that it would be someone not within government but that we pay for, but I am just checking on that. There were some communications pieces about trying to keep farmers and hunters informed and also to

try to get farmers connected with hunters so that we could do that well.

So, I think that what the department is telling me is that they haven't worked out all the details around the coordinator yet, about where they will be living — whether they are a government person or not. They looked at ways to try to accelerate the work that we are doing. I think that the Department of Environment has always said that we need more data or we need to make sure that our data is good around the elk, because that gives you an indication when the herd is healthy or when it is not.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Speaking of healthy herds — and I appreciate that we are not in the Environment debate, but again, they cross over — does the minister have current population numbers for both the Takhini and the Braeburn elk herds?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I don't have the data for Braeburn, and I would have to turn to my colleague, the Minister of Environment, to get that. In terms of the Takhini herd, the number has bounced around between 150 to 250. I am not giving exact numbers, but I can see the data and I can see it is moving around. Of course, the working group saw that as well, and so, one of those things that I was talking about better data — it's even better processes to get the data, like more collaring so that they could have more confidence in the numbers that they do have, because right now, your picture seems to shift depending on whether the last count saw it as high or low, because there are resulting arguments about which types of solutions you would seek depending on how many animals there are and how much conflict there is with our farms.

Ms. White: I think it's really hard to hear that the numbers can be as low as 150 and as high as 250, but we're not really sure, and we need to get better data. The issue has been ongoing for a number of years. Is there a plan for EMR to work with Environment to get clearer numbers?

The reason why the Takhini herd is of special interest is that those animals are in pretty substantial farmland, so knowing those numbers is important. Is there an intention for Energy, Mines and Resources to work with Environment to get better numbers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The answer is yes. Energy, Mines and Resources will support Environment, and they are working with the working group, which includes the Yukon Agricultural Association and Fish and Game. Environment will have the lead on that action.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When can we expect recommendations from that working group?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The next meetings will be in the coming weeks. The group has met to talk through the proposals. Again, their suggestion is on a two-year window, but the implementation is starting this summer. That's the timeline.

I want to be careful, because there are probably subtleties within that answer because there are a few actions. They are meeting again shortly — implementation starting in 2023.

Ms. White: Where could regular folks find either minutes from those meetings or the implementation plan once it is accepted?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, I think, from the public perspective — the working group was talking about putting out some joint press releases — or a press release, depending — as needed that would talk about the pilot program.

There will be a coordinator named, and then we will do this outreach to farmers and hunters so that they know who that coordinator is and how to contact them. I don't know that we were anticipating the broad public, but, on the other hand, there will be public information. I suppose that if there was someone from the public who wanted to either share or get some information, that would be a way. I imagine the media could reach out if you are going to put out a press release, but that's the game plan — put out some public information and then have a position that will liaise more directly with farmers and hunters.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am sure he can appreciate that I am more interested in what the responsibilities of the Yukon government in those recommendations are, which is why, as a normal person, I am asking where I might find both their implementation plan and the proposals. I look forward to either the press release from those organizations — or maybe a ministerial statement in the future about what the plan is, because that would be something that we didn't know about.

I am going to move on to firewood because April 1 is fast approaching. The reason why I believe this date is relevant is that our woodcutters have to stop harvesting, for example, in some areas. So, can the minister update us on the status of the Quill Creek firebreak?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: The fuel break, I believe, was completed in the last calendar year. I would have to look back in time to see when that was completed, but it was done pretty quickly, actually. Part of this was about making sure that there were staging areas in and around there so that work could continue when we got into that period of time. The permitted areas are permitted from August 15 to spring breakup, and I take that to mean when the ground is not hard anymore. So, it is about the environmental requirements around the ground that came through the permit itself and the YESA application. I can indicate that we have 27,000 cubic metres of timber permitted in the Quill Creek area. There are now 20 operators working there, and 12 are new commercial applicants, so that is a big jump. That is great.

We are continuing to work through the Wood Products Association to try to support other opportunities to allow more year-round work — and that we can build up a store of firewood, because that was one of the things that caused us so much trouble — well, mostly two winters ago when it got to the toughest. We want to continue to improve that.

As I said previously during one of the budget speeches, wood harvesting is up quite a bit. The number of cords overall is up now, but we still want to do some work to get more storage so that the system is more resilient if we hit times when there is a shortage of supply for whatever reason.

Ms. White: Just to build up on the comment about storage — so, it is my understanding that harvesters have been asking for the establishment of a drying yard. So, as we all know, burning green wood is not an effective way to heat, and

it is not ideal, either, for transportation, for processing, and all those things. The minister just mentioned the importance of having kind of a bit of a stockpile, in case things changed. I mean, for that, we could look at environmental — whether it was a wet and soggy time and we couldn't get out to harvest or whether there was a high fire risk later in the season.

So, does the minister have any updates on — I would hope — the ongoing discussions around a drying yard for timber?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, we are looking at trying to develop some possible locations. You know, it is not just one that we are looking at, actually. We are trying to think on different sides of — so, there are two ways that you can think of it: One is right next to where the operators are working so that they could continue to work there; one is close to town, because most of the market is here — in and around Whitehorse. So, there could be one on either end of town. We are looking for places where wood could be stored, seasoned, processed, et cetera.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. When do we expect to know more — so, whether or not the government is going ahead with those yards or working with others to develop them?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: They are all at various stages. There is one, which we have already discussed, that is permitted at Haines Junction. There's one that is going through YESAB right now. There is one where we are in dialogue with proponents about their concepts about where, and then there's the very high-level conversations that we are looking to have with the Liard First Nation directly about increasing wood as — well, it's a range of things, really, but it's as an economic opportunity. It's also as a fire-risk reduction near to the community, et cetera. They're at different stages.

Ms. White: I am just currently going through the — it used to be the Energy Solutions Centre, but it is no longer that — going through the rebate program. Is there still a rebate for high-efficiency wood stoves?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes, there are still subsidies for high-efficiency wood stoves. My colleagues from the Energy branch are telling me that it has been there for about 10 years now, and the subsidy is around \$300.

Ms. White: The humour for the people within his department is that I was looking at the heating systems for existing homes and read the \$8,000 rebate for installing a heat pump, and there's a picture of a wood stove.

My brain read "heat pump" and did not look at the wood stove.

The reason I bring this up is that, a number of years ago, there was a wood smoke study done, and it was an interesting one, and I really appreciated the opportunity that I had to speak with people at the department at the time after the study was done, because it actually highlighted that two areas in my riding — both by the Kopper King, off the highway and toward the Takhini Trailer Park — actually had high levels of wood pollution. When I went and had the discussion, it was quite convenient at the time that no one else was there, so it was easy for us to have a candid conversation.

But one of the concerns is that when you look into areas, for example, that have a lot of poverty — so, trailer parks are a good example — you know, they are affordable homes to get into, but they are not necessarily affordable to run. One of the points that I make is that I have seen all sorts of things in trailer parks, and it is just people trying to get by. It's great to have things like a rebate when you can afford to buy a new Princess stove for \$5,000-plus, but if you don't have \$5,000 to buy the stove, you are going to continue to use whatever you have — similar to the fact that without — you know, I have seen all sorts of wood piles, and by that, I mean found wood, scrap wood, and things like that. When we have programs, for example, like the wood stove replacement which I think is fantastic if you are able to access and afford it, but it doesn't capture everyone.

So, even when I look at, for example, the home retrofit programs — and I think that they are really important; I do — as a person who has accessed lots of them, I often talk about myself in here, because it is easier than talking about anyone else, but having done the insulation on my home and knowing the difference in how much it costs to run now compared to before, knowing how much more comfortable it is and how much more affordable it is — but at times, people don't have the luxury of being able to pay for these things. I mean, we could go anywhere in some of these parks, and we could see where people have pink batting insulation inside windows, trying to make them more energy efficient, just because they are not — trying to make them safer, trying to make them more comfortable, and trying to make them warmer in winter.

So, one of the challenges that comes is — again, I am a huge fan of these programs — the reimbursement programs and the incentive programs — I think those are fantastic, but I do still think that there is a portion of the population who is missed and the ones who probably, to be honest, could use the support the most.

I know that my colleague will have a conversation with the Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation when we talk about it, but I'm just going to put the pitch in. If we talk about the importance of energy reduction and we talk about how it saves in the long run and how it makes things more comfortable, there is an entire part of the population that is missed in that conversation because there is just not the privilege of being able to afford to participate.

If we, as decision-makers or as part of a society, believe that we are — you know, if a testament of how we are as a society is how our most vulnerable are able to participate, live, and be well, then I would say that a lot of the energy stuff that we do is very much for the privileged. I recognize that as a privileged person who has been able to participate in those.

So, I am just putting a pitch in. It's probably not a question, just a pitch. I don't know the answer. I don't know the answer, but I know there's a problem, so I am just highlighting the problem and putting it out there, knowing that the folks in — I don't even know what the branch is; I want to say the Energy branch; okay, it's still the Energy branch — do really incredible work. I have a lot of admiration for the folks there, because that is where I got walked into the air-source heat pump, for

example, in 2016. It is where I signed up for a lot of other programs. So, I have a lot of admiration for them, but I know that they are working within the parameters of policies. So, if we were ever able to expand those, I think it would be really valuable.

I am going to sit down because the minister would really like to add to that conversation.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I am going to make two offers to the member opposite. The first is that I will ask our Energy branch folks to sit down with Social Services and sit down with, maybe, Yukon Housing Corporation as well to take a look to see if there is any way to try to tailor some of the programs so that they could be more accessible for low-income folks.

Now, I know that there are some programs that we are getting access to. For example, the member was talking about heat pumps. We just got some federal funding initiatives that focus on low-income folks — around heat pumps. That's one specific thing and it's not the only thing. It's an example.

The other offer that I will make is — I would love to go with the member to see some of her constituents' places and just to talk to folks a bit. If she is willing to take me around and have some of that conversation, then I could feed that back to the department with some of the perspectives that I'm hearing from her neighbours. I know that the problems are not unique to her riding, but I think that it would be instructive for me to get the same look that she is getting — so if I could make those two offers and see what she thinks.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for both of those. That's great. Just a reminder that not everyone with low income is on social assistance — and sometimes not supported by Yukon Housing Corporation. But I do appreciate that, and I would love to take the minister around, but we will wait until it's not cold out and mucky out — just so people aren't having to keep their doors open for us, because losing that heat right now — we wouldn't be very popular. So, I do appreciate that.

Is there a number that we are aiming for, for example, of residential heat pumps for this year? I realize that I could have asked this in supplementary, but how many did we support in installing last year and how many are we hoping to install this year?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I won't have it on the same timelines that the member asked for specifically. The numbers that I have are going to be heat pumps plus electric thermal storage. We are just saying "renewable heating" or "smart heating devices". So, in recent time, we have installed 117, and our target is to install 1,300. So, this is going to ramp up both through Better Buildings — but also because we think that people are going to want to start getting these things to improve efficiency.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Better Buildings doesn't come quite close enough to the cost of a heat pump, even with the rebates, but I appreciate the optimism. In my case, it wouldn't have helped me at all — well, I guess it would have helped, but it wouldn't have got me there.

Can we talk next about the number of EVs that we have supported and the number that we are hoping to get to?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So far, we have had just over 200 zero-emission vehicles sold and registered in the territory. We have also done just over 750 e-bikes, and I will just add, in case it's of interest to the member, 79 of the high-performance building retrofits. Our target for zero-emission vehicles is 4,800 total, I believe.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. It's a really exciting thing, because in this Chamber, for years, my then-colleague, the Member for Mayo-Tatchun, Jim Tredger, and my colleague for Whitehorse Centre, Liz Hanson, and I talked about an electric Alaska Highway back when it seemed like it was a pipe dream. It seemed like we were never going to get there. We talked about this imaginary future. We never really thought that we would get there, but we talked about how great it would be if you could drive an electric vehicle up the Alaska Highway. We are so close. I think that we are so close.

Which brings me to one of the commitments in *Our Clean Future*, where the Department of Energy, Mines and Resources is to be working with other levels of government to work on that infrastructure to allow electric vehicles to be able to drive all the way, for example, from British Columbia all the way to the Yukon. So, I just wanted to know where we are at in that process and with those discussions.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We now have fast-charging stations from Dawson down to Carcross, from Mayo over to Ross River, and from Watson Lake to Haines Junction. The two communities we are looking to get on shortly are Burwash and Beaver Creek, and we are densifying the number within Whitehorse. Those aren't the level 2 chargers yet; these are the fast chargers.

With respect to working with neighbours — for example, British Columbia — we have had conversations — I mentioned earlier today, but maybe it was missed, that I met with Minister Osborne. My colleague, the Minister of Highways and Public Works, has had conversations with British Columbia as well. I am sorry; I'm not sure who his counterpart is, but we are just about to work to sign an agreement with BC on how we will work together on this issue at the government-to-government level.

We have also had conversations with Northwest Territories about the Dempster. I believe there have been conversations with Alaska, although I have not been part of those, so I will have to turn to my colleague; likely the Minister of Highways and Public Works is the person who would have been having those types of conversations.

I have even had conversations with Canada about this, because you can see what might happen: A province might think to themselves, "Yeah, we will deal with our dense areas and not necessarily deal with the periphery." Of course, the Yukon totally cares about the Stewart-Cassiar and the Alaska Highway, just in the same way that the Northwest Territories cares about what we do on the Dempster.

Ms. White: I will have other questions about the commitments in *Our Clean Future* that fall under Energy, Mines and Resources. I am also going to jump around, because it is my way.

My understanding is that there are six blocks of gas leases that Chance Oil has right now that are set to expire in August of this year. I just wanted to know if there was a sense of whether or not his department was planning on extending those.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We are in dialogue right now, so it is too early for me to say. If I recall how those requests went previously, they actually end up being — they go through Cabinet at some point. So, at this stage, we are in correspondence with Chance, and we have an ongoing dialogue with northern chiefs. So, we are just in those engagements right now.

Ms. White: Just while we're on the topic of oil and gas, last fall when we were discussing the bill that I brought forward about changing the *Oil and Gas Act* back to include section 13, which was essentially the veto for unsigned First Nations, the Premier — well, the now Premier — had talked about exploration off the Beaufort, and I just wanted to know if the minister has any additional information. So, yes, I guess I am asking right now about offshore oil and gas exploration.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: What I believe the Premier was referring to was talking about dispositions that might happen in the future in the offshore. Previously, the Yukon had not been a decision body around that, so we are currently in negotiations with the federal government and others — for example, the Inuvialuit — around what role the Yukon can and should have with respect to any potential offshore work, but those negotiations are not concluded at this point.

Ms. White: I mean, the minister and I have had a lot of different conversations about his language around moratorium of oil and gas development and my language around banning and how I don't think that they are the same thing, although he believes that they are. So, how do we justify, for example, the Yukon government page about learning about our work on offshore oil and gas, where it talks about developing offshore oil and gas, with his government's stance on a moratorium on oil and gas development in the territory?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: So, there is a moratorium right now, first of all. It is a federal moratorium, but part of that issue, from our perspective, is that, when it comes to questions about whether there is development in the offshore, we want to make sure that the Yukon has a role in that. That is what we are at the table with. By the way, we have been there with — First Nations have been part of this conversation with us all along, and so, it's a question of governance. We believe that there is jurisdiction for us, as a government, in the Beaufort, north of the Yukon in our territorial waters, and so this is about establishing that. It is not incongruous with the rest of our stand around oil and gas that we have campaigned on — and made good on our commitments.

Ms. White: The minister and I may have different thoughts on how this all works, but I would think that the recommendations of the IPC about no more extraction and no more oil and gas development would play into — especially with a government that declared a climate emergency. But I will leave it because I can only find the information that I can find online. Unfortunately, I am not privy to other conversations.

The next conversation that I would like to have is about where we are with the Dawson regional land use plan. I know that the recommended plan was released on September 19. The engagement period ran until November 20, 2022. Where is the process now? What were the results of the community engagement? What do we expect that timeline to implementation to be?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Just before I leave the question, our efforts to work with Canada, the Inuvialuit, First Nations, and the Northwest Territories around getting an agreement where we have agreed-upon jurisdiction — what we are negotiating right now is exactly about making sure that we have a say in protecting our environment. That's what it's about. I believe in responsible government. I believe in the Epp letter, and I think that this was just something that was missed.

With respect to the Dawson regional land use plan, we had a public engagement that concluded at the end of last year, so we have a “what we heard” report coming out shortly. We just recently did quite a few scenarios where we worked with decision bodies about how things would work — imagining the plan as it is but trying to understand the process to make sure that we are not missing anything around the choices within the plan so that we can see that it can be implemented well.

We got some feedback. We invited others to watch that process and then provide feedback to us.

Currently, we are at the stage where we, as a government, are working internally and Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, as a government, is working internally. Sometime soon, I hope, we will get together as governments to see what we think jointly and see if we are close. That is the next stage. I will share that I think the sorts of things that we are looking at are modest changes. We are not looking at anything like what happened previously, for example, on the Peel watershed planning process. We believe substantively in the overall direction of the commission — and if I can just again thank them for all their hard work. So, that's where we are right now.

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

Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The following legislative return was tabled March 23, 2023:

35-1-82

Response to matter outstanding from discussion with Ms. Van Bibber related to general debate on Vote 54, Tourism and Culture, in Bill No. 207, *Third Appropriation Act 2022-23* — museums and cultural centres (Streicker)