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Thursday, March 30, 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 — Lane Tredger, MLA, Whitehorse Centre

CABINET MINISTERS

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

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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
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Wade Istchenko	Kluane	Stacey Hassard	Pelly-Nisutlin

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

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**Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Thursday, March 30, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.**

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

Prayers

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to please help me welcome some guests here today for one of our tributes, which will be led by my colleague.

We have: Julie, also known as “Jules”, Anderson, executive member of the Public Service Alliance of Canada pride committee; Birju Dattani, director of the Yukon Human Rights Commission; Simone Kitchen, the operations officer of the Yukon Human Rights Commission; Mira Sirois, health and education manager at Queer Yukon; and Emily Brooks, also with Queer Yukon. Welcome.

Applause

Speaker: Tributes.

TRIBUTES

In recognition of the International Transgender Day of Visibility

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Tomorrow and yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow is the International Transgender Day of Visibility, so today I rise to add my voice as an ally. I come from the majority and from a place of privilege, and it is hard for people like me to really appreciate the experience of discrimination, hate, and even risk that transgender people face just for being themselves, whether it is something as petty and despicable as being judged for using one bathroom versus another, or something as extreme as facing violence because of being different and wanting to tell the world or even wanting to tell friends and family. From my perspective, it is bullying and violence that are despicable. Love is love, and our world is better when we respect everyone’s identity and orientation.

We should thank transgender people for showing us a world that is a little more diverse, a little fuller, a little more colourful. As Yukoners, we take pride in the colourful differences, so we should say thanks to transgender folks. As Yukoners, we should be allies. The progress that the Yukon has made in recent years is thanks to the tireless work of those on the front lines: gender and sexuality alliances; gay and straight alliances, like the Porter Creek Rainbow Room; All Genders Yukon Society; Queer Yukon Society; Yukon Queer Film Alliance; the Human Rights Commission; and the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. Thanks to all of these groups and the superheroes who support them.

The Transgender Day of Visibility is a celebration of the tremendous work that these organizations and the trans community have been doing. The Transgender Day of Visibility is also an opportunity to acknowledge the work that is still ahead of us. So, I am looking forward to the update today on gender-affirming care.

Yesterday in this Assembly, I was honoured to hear our colleague, the MLA for Whitehorse Centre, stand on a point of privilege and share their new name and pronouns to be a visible face for the trans community. Today and always, I hope that they feel respected and supported in this House, in our communities, and in our territory.

Tomorrow is the International Transgender Day of Visibility, so today I rise to add my voice as an ally.

Applause

Mr. Istchenko: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize March 31 as International Transgender Day of Visibility. March 31 is dedicated to celebrating transgender and non-binary people while raising awareness of the discrimination that they face worldwide. It signifies our support for everyone to be able to live safe and authentic lives. In many places around the world, it is still not safe to be openly transgender or gender non-conforming. Because of this, it is important to take steps to educate ourselves and each other in order to live, work, play, and study together regardless of identity expression or orientation.

We are taking steps in the right direction toward inclusivity and equality, and it can be as simple as just being kind, respectful, and understanding toward others. Each transgender person should be recognized for who they are. Human beings are deserving of respect, dignity, and equality. When we build a society that accepts, celebrates, and uplifts transgender people, we celebrate spaces where all can feel understood, respected, and safe.

So, I would like to recognize and thank our remarkable community organizations that continue to support, promote, and educate Yukoners on behalf of our LGBTQ2+ community, and thank you to all of those who stand up and show support for their trans family, friends, and colleagues.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to tomorrow’s International Transgender Day of Visibility. I am going to talk today about who I look to for trans visibility and inspiration, and those are the students of the rainbow rooms and rainbow clubs and GSAs across the Yukon. It is such a joy and a privilege to get to spend time with them.

I will start by taking a minute to thank all of the incredible educators and parents supporting students and making spaces like clubs and queer proms happen. It takes a huge amount of behind-the-scenes planning and advocacy, and I am so grateful that you do that work for our students.

Yesterday, the gallery was full of Porter Creek’s Rainbow Room students. I think about their confidence in talking to the media and in walking through public places so proudly wrapped in pride flags. It is something that I didn’t know was

possible when I was in school, and I am so grateful for the people who blazed those trails and who are still blazing those trails to make room for all of us.

Last year, I had the pleasure of attending queer prom, and aside from picking up some great fashion tips, I was so struck by how open, curious, and, in some ways, nonchalant students were about their spectrum of gender identities and expressions. It made me feel old-fashioned and out of date, which was amazing, because it gave me the chance to learn and grow.

Every time I have walked into a GSA or a rainbow room, or rainbow club, the joy and care in those spaces have swept over me. I have watched students support each other through navigating difficult communities and mental health crises. I have seen them celebrate together, from political wins to very personal moments of joy.

I have watched them talk through uncertainty and new ideas. I love their questions, their exuberance, and their warmth. Our youth make me feel so hopeful for a braver, brighter, more diverse, more accepting, more visible future. I can't think of anyone better to celebrate on the International Transgender Day of Visibility.

Applause

In recognition of the Celebration of Swans

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I rise today to pay tribute to the Celebration of Swans festival at the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre and other wildlife viewing sites in the Yukon.

The swan festival takes place each April when tens of thousands of swans, ducks, and geese land on M'Clintock Bay, Marsh Lake to rest and feed during the long migration to their northern nesting grounds. This mass migration event is truly astounding to witness. For Yukoners, it marks the return of spring and the summer months we all enjoy.

I encourage Yukoners to visit the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre, located on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Carcross/Tagish First Nation, which welcomes more than 4,000 visitors a year.

I am happy to say that the Swan Haven Interpretive Centre will be open daily in April, with additional programming continuing into May. The centre offers learning opportunities for all ages — exhibits, knowledgeable guides, daily swan counts, and a 500-metre shoreline trail with views of water birds all along the way.

Every year, hundreds of Yukon kids make school trips to Swan Haven to do hands-on activities, games, and outdoor learning. In addition, each year, the Government of Yukon produces a collectible poster for the celebration that features spring-themed artwork from a local artist. This year's poster includes a beautiful image created by a local graphic designer and illustrator, Nhesa Patoy.

I want to take a moment to highlight some of the events that the Department of Environment is hosting over the course of the month in the Celebration of Swans. On April 16, the Japanese Canadian Association of Yukon will be guiding a free bird origami activity. There is a bird nest box building workshop being hosted by YuKconstruct on April 18. We will be hosting a seniors' tea on April 26 at Swan Haven, organized

by the Marsh Lake Community Society, and a guided hike on the M'Clintock west ridge on April 25, and much more.

Throughout the month, several swan buses, a free shuttle for Yukoners, will be running from downtown Whitehorse to Swan Haven and back. Yukoners can register to catch a swan bus and find out more information about events happening throughout the month by visiting Yukon.ca/swans.

I want to end by thanking the dedicated Department of Environment staff and all those who help organize and make this celebration such a success every year. Swan Haven provides a unique experience that is enjoyed by so many, and I encourage all Yukoners to take time this spring to check it out.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize the Celebration of Swans. Every spring, Yukoners, students, and visitors look forward to the spectacular influx of trumpeter swans in our Yukon lakes and specifically at Marsh Lake. This mass migration of thousands of swans not only signifies that the spring season is upon us, but it's also a beautiful display of our vast wildlife of the territory.

The Celebration of Swans occurs annually throughout the month of April and is the Yukon's premier bird festival. Part of this celebration takes place at the well-known Swan Haven Interpretive Centre, located on the shores of M'Clintock Bay at the north end of Marsh Lake. Swan Haven's multiple outdoor viewpoints allow for observation of the swans in their natural habitat in their northern breeding grounds. Not only can you observe the swans outdoors, but the interpretive centre allows for visitors to enjoy and learn about the native swan species through interactive workshops, presentations, spiritual celebrations, and much more.

For those near Kluane, there is the Degey swan walk, where you can bring a lunch and enjoy a guided walk with Elder Mary Jane Johnson while learning about and observing the swans. For the more hands-on individuals, there is a workshop at YuKconstruct that will guide you through the assembly of your own bird nest and/or bat box.

I encourage all to explore the many events and activities throughout April for the Celebration of Swans. Thank you to the Environment staff, and especially Swan Haven staff and experts, who make the Celebration of Swans a huge success every year.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to pay tribute to this year's Celebration of Swans. What always amazes me about swans is how big they are. There is something a bit surreal about seeing such an enormous and elegant bird swimming on Marsh Lake, but maybe it's the warm sunshine and open water that feels surreal after our long winters.

Spring is coming back, and we know it because the swans are returning. What a great reason to celebrate. This year's festival is packed full of events. One that particularly caught my eye is the bird origami workshop, hosted by the Japanese

Canadian Association of Yukon. What a delightful way to spend an afternoon.

Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who are making the festival a reality. I would also like to highlight the swan bus, a free shuttle from downtown Whitehorse out to Swan Haven and back. It is a wonderful way to make the celebration more accessible and more environmentally friendly.

And there is no way I could talk about the Celebration of Swans without talking about their incredible annual posters. They are a common sight in people's homes across the Yukon, and a perfect celebration of spring and those returning swans. Happy Spring, and Happy Celebration of Swans.

Applause

Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Mr. Hassard: I have for tabling a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works from several industry groups throughout the Yukon.

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

THAT this House applauds the efforts of those who travelled to the Vatican to share their experiences and the lasting impacts of the residential school system, which resulted in the formal repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to follow through on their commitment to install streetlights on the Robert Campbell Highway as requested by the people in the area through their MLA and in a petition signed by hundreds of citizens.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Highways and Public Works and the Minister of Community Services to attend the 2023 annual general meeting of the Yukon Contractors Association to discuss their concerns with government procurement, process, timelines, and red tape.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to develop "slow down, move over" legislation, similar to what is in place in British Columbia, to require motorists to slow down and move over for all vehicles stopped alongside the road that have flashing red, blue, or yellow lights.

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

THAT this House urges the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources to agree to the request of the Ibex Valley Local Advisory Council to begin a review of the Ibex Valley local area plan.

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to provide a timeline including the expected opening date of the public health lodge in Whitehorse.

I also give notice of the following motion:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Nunavut to explore options to create and expand existing health lodges for out-of-territory medical travel.

Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Gender-affirming health care

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today to speak about our government's ongoing efforts to increase Yukoners' access to gender-affirming health care. I am extremely proud that with changes our government has enacted, the Yukon has the most progressive and comprehensive health coverage for gender-affirming care in Canada. Gender-affirming care, according to the World Health Organization, includes a range of social, psychological, behavioural, and, sometimes, medical interventions to support and affirm someone's gender identity.

Gender-affirming health care is simple: it is health care. Like all health care, gender-affirming care can be life-saving. I believe all Yukoners should have access to health care that they need to live full, healthy, and happy lives. Expanding gender-affirming care was a commitment made in our government's LGBTQ2S+ *Inclusion Action Plan*. This plan sets out a path for the government to make programs and services more equitable for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community now and in the future. While the Yukon has been called a leader in North America for our comprehensive coverage of gender-affirming health care, we will continue to work with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community to make full and genuine inclusion a reality in all that we do.

Last year, our government made it possible for Yukoners to receive coverage for services that other provinces and territories across the country do not provide to their citizens. This is our most recent initiative in a long line of commitments to change Yukon laws and policies to make our territory more equitable and inclusive. Services including body contouring, face surgeries, upper and lower body surgeries, vocal surgery, voice training, and hair removal are now covered under the Yukon health insurance plan so that Yukoners do not have to pay out of pocket. This is a significant step forward in our commitment to making health care more equitable for transgender and gender-diverse communities.

It is one of the many initiatives that our government is taking to reduce barriers for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, all mental wellness and substance use counsellors have received training from the World Professional Association of Transgender Health to help provide informed, inclusive, and affirming mental health care for transgender and gender-diverse people.

The Yukon has an opportunity to be a leader and influence public policy elsewhere in Canada when it comes to supporting the rights of 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples. We have much work to do, but the wheels are in motion, and we must keep up the momentum and work to make all programs and services equitable. To achieve this goal, we rely on our strong community partnerships with equity-seeking organizations and advocates throughout the public service and throughout the territory.

All Genders Yukon and Queer Yukon have helped pave the way for the Yukon's comprehensive gender-affirming care policy. Thank you to all of the equity-seeking organizations that work to advance the rights and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ Yukoners.

Mr. Dixon: I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to respond to this ministerial statement. I should note at the outset that the current government introduced the LGBTQ2S+ action plan in 2021. As we noted when it was released, that was a plan that we are supportive of, and we thank those who contributed to its creation.

Last year, we did hear that, despite the commitments to making the procedures and surgeries referenced by the minister available, there were significant issues that had arisen in regard to access. I also note that the MLA for Whitehorse Centre asked a number of questions about this on October 24 last year that were not entirely answered by the minister.

So, as this government continues to offer these services, we will certainly continue to monitor whether or not the government's actions do indeed match their commitments.

I should also note that there is currently a backlog of surgeries of many types across the board. Earlier this year, the Yukon Hospital Corporation announced that it was delaying or cancelling surgeries from February 13 to March 31. So, we would like the minister to provide more information about whether they are on track to reschedule these surgeries and what steps have been taken to ensure that such disruptions do not occur again.

We have heard from many Yukoners and medical professionals that surgery and specialist wait times for a variety of procedures currently face wait times that are beyond what is considered medically acceptable. For example, we have heard from health professionals that the wait time to see a cardiologist is five months, and about 300 Yukoners were on that cardiac wait-list, as of the last update we received. In response to this, we will continue our call for a surgery wait-time reduction strategy.

I also note that the minister's statement includes a commitment to ensuring access to mental wellness and

substance use counsellors, which is certainly something that we support. I was pleased to learn from the minister's statement that all mental wellness and substance use counsellors have received training from the World Professional Association of Transgender Health to help provide informed, inclusive, and affirming mental health care for trans and gender-diverse people.

In the minister's statement, she said that their goal is to make our territory more equitable and inclusive. Mr. Speaker, those are goals that we certainly share.

MLA Tredger: It is really good to be talking about gender-affirming care in the Yukon when things are going well. Less than six months ago, we were in somewhat of a crisis with gender-affirming care in the territory. After several months of delays, people were finding out that their appointments and surgeries were being paused and cancelled. The delays were devastating for people who had been working toward these treatments for years, only to hit a wall at the final step. A compounding frustration was that information about the situation was not communicated directly to the people affected, and most found out about the delays and cancellations second-hand.

In the Fall Sitting, I asked about the situation here in the Legislature during Question Period and budget debate, and while this government didn't provide a lot of answers at the time, I am really pleased to see that things have improved since then. I want to give credit to the staff in the department for working hard to get a solution in place, because appointments have now resumed and, to the best of my knowledge, things are running pretty smoothly. It is a real relief to know that people are accessing the gender-affirming care they need.

I would really like to thank Queer Yukon for the work they did supporting community members during that very difficult time. We wouldn't be where we are today without their work and advocacy, and I am very grateful to them.

In the fall, I asked specifically that more information about gender-affirming care be made available on yukon.ca, and I'm really happy to see that this has happened. I know it will be a lot easier for people to make decisions and navigate systems when they can easily access information about their options.

I am also really happy to see that the policies have been updated to reflect the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's — or WPATH — most recent standards of care.

I do still see gaps in mental health services. Trans people are disproportionately impacted by gaps in mental health care, not to mention the challenges in finding an informed and accepting health professional. I can tell you from personal experience that there are wonderful, sensitive, supportive health professionals, and, unfortunately, some who really are not. I am really pleased that the Yukon government's mental health professionals have taken the WPATH training, and I'm curious if they have a plan to support or require other health professionals to take similar training.

While we are talking about mental health services for trans people, I do have another question. Last November, All

Genders Yukon stopped providing direct mental health services and shifted their focus to community-building events. I was surprised when I saw that they had the same line item in this year's budget. I am absolutely in favour of funding them for their new mandate, but I was surprised, so I reached out to them, and they were also surprised, because they told the department that they weren't doing direct service anymore, that they hadn't asked for funding in an ongoing way, and that they had not been told that they were getting any more funding.

So, I wanted to ask the minister if she and her department would reach out to them and have a conversation about how the funding can be used to support their new community-building mandate. My hope is that the department can be flexible and collaborative, and find a solution that will work for everyone.

I hope that the minister will be able to address my questions in her reply. I will finish off by saying thank you again to Queer Yukon, All Genders Yukon, and the Department of Health and Social Services for all their work to get us to the place where we are now.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the comments from the members opposite. Gender-affirming care matters to this government, and it has been a priority for us since day one. As I noted earlier in the statement, expanding access to gender-affirming therapies, procedures, and surgeries is only our most recent initiative in a long line of commitments to change Yukon laws and policies to make our territory more equitable and inclusive.

Our government's LGBTQ2S+ inclusive action plan continues to guide our ongoing work. I hear that it is supported by the other parties. Some examples of that work underway, or already completed, include passing the *Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Protection Act*, which bans conversion therapy in the Yukon, and offering mental health training from the World Professional Association for Transgender Health to all Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services clinicians. I certainly expect that we can expand that training for other mental health workers, physicians, nurses, and others — social workers — who work in communities where it would be beneficial to citizens. We have made LGBTQ2S+ awareness and inclusion training available to all Yukon government employees through the internal YGLearn website. We have integrated inclusive language in the new official Government of Yukon communications style guide. We have incorporated gender-inclusive washrooms and change rooms from specifications and design guidelines into Yukon government design guidelines and technical standards manual. We have included pronouns in e-mail signatures as a best practice for Yukon government employees who feel comfortable in doing so. We also amended the *Family Property and Support Act*, which allows separated common-law spouses equal access to spousal support, compared to married spouses.

This list is only a few of the examples of the work that our government is taking action on to enhance inclusion across the board here in the Yukon. Expanding and supporting access to gender-affirming care supports our vision of continuing to improve health and wellness outcomes for all Yukoners. I

would also like to note that the policy, through Yukon's Insured Health and Hearing Services, to expand this access for gender-affirming care was developed in consultation with Dr. Michael Marshall, the president of the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health. It was also reviewed by Dr. Gail Knudson, the previous president of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health.

These meaningful and personal, for many of us, and absolutely necessary changes that our government continues to prioritize are consistent with the recommendations of the *Putting People First* report to enhance health equity and provide more people-centred, holistic care.

Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Motor vehicle inspections

Mr. Hassard: So, on February 23 of this year, a group of industry organizers representing a vast majority of Yukon's private sector, including the tourism and mining sectors, wrote a letter to the Minister of Highways and Public Works to raise concerns about new carrier and compliance policies that his department is implementing. These new rules, related to weigh-scale reporting and the types of vehicles that require a periodic motor vehicle inspection, or PMVI, and here is what the organizations had to say — quote: "... we believe that this new policy is overburdensome, too restrictive and unclear."

Unfortunately, this is becoming a trend with this government. The Liberal government continues to pile new red tape, regulations, and costs onto the private sector without consulting them to understand the impacts. So, why did the government impose these new weigh-scale reporting rules without consulting industry?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Monitoring commercial vehicles on Yukon highways is important for the safety of the travelling public and the integrity of our highway infrastructure. Highways and Public Works administers the Yukon carrier and compliance program, which is responsible for ensuring that drivers of commercial vehicles are following the *Highways Act*, *Motor Vehicles Act*, Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance requirements, and the National Safety Code.

Through this program, carrier compliance officers perform inspections on commercial vehicles to ensure that they are within the weight limits capacity and that their cargo is also properly secured. They also confirmed that pre-trip inspections and log books are completed and that vehicles are mechanically sound. Highways and Public Works continues to work closely with the transportation industry to balance safety, compliance, efficiency, and movement by industry.

Mr. Hassard: While the Yukon government has been creating new policies that industry has called "overburdensome and too restrictive and unclear" in Whitehorse, they have been pulling back services in rural Yukon. Previously, PMVIs could be performed by non-red seal mechanics who had been properly trained to conduct these inspections, but as of January 1 of this year, those rules changed, and these changes will disproportionately affect rural Yukon businesses. So, why

has the Yukon government made this policy change regarding PMVIs that will negatively impact rural Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: What we are really talking about this afternoon is safety on our roadways, making sure that our highways comply with national standards, making sure that the travelling public, either commercial or passenger vehicles, are safe when they travel between our communities and across our territory.

As I have said earlier, under our current model, carriers are required to submit detailed fleet information annually to carrier compliance. We have heard from local businesses that it is burdensome to keep accurate and current logs of all their fleet. This comes into the discussions we have had this week about the electronic log books. When commercial vehicles are overweight and carrying unsecured cargo, it presents a safety risk to the travelling public and causes significant damage to road infrastructure — expensive damage to road infrastructure. So, to address this, carrier compliance has recently proposed modified requirements for weigh-scale reporting and exemption permits. The proposed policy will take a risk-based approach in determining carrier reporting requirements. It may consider vehicle weight, carrier safety incidents, roadside safety violations, and summary conviction tickets.

Really, what the Department of Highways and Public Works, with its carrier compliance requirements, is doing is just making sure that our travelling public is safe, that our commercial vehicles are following the rules, and that our roads aren't getting damaged.

Mr. Hassard: It is very interesting how the minister sees it, because here in Whitehorse, the Yukon government is imposing new rules that the business community is calling overburdensome, too restrictive, and unclear; in the communities, they are imposing policies that give rural Yukoners even less access to services, but meanwhile, the Liberal government has a different set of standards for their own vehicles.

Private carriers are required to provide two PMVIs per vehicle, per year, but the Yukon government isn't required to do any on their own vehicles. So, why is there one rule for private sector vehicles and another rule for the Yukon government's own vehicles?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Mr. Speaker, I have heard today is a — definitely a perspective that has been put forward by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin — not necessarily accurate, but I think — what we did was we had a long debate yesterday about safety, and we talked about making sure that we have exemptions in place, when appropriate, and how do we work with the sector. I heard today the member say that there was no consultation, and I know I actually sat with members from the Contractors Association, and it was previous to them actually going into meetings with Highways and Public Works, I think, which was happening just a week later. I know, in my work, I am committed to continuing that dialogue — I believe I have a meeting — I think it is next Wednesday; I will check my schedule — where I will be having discussions with members from Highways and Public Works.

I know this week, we have Yukon Forum meetings on a number of issues. One of those issues was put forward by the Contractors Association, so I think it's important that I take that forward for the contractors and sit down with First Nation leaders. So, I mean, I think what we are illustrating here is an ability to work with individuals, understand what their needs are, being open-minded to understanding that industry has a particular perspective — we have to understand what this means, but we also have an obligation, again, to keep people safe.

Members on the other side can laugh. We gave a number of issues — examples — yesterday — the Member for Watson Lake can laugh — where people were injured and —

Speaker: Order, please.

Question re: Building code and standards

Mr. Kent: Yesterday, I asked the minister about a new policy in Energy, Mines and Resources that makes it harder for home builders to sell properties in a timely manner. As mentioned, the ability to obtain title has gone from clad to weather, to requiring an occupancy permit, and then a possible 30-day waiting period after that. This means — as a direct result of the Yukon government's decisions — that housing will be delayed, and the cost of housing will go up.

Yesterday, the minister told us that it was — and I quote: "... a common-sense approach that was brought through conversations with the City of Whitehorse." City officials disagreed with this assertion, saying that this was a Yukon government decision.

So, can the minister tell us what input the City of Whitehorse had in making this decision?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Since the member raised the question yesterday, I have not yet had a chance to speak with the City of Whitehorse. I will get on it soon, but I haven't had a chance yet. I did reach out to the department to ask them about it. They did explain to me again that the methodology that they are looking to use to make sure that the building is complete enough is harmonizing with what the city is doing.

This is all set out in the agreement that is signed, as we go through that lot going to private sector folks or the public. So, when homeowners are buying a home and want to ensure that homes are built on time, but they are also safe, this is what this is about. The member is raising a very specific concern. I will work to reach out to the city and talk with them directly to find out if they have any concerns. I have not heard any to date.

Mr. Kent: So, I sent our exchange from yesterday out to a number of contractors, and they reiterated the concerns that they have with this new policy.

The home-building industry in the Yukon is worth tens of millions of dollars on an annual basis, and this new policy brought in by the Liberals is adding cost to the home builders, and this is only going to increase the cost of housing. The fact of the matter is that the Yukon government is making the housing crisis worse through this policy. Obviously, a major departure from existing policy like this should require consultation with those most affected.

So, can the minister tell us what consultation occurred with the home-building industry before he made this policy change?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: On this specific question, I will, again, reach back into the department. As I said yesterday, I will enquire about in what ways the department spoke with the community of practice — no problem.

But, when we are talking about lots, I think our goal this year is roughly 200 lots to go through the lottery system. When I look back in time, and I understand how much we have invested in lot development, this year alone, we are investing the same that the Yukon Party government did over four years. So, it's a big, big investment. It's a big, big jump. We are moving many more lots through than the Yukon Party did, and we will work at all times to look for better ways to do our work. We are happy to connect with homeowners, with the building community, and with the city to understand any issues.

Mr. Kent: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have sent the minister two letters on this topic, so I'm not sure why it is coming as a surprise to him that we're raising it in the Legislature.

We are aware of a motion that was put forward at city council in Whitehorse that makes it clear that this was a Yukon government decision, and calls for further study of this policy change and how it is negatively impacting housing. It is clear that the City of Whitehorse is not convinced that the Yukon government's decision was a good one. We know home builders were not consulted prior to the policy change, and the last thing that the housing industry needs is delays and more Liberal red tape.

The minister admitted yesterday that he has been signing letters and making statements on this issue without fully understanding the content, so will the minister agree to revert to the previous policy until there is a thorough consultation on the new one with all stakeholders, including the City of Whitehorse and residential building contractors?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I stood in this Assembly yesterday and said that I stand by those things that I signed, including the two letters of response that I wrote to the member opposite.

You know, this just feels like games to me, honestly. The member opposite writes a letter, and I write a letter in response; the member opposite writes a letter, and I write a letter in response. Then he comes, tables the letters, and asks questions. So, I go off to investigate further. That's exactly what I'm doing. In this place, let's not muck around with Yukoners and play games. Honestly, what we ought to be doing is supporting Yukoners in getting homes.

By the way, we have record investment in developing homes and lots here across the territory in the private sector by government on both sides. That is what we're doing.

Question re: Support for substance use emergency

Ms. White: As the Yukon grapples with the substance use emergency, people on the ground are doing the work to support each other. One shining example is the work of the Council of Yukon First Nations. For years, CYFN has worked on the front lines. Day in and day out, they continue to help Yukoners through crisis. In the process, they have built

meaningful relationships with mental health and substance use treatment centres out of territory. Because of this, multiple Yukoners have been able to rely on CYFN for fully funded stays in out-of-territory treatment centres.

We have heard from folks that CYFN's safe and supportive work with them has made all the difference in their recovery. This government has more resources than CYFN. In fact, they have the full power of an incredible public service behind them, so they should be offering similar support.

Can the minister tell Yukoners if this government provides full funding to Yukoners to access mental health and addictions treatment out of territory?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I appreciate the question. It is always important to make sure that we are drawing accurate information and attention to Yukoners, when it comes to the substance use health emergency, and the ways in which many Yukoners across the territory are responding. Insured Health Services and Mental Wellness and Substance Use Services are both aspects of the Department of Health and Social Services — continue to work with Yukoners to ensure that they receive the medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care that they need, including if that care is out-of-territory.

In February 2022, Insured Health Services implemented a directive that expanded coverage for out-of-territory residential treatment centres to support Yukoners to access pre-approved out-of-territory medically necessary mental wellness and substance use care at approved facilities.

Ms. White: So, that is great news, and I am hopeful that information is publicly available, so that people know what their options are. For the people who do not get the treatment, thanks to the work of First Nations and NGOs — pardon me — so, for people who do get the treatment, thanks to the work of First Nations and NGOs, their lives are completely transformed. They spend weeks, or even months, doing the work to break the cycle of trauma and learning the tools that they need to cope.

But for many of these same people, coming home can undo all of that hard work, because they have almost no support or after-care when they come back. They are surrounded by triggers — by other people who might be using, and by new waves of grief in their communities — and this government is leaving them to figure it out by themselves.

So, what support — outside of a few counselling appointments — does this government offer people when they return home from treatment?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I have to take issue with the fact that there is this assumption, or statement, that individuals returning home from treatment are left to "figure it out by themselves" — I think that was the quote.

Not only is that a disservice to the people who work so hard in the Mental Wellness and Substance Use unit at the Department of Health and Social Services, and in many, many other places across the territory to support individuals who are returning home from treatment and integrating back into their communities, or into their lives, but it does a disservice to all of those individuals, including, frankly, the individuals who are

seeking treatment internally or externally to the territory, and ultimately, changing their lives.

We have a number of programs. We are concentrating on the substance use health emergency through a soon-to-be completed strategy. It is a strategy that will speak to Yukoners, speak to government, and speak to individuals across the territory, and hopefully, they can see themselves in it. It will be a long-term, living document, so that we can address the substance use health emergency, which is not going to end any time soon.

Ms. White: So, sadly, the lived experiences of people coming home from treatment don't reflect what the minister has just answered. For people coming back to their communities after treatment, the experience is stressful, lonely, and triggering. They go from living in a sober place, where they can access counselling, or have day-to-day support with meals and more, so that they can focus on treatment. When they return home, none of that exists. There is a huge gap in substance use services in the territory. There are no transitional services, no support worker in place, and no one to help them navigate living at home again.

Will the minister create a dedicated after-care unit within her department that includes social and harm reduction outreach workers to ensure that all Yukoners returning from treatment have the support that they need to thrive?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Although I appreciate the comments and advice from the Third Party, I think that there is a lack of understanding of what is going to be effective for people who are coming back. I think that what we are seeing with the dialogue with First Nation leaders and community leaders is that the best way to look at some of the after-care methods is being built by the community, being culturally relative, and ensuring that land-based treatment, either as a primary treatment or as after-care, is key.

So, we are looking at groups like we are seeing in Kluane right now, which had won the Arctic Inspiration Prize and is being led by former Chief Strand. They're doing great work on that type of after-care. There are organizations we are seeing in the Yukon that are now coming up, but I think for the Yukon government to completely take on that type of work without a cooperative effort to ensure success, which should be driven by those communities, and not just by the Yukon government — I think that it would be inappropriate for the Yukon government to take up that entire responsibility. I think that it has to be in partnership.

I spoke with First Nation leaders, as well, this week, getting ready for tomorrow and the Yukon Forum. This will be a key topic that is on the agenda for the Yukon Forum tomorrow, and our retreat. It's one of our key topics. I know that there is going to be some work that will be tabled that has been consulted on and put in place by the minister.

So, yes, we are committed to this, but again, this has to be in partnership for it to be effective, not just driven by the Yukon government.

Question re: Public transit funding

Ms. McLeod: The confidence and supply agreement between the Yukon Liberals and the NDP commits that public transit in the City of Whitehorse will be free. On February 6 of this year, the Mayor of Whitehorse said that the transit system costs about \$6 million per year to operate.

Why is there no funding for this commitment in either the budget or the five-year capital plan?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: The Member for Watson Lake is absolutely correct. The New Democratic caucus and the Yukon Liberals did sign a confidence and supply agreement a few months ago. One of the commitments was to explore free transit. As I have said many times, transit is a municipal responsibility, but we are working with the New Democrats to have a meeting with the City of Whitehorse. We will be having that meeting in the coming weeks, and we will be able to start to explore options with regard to transit within the City of Whitehorse.

Ms. McLeod: The only way for the Yukon government to provide free transit in the City of Whitehorse is to provide a block of funding to the city. The mayor has said that it costs about \$6 million a year to run the transit system, so can the minister provide us with an updated timeline for when this meeting may be held and the upcoming funding commitment can be made?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I can hear the anticipation in the Member for Watson Lake's voice this afternoon. I am very glad she is excited by this initiative. As I said just a few moments ago, we are having a meeting with the City of Whitehorse in the coming weeks, and we will have more to say after we have had that meeting.

Ms. McLeod: In a February 6 article in the *Yukon News*, the Mayor of Whitehorse explained that many transit riders were confused by the announcement of free transit. According to the mayor, some transit riders argued with bus drivers about whether they had to pay or not, because they actually believed the CASA announcement.

So, my question is simple: When will this promise actually become a reality?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Once again, I really do appreciate the excitement. I can hear it is the Member for Watson Lake's voice, but I have nothing to report at this time. We are going to have meetings with the City of Whitehorse. Transit is a City of Whitehorse responsibility. I have said many times that the City of Whitehorse will take responsibility for things within its municipal boundaries. Transit is one of those things. I am going to meet with the City of Whitehorse, and my good colleagues across the way from the New Democrats, to discuss options when it comes to transit within the City of Whitehorse, but it will ultimately be up to the City of Whitehorse to determine how transit operates within its boundaries.

Question re: Residential Landlord and Tenant Act review

Mr. Cathers: Earlier this week, I asked the Minister of Community Services about the upcoming review of the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. In response, he said that

no decision has been made yet and that they are waiting to see the results of the review. This, however, directly contradicts the commitment in the confidence and supply agreement that the Premier signed on January 31 this year with the NDP.

So, can the minister clarify: Is he backing away from the commitment made in the CASA to legislate clause 4(b) of the CASA into the act?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Absolutely not.

Mr. Cathers: That is interesting, Mr. Speaker. The minister seems to be contradicting himself from earlier this week. When I asked about this earlier in the week, the minister was clear that there had been no decision to legislate the elimination of no-cause evictions into the act. Here is what he told this House: "... it is a hypothetical question for which he has no idea — no decision has been taken." Despite the minister's comment — and his, this afternoon — the CASA is quite clear. It says: "This clause will be legislated into the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act* following a review of the Act."

So, I would like the minister to be clear with Yukoners where he stands on this. Will this clause that eliminates no-cause evictions be legislated into the act — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: As I recall, the conversation earlier this week was about — I heard the members opposite from the Yukon Party actually — sort of throwing up their hands and getting up and saying that you shouldn't take part in the consultations that we are going to have in the next little while. Well, that's not where we are at.

Consultations are important to rewrite this act, and those consultations are going to begin in June, as per CASA. I don't want anyone to prejudge the results of our upcoming engagement. We are going to be reviewing the *Residential Landlord and Tenant Act*. The opposition seems to have made up their mind already without hearing from Yukoners. We are committed to listening to Yukoners and hearing what they have to say. I have had several phone calls with the landlords association. I want to make sure that they know that their concerns are heard and will be factored into a review of the legislation. The Premier and I have been clear from the start that we want a review of the act. We are committed to this.

Section 4(b) of CASA indicates that we will be legislating into the act, following the review, a list of situations where evictions are allowed and when they are not allowed. With this, it will allow landlords and tenants to have clarity. Our act needs clarity and balance on what protections are available for landlords and tenants alike. It currently lacks that clarity. We are going to bring it. That is the intent of this whole thing. That is what I was saying a couple of days ago. I am going to continue to say that again and again and again.

Mr. Cathers: I do have to correct the minister and remind him that what we took issue with is government having made the decision and then making a mockery of Yukoners by pretending to consult on it.

This is another issue where it seems that there is a divide in the Liberal cabinet. The Premier saying one thing and, earlier this week, the Minister of Community Services said something

contradictory. This week, the minister also said that the review of the act will likely take several years.

Can the minister confirm that the review of this act will not be complete before the next election, as he seemed to indicate earlier this week?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Look, the theme of the day is "speculation", and nobody is better at it than the Member for Lake Laberge.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Oh, we are touching a button there.

So, that's what it is. It has been speculation, speculation. First of all, there is a very clear process for us when we are looking at reviewing legislation. We go through our Cabinet Committee on Priorities and Planning. We will lay out a timeline of the work; we will go out and speak with the public, which will identify what we are hearing. The minister doesn't want to predetermine the outcome because, first of all, the process has not started, and we haven't had a chance to go out and hear what individuals have to say. So, clearly, lots of speculation —

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, that is what we are hearing from the member opposite — constantly trying to muddy the waters — maybe the best at it. I will give credit — maybe one of the best at it — but that is not what is happening here today. The minister has been clear; we are clear about where we are going; we are committed to an agreement. There is no division — just speculation.

Question re: Hydraulic fracturing

Ms. Blake: For decades, the Vuntut Gwitchin and the Gwich'in Nation have advocated globally for permanent protection of the Porcupine caribou herd calving grounds, which we refer to as "Izhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit" — "The Sacred Place Where Life Begins". The Vuntut Gwitchin Government recently expressed their concerns about the harms of the Willow project on their fight to see permanent protection of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Vuntut Gwitchin is a nation with only a few hundred citizens, and we have been fighting for decades to protect our way of life against the fossil fuel industry.

How is this government supporting the Gwich'in Nation in their efforts to ensure that the Porcupine caribou herd and the Gwich'in way of life is able to thrive for generations to come?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that there has been a long history of courageous leaders from Vuntut Gwitchin nation — individuals who have sat as members in all parties here in the Legislative Assembly at different times. I am looking forward to that discussion with leadership from Vuntut Gwitchin. It hasn't occurred yet — specific to Willow. We are well aware of the advocacy. The history has always been, on this side of the floor, to support leadership and to amplify the message in Ottawa as well as in Washington. I know that was work that was undertaken by my predecessor. That is work that I will continue to undertake.

We are lining up our meetings with leaders for later this year on a number of issues that we are concerned about, not just

around protection of the Porcupine caribou herd. So, I think we will wait for those discussions with the Vuntut Gwitchin leadership and that will give us a sense of how to best deploy a strategy that can amplify those voices that have, again, been so loud and so strong for so many years.

Ms. Blake: Like many in my generation, I grew up with this fight for our way of life. We have inherited that fight from our elders and past leaders. As Yukon First Nations, we always consider future generations in every conversation we have. We are always thinking of the children who will inherit what we leave behind. But, Mr. Speaker, this is not just about Yukon First Nations; this is about the future of Yukon children and what they will inherit from the decisions we make today.

So, while the former Premier did put a temporary ban on fracking after the NDP made it an election issue, it is hard for me to believe that this moratorium will protect future generations. What we need is a permanent legislative ban.

Will this government commit to protecting future generations and legislate a ban on fracking in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, just going back to the first question — yes, we will advocate on behalf of Yukoners and work alongside the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation when it comes to working with individuals, legislators in Washington — the same as my predecessor had done — again, with officials and NGOs that have worked alongside the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and other Gwich'in leaders from communities in the north.

I think that we have been very strong on the issue. I don't know how else to illustrate — other than I think that the record of being sued for the most money in Yukon history, probably — I was named in a \$2-billion lawsuit because we stood strong on ensuring that there was no fracking in the Yukon. I don't know what the perspective would be from the Official Opposition. I think we have seen the position from the Third Party. I know that we have been very clear about this and have stuck to exactly where we said we would be. We made that commitment; we delivered. Again, legal action was taken against us, and I was named in that case. Again, we have tried to work hand in hand on the formulation of the northern chiefs table on oil and gas and have worked with them very strongly.

Ms. Blake: A moratorium is defined as “a temporary prohibition of an activity”. The word “temporary” is important here.

This government has declared a climate emergency and continues to tell Yukoners that they are doing all that they can to take action. What they have not done is legislate a ban on fracking across our territory. While we have been told that there will be no future fracking in the territory, what assurances do we really have?

Last fall, in this House, the Yukon Party made it clear that they support oil and gas development in the Yukon. We know that this means fracking. A legislated ban on fracking would be a concrete action toward protecting the future of the Yukon. When will this government permanently ban fracking in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I apologize — I missed the portion about support for industry in some of those key points.

Look — it's your actions. You can put a moratorium in place, you can actually put legislation in place, and then there can be another government that changes the legislation. What are you going to do?

I know what we said we are going to do. That is what we have done. We have stuck to it. I don't know what's going to happen in 10 years, 15 years, or 20 years, but at this particular time, that's not something that we committed to — the same way, in our negotiations around things such as the Beaufort, we went to the Beaufort Sea negotiations, and it was about ensuring that we understood the governance. We knew what the rights of Yukoners were — that we were standing up for Yukoners and ensuring that we had the environmental protections. That is our track record. That is what we have done.

We committed to that in our election in 2016. I don't know what will happen in the future, but I can tell you that, at this particular time, we are rock solid on where we have been and we will stay there.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BILLS

Bill No. 23: *References to the Sovereign Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)* — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 23, standing in the name of the Hon. Ms. McPhee.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, entitled *References to the Sovereign Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Speaker: It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 23, entitled *References to the Sovereign Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*, be now read a second time.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I don't intend to speak very long with respect to this particular matter. This is a bill that has been brought to the Legislative Assembly for the purposes of changing the sovereign statute law. It will amend that law by making appropriate references to the now King of England, rather than the Queen of England. I appreciate that this is a change for many, many people. Those of us who have made reference our entire lives to the Queen as the Crown in right of Canada will have adjustments to make. I know we have probably each had an opportunity to feel that in our own personal lives, but this is an opportunity, and the appropriate move, to bring this reference to the Legislative Assembly in light of the passing of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022. His Majesty King Charles III has become Canada's new sovereign and head of state. He will be coronated in early May in London. As a result of this transition, the Yukon's legislation is required to be updated and to reflect the identity of the current sovereign of Canada.

Apart from the administrative updates, the bill will also introduce a new provision to the *Regulations Act* which would allow for future administrative updates on the references to the

sovereign in Yukon's legislation to be made through regulation, instead of by statute. I don't think anyone anticipates — if they understand the lineage of the Crown at the moment — that they will be changed anytime soon. Nonetheless, this would be an appropriate move so that such a change in future could be made by regulation. This is an effort to optimize the administrative efficiency and to reduce costs associated with maintaining accurate references in our laws.

While the provision would provide Cabinet with the power to amend legislation without the Legislative Assembly's approval in this small and particular circumstance, its scope is appropriately narrow. It's only applicable to future updates on references to the sovereign in Yukon's legislation — for no other reason.

Our government is pleased to bring forward these legislative amendments by way of the bill *References to the Sovereign Statute Law Amendment Act (2023)*.

Ms. Clarke: I am pleased to rise to speak to this bill at second reading today. The main thrust of this bill is captured by the explanatory note and in the minister's second reading speech.

The intent of this bill is to update the language in Yukon statutes to reflect the ascension of the new monarch, and to update language from "Queen" to "King". We do have a few potential concerns about this bill, though.

In particular, we will be asking some questions in Committee about the regulation-making powers that this bill will grant to the Commissioner in Executive Council. We have concerns with the idea of granting Cabinet the ability to unilaterally change the legislation without a vote in the Legislature. Regardless of the subject matter, this has the potential to become a slippery slope that could undermine the principle of legislative supremacy.

Despite these concerns, we will vote in favour of the bill advancing to Committee and will raise our concerns there.

Salamat po.

Ms. Blake: The Yukon NDP will be supporting this bill. We would like to extend our thank you to the department for their work in preparing this bill.

Mahsi' cho.

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

Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the members opposite. To maybe provide reassurances to the Yukon Party in respect to the comments made, again, this is only with respect to a very narrow provision that, in the event in the future that the sovereign would change gender or titles again to the point where there would be a queen rather than a king, we would need to make this change. It is not anticipated for many, many years to come, and I appreciate the support of everyone on this bill.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.

Mr. Cathers: Agree.

Ms. McLeod: Agree.

Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.

Mr. Hassard: Agree.

Mr. Istchenko: Agree.

Ms. White: Agree.

Ms. Blake: Agree.

MLA Tredger: Agree.

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

Speaker: The yeas have it.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 23 agreed to

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 now come to order.

The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, 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

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

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

Deputy Chair: The matter before the Committee is general debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Is there any general debate?

Department of Finance

Hon. Mr. Silver: I am very pleased, once again, to rise to speak to the appropriation tabled for the Department of Finance in 2023-24. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to acknowledge and welcome Deputy Minister of Finance Jessica Schultz to the floor of the Legislative Assembly and also Rebekah Harrison, manager of Finance within the department. Jessica assumed this important role in February of this year and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the Department of Finance from her past work in various senior leadership roles across multiple Yukon government departments. She has gained considerable financial management expertise while serving the Yukon government for nearly three impressive decades — when did you start? I am so very, very proud of the work that she has brought to the department. It's great to have her and Rebekah here today.

An interesting fact, as well: The financial year ends tomorrow, on March 31. Guess when Rebekah and Jessica's birthdays are? It is tomorrow for both of them. I don't know if that is one of those divine interventions or whatever you want to call it, to have a career in finance when your birthday is the end of a fiscal year, but happy birthday to them both. I am sure the folks upstairs are going to love that.

As I have said on multiple occasions, since day one, it has been an immense pleasure for me to represent this department as the Minister of Finance. From the start of my tenure as minister, one thing has remained evident, which is the professionalism of the staff and the dedication they have to their craft. Putting together annual budgets represents an incredibly challenging task each and every year, and the department does this with a relatively small team. Over the years, the various teams in this department have shown, time and time again, that they are able to deliver on major government initiatives from developing a carbon pricing rebate program from scratch, to implementing and delivering tax adjustments and credits that benefit our business sector and private citizens.

This is a department that absolutely gets the job done. It is also the department that continues to do the background work to make sure that the money gets to where it needs to be in supporting Yukoners. It tracks the latest federal, provincial, and international trends to ensure that our tax rates are consistent and appropriate for our current environment. It also makes sure that rural Yukoners have access to banking services so that they don't need to make the long drive into Whitehorse, Dawson City, or Watson Lake for their daily financial needs.

The Department of Finance counts every receipt, issues most payments, and tracks all financial transactions that enable us to reconcile the entirety of the accounts from the Government of Yukon each year. It also undertakes survey work for countless clients and vital data-driven projects

throughout the year. They accomplish this incredible precision with a roster of just 79 full-time-equivalent positions. They also do it with a responsible and sustainable budget of \$11.9 million for the department in 2023-24, nearly identical to last year's total.

With this budget, the department's commitment to forecasting and evidence-based decision-making remains top of mind. As always, this funding will ensure that the department continues to support all other departments across the government, as they deliver services to the Yukon. It allows us to provide the training and access to the financial and budgetary systems across the government, while also fulfilling payments for initiatives that supported Yukoners throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and also beyond.

In 2023-24, the Department of Finance is seeking operation and maintenance appropriation for \$11.9 million, a slightly higher figure than last year. As part of the total for O&M, \$9.7 million will be directed toward salaries, while \$1.5 million will go toward other departments' needs. This latter "Other" allotment includes office supplies, VoIP lines, contract services, banking service fees, and other items necessary for day-to-day operations. These support items equal 12 percent of the O&M total, an amount that has remained relatively unchanged over the previous three years. The change in salary allocation represents a \$143,000 increase over last year.

After initiating work on the implementation of the PS3280 assessment retirement obligation in 2021-22, it has been determined that additional personnel support is required to complete the existing efforts of the Office of the Comptroller to ensure compliance with this new standard, as well as Public Sector Accounting Board requirements. The department is therefore increasing its O&M budget by \$150,000, which will go toward the addition of one three-year-term financial accountant FTE and projected related O&M expenditures.

When factoring in annual personnel budget adjustments, an overall change of \$143,000 makes up the entirety of the increase in the Department of Finance's salary budget over last year. With minor increases, this appropriation will ensure that we can continue to meet our business needs, as we have always done, and this is the only notable variance in the department's O&M budget over last year.

If we take a look at the department's transfer payment agreement allotment, the Department of Finance is, once again, seeking approval for \$725,000. Similar to last year, this includes a request for \$450,000 for community rural banking agreements. It also includes a request for \$275,000 for the ongoing legislative grant for workers' compensation supplementary benefits, which has remained the same for the last four years. The total appropriation for these transfer payment agreements account for six percent of the total O&M budget being requested.

On the capital side, the Department of Finance is, once again, requesting \$32,000 in 2023-24 for the purchase of equipment and furniture. Our department prides itself on being able to stretch a dollar; however, despite our best efforts, staff do require updated computers, printers, chairs, and other

equipment. The capital allocation this year will ensure that we have the funds available to replace the end-of-life printers, minor office improvements, and other needs.

Looking at revenues for a second, we have just a small allocation for capital once again this year. So, moving into the revenue side of things, we will see a 6.9-percent growth in the total revenues, compared to last year's estimates. This equates to an increase of approximately \$96 million over the last year.

In 2023-24, we will see an increase in transfers from \$1.24 billion to \$1.32 billion. With these transfers, the Government of Yukon is able to fund a large majority of the services that we come to expect, which help increase the quality of lives of Yukoners. The grant from Canada will see an increase from \$1.17 billion in 2022-23 to \$1.25 billion in 2023-24.

The Canadian health transfer is projected to be \$55.6 million this year. This is an increase of approximately \$4.2 million over last year. We look forward to providing the House with further updates to the Canada health transfer later this year, as that negotiation process is underway, and with the tabling of the federal budget.

The Canadian social transfer will also increase in the 2023-24 year. It will be set at \$18.5 million, which is an increase of \$350,000 from last year. The increase in the first three transfers is largely a result of population growth, which continues to outpace many of the other provinces and jurisdictions as people move to the Yukon for our excellent quality of life. The fourth transfer from Canada is the cannabis transfer, which is expected to increase by \$70,000 over last year's budget.

Moving now into taxation revenues, the Government of Yukon will see a taxation and other revenues of \$160.2 million for 2023-24, and this is an increase of \$12.9 million over the last fiscal year's estimate. In 2023-24, we will see \$98.4 million from personal income tax. This is an increase of \$8.5 million from last year. This is primarily the result of an improved outlook for total and average personal income in the territory and reflects the strength of growing salaries for those working in Yukon. Previous forecasts assumed that the COVID-19 pandemic would negatively impact personal income, both in terms of total income from all taxpayers, as well as the average income of taxpayers.

In 2023-24, we will see \$27.4 million from corporate income tax. This is an increase of \$3 million from the last year. This forecast has increased due to the faster than expected economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Revenue generated from Yukon's fuel oil tax will be \$8.8 million. This is closer to but still below the average revenue before the COVID-19 pandemic. \$14.6 million in revenue will be generated from Yukon's tobacco taxes. On January 1, 2023, the tax rate for tobacco products increased by one percent per cigarette and one percent per gram of tobacco automatically due to the inflation-related provisions set out in the *Tobacco Tax Act*. The insurance premium tax accounts for nearly \$9 million for 2023-24, and revenue from other sources, like banking and investments, as well as received interest, accounts for approximately \$2 million in additional revenue.

Finally, Deputy Chair, I would like to briefly speak to the carbon rebate revolving funds. As members know, the Government of Canada introduced the carbon levy on July 1, 2019 in the Yukon. In the *Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change*, Canada and the Yukon agreed that 100 percent of the revenues from carbon pricing would be retained by the territory. In order to distribute these federal revenues, we passed the *Yukon Government Carbon Price Rebate Act* and, with it, established the carbon rebate revolving fund.

Since restricted funds cannot be accessed for other purposes, it makes sense to discuss it separately. In 2023-24, we are projecting carbon rebate revenues of \$29.6 million in the territory. At the same time, we are projecting that the amounts to be distributed will be \$32 million. This includes the full \$29.6 million that we collected, as well as \$2.4 million that went unclaimed from the previous year, which has been carried over to this year.

This fund is designed to be revenue neutral, meaning that every penny we receive from the federal government gets redistributed to eligible groups in the Yukon. While we have designed the rebate system to be as administratively non-burdensome as possible, it does require the Yukon individuals and businesses to file their taxes to claim their rebates. This year, the department will continue to work with the local chamber and businesses to encourage them to claim the rebates that they are entitled to.

Deputy Chair, I would also like to remind folks that multiple groups are not eligible for a rebate. This includes the Government of Canada, the Government of Yukon, and also visitors to the Yukon. As such, the total revenues to be distributed to Yukoners still exceeds the total levies that they pay on average.

In addition to these latest numbers, I would like to also take a moment to highlight some process improvements that have made the carbon rebate revolving fund even more transparent. This year, members looking at the revolving fund in the budget will notice that the business account amount received, dispersed, and the net change has been further categorized. Following the passing of Bill No. 21 last fall, the business account has been divided into a general business rebate account and a mining business rebate account. There are now five rebate accounts in total. We think that it is important to report each account separately. I am pleased to say that this added level of detail ensures that the amounts being paid and received by each group remain transparent and fully accessible to those looking for that information.

As rebates to Yukoners continue to increase in step with the federal carbon levies, I encourage Yukoners to direct these payments toward energy-efficient retrofits in their homes or green transportation alternatives.

I would also like to reference one important transfer through the tax system. Recognizing that the cost of living has increased, the Government of Yukon will adjust the Yukon child benefit rate to the consumer price index for Whitehorse in the 2023-24 budget year and tie annual rate adjustments to Whitehorse CPI going forward. Transfers through the tax

system are financial benefits provided for a purpose other than the relieving of taxes previously paid or currently owing. This amount for this transfer in 2023-24 will be \$1.55 million.

This concludes my summary of the requested appropriations for the Department of Finance in 2023-24. I will echo the same sentiment that I meant in tabling the appropriations for this department in 2022-23. While members will not see many new or flashy spending initiatives included in this appropriation, once again, this budget represents stability. The Department of Finance has long since demonstrated its ability to manage large projects sustainably and within its budget. This budget reflects this reality. This is a department that continues to do more with its existing resources by increasing efficiencies internally.

I welcome questions from members opposite and look forward to a constructive debate as well. With that, I would like to thank the members in advance for their comments and for the debate, and I will conclude my remarks there.

Mr. Cathers: I thank the Finance minister for the information that he provided in that, and I would also join him in welcoming the officials here this afternoon. I would also take the opportunity to wish both Jessica and Rebekah a happy birthday for tomorrow.

Moving on to some of the questions that I have, I am going to start with the carbon tax restricted fund. As the Finance minister will be aware, as shown in the green sheets on page 11-19, under “Restricted Funds”, the balance at the end of the year in 2021-22 was \$18,885,000. This is a matter that has come up as well at the Public Accounts Committee.

Can the Finance minister explain why there was over \$18 million sitting in the account at the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year, as well as indicating what the balance is expected to be at the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, the Yukon rebate is revenue neutral. We are returning 100 percent of the federal carbon levy to four rebate groups, and we remain committed to ensuring that those four rebated groups continue to receive more, on average, than they pay into the carbon pricing levies. We are distributing 45 percent to individuals; 36 percent to general business; 12 percent to mining business; 3.5 percent to First Nation governments; and 3.5 percent to municipal governments.

Finance officials have reaffirmed that the 2022-23 rebates are on target to meet by March 31, 2023. The most recent projections of the surplus will begin to decline to just over \$12 million this fiscal year due to higher business uptake, and we expect that trend to continue into the new fiscal year as well. By the end of 2023-24 fiscal year, we expect the surplus remaining in the carbon rebate revolving fund to decrease to \$4.4 million.

I know that we had a question in Question Period on the amount in the fund — again, completely revenue neutral. Things take time, as applications happen during the end of the fiscal year, but the department, working with the chamber and others, is making sure that the information is out there for people to be able to access the money that is there for them in these particular rebate groups.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the information. I would just seek a bit of clarification to make sure I heard the Finance minister correctly. To clarify, the actual number, as we can see at the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year, was \$18,885,000 in the carbon price rebate restricted fund. Could the minister just confirm that I heard him correctly that this amount is anticipated to be, as of tomorrow, \$12,135,000 and that it’s projected to go down further throughout the upcoming fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Just a little context — the rebate for the general business — other than mining — there are a lot of moving pieces here, since we changed the legislation for the rebate for mining businesses. Yukon businesses receive their carbon rebate as a refundable tax. It is a tax credit. With some other tax credits, businesses can apply retroactively to past tax years, which is important information for the member opposite as well. The business rebate for 2022-23 is — and I will just confirm that my numbers are the most accurate from what I have here — \$21.98 per \$1,000 of eligible Yukon assets. The rebate is calculated based on the value of business assets and includes incentives to invest in clean technologies. For 2023-24, the super-green credit provides a rebate of about \$109 per \$1,000 of clean technology assets, which includes eligible solar energy systems, electric vehicles, and charging systems.

Uptake of the general business rebate was low in those initial years, as we were getting this up and running. This is partly due to tax software providing delays in the rollout and products with the appropriate carbon rebating schedules and forms.

The lower uptake resulted in a significant surplus when we were first starting to get this business rebate rolling forward in that business rebate account, which was carried forward to increase the rebate for 2022-23. Now, tax data indicates that the uptake is increasing, as I mentioned, so the rebate for 2023-24 no longer includes large surpluses, which explains the decline in the rebate compared to that of the previous year.

The number that I have here — I will just double-check — is that our most recent projection is that the surplus will decline by just over \$12 million this fiscal year due to that higher business uptake. We expect this trend to continue into the new fiscal year, and by the end of the 2023-24 fiscal year, we expect the surplus that will be remaining in the carbon rebate revolving fund to decrease to \$4.4 million.

Mr. Cathers: Just for further clarification on the amount — just for reference for Hansard and others — under the heading of “Amounts Disbursed” for the 2022-23 fiscal year, it is showing that number of an estimated total of disbursements for businesses of \$24.2 million. That amount, then, is declining in the estimate for the upcoming fiscal year to a total of \$11.6 million in the business account and \$4.2 million in the mining business account. Can the Finance minister just elaborate on the reasons for such a significant change in the estimated annual amount of disbursement?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe, in answering the previous question, that I answered this question. I know that the member opposite wants clarity on this. With the first year, you are going to have some issues in any program when you are first setting

something up — like I said, some issues with software — but then there is also making sure that people apply and giving them the retroactivity if they missed an opportunity in a year.

So, all of these things kind of come together, including working with the chamber to make sure that we get the word out about how people can get these dollars back into their pockets. That is why we are seeing this fund decreasing as you look at it from one year to another. This is because of the uptick, the retroactivity, and the increase in the number of businesses getting in there. So, again, we're seeing a continued decrease in that process — so that we get to the end of this fiscal year, 2023-24, hoping to decrease that fund even more to just over \$4 million with the goal of working with the chamber and businesses to make sure that the money that people are owed and deserve gets back into their pockets.

Mr. Cathers: I will just move on to the next question that I have for the Finance minister, which is about the cost of the carbon tax that, as he knows, is set to increase on April 1 this year. When we discussed this in the fall — when I asked what the impact of that was on gasoline, diesel, home heating fuel, propane, and natural gas — the Finance minister provided me with those numbers. I would just note for those listening and reading that, at the time, he clarified that the term “light fuel oil” is used to refer to diesel fuel or home heating fuel.

In the fall — and this is found on page 2333 of Hansard from October 20, 2022 — the Finance minister indicated — and I quote: “For 2022, gasoline is 11.1 cents. Light fuel oil is 13.4 cents. Propane is 7.7 cents. Natural gas is 9.8 cents.” Could the Finance minister indicate, for the upcoming fiscal year — as of April 1 — what the breakdown of the carbon tax on each of those items per litre will be — for the fiscal year that begins on April 1?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I could even go further, if the member opposite wants. I have some numbers that go into the future as well. We have numbers from the feds right up to 2030.

Some Hon. Member: (Inaudible)

Hon. Mr. Silver: Okay, great. So, we will start with gasoline. Back in 2019, the federal fuel charge rate applicable in Yukon, in cents per litre, was 4.4 cents; in 2020, gasoline was 6.6 cents; in 2021, 8.8 cents; in 2022, 11.1 cents; in 2023, 14.4 cents; in 2024, 17.7 cents; in 2025, 21 cents; in 2026, 24.3 cents; in 2027, 27.6 cents; in 2028, 30.9 cents; in 2029, 34.3 cents; and the last number that I have is for 2030, which is 37.6 cents.

In the interest of time in the Legislative Assembly, I can send these numbers to the members opposite for light fuel oil, propane, and natural gas as well. Just a note, too — aviation turbo fuel and gasoline being exempt — and there is currently no intention to eliminate the exemption for aviation fuels being used in the territories.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the information from the Finance minister. Just for our ease of reference and understanding, I appreciate that he will send over the whole list by category of fuel later, but would he please just provide the numbers for light fuel, propane, and natural gas for the price per litre for the fiscal year that we are just about to enter?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Certainly. So, we will start with the light fuel oil: 2023 was 17.4; in 2024, it is 21.5 cents. For propane: in 2023, 10.1 cents, and in 2024, 12.4 cents. Finally, natural gas — 12.7 cents in 2023, and 15.7 cents in 2024. For natural gas, of course, that is per cubic metre, as opposed to per litre.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the information and the clarification that natural gas is based on per cubic metre.

I would just ask about — there has been some discussion in the Legislative Assembly this Sitting about the potential use of biodiesel. Based on the discussions, our understanding was that the indication was that the rate charged on biodiesel would be less than that for light fuel oil, but we are not clear on what the cost per litre of the carbon tax would be on biodiesel. Could the Minister of Finance just either provide that information or, if we have missed or misunderstood what was indicated, just confirm what the facts actually are, as far as the cost of biodiesel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that the Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources and Yukon Development Corporation had this conversation. It comes down to the diesel component of the — 100 percent of a litre of these fuels will still have the same rates as regular diesel, it is just that it's the flex fuel — that part of it that is not diesel. It is not like there is just one option. So, there would be a few different ranges for that part, but that is about all the information that I have right now. The diesel component of the fuel will still be at the same rate as something that is 100-percent diesel.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate the clarification.

I want to move on to the issue of inflation and the role of fuel pricing on that. As noted in the *Fiscal and Economic Outlook* that the Minister of Finance tabled, it indicates on page 19 — and I quote: “Higher fuel prices in 2022 were a prominent driver of overall inflation, with the price of gasoline up 29 per cent, and the price of fuel oil up 47 per cent compared to 2021.”

It also notes the impact on the next page. It makes reference to the impact that it has on the consumer price index. Again, I will quote: “Fuel oil is weighted heavier in the Whitehorse CPI than in the national index, because a substantially higher share of Yukoners use fuel oil for heat. This higher weighting is one of the reasons why inflation of 8.1 per cent in Whitehorse as of December was higher than the national rate of 6.3 per cent.”

It then goes on to talk about the impact of that on food prices. It notes — and again I will quote: “Another factor is that price pressures on food were slower to materialize in the Yukon than in the rest of Canada (Chart 10). Food prices in Canada rose throughout the pandemic, whereas in Whitehorse, they did not start to increase in earnest until later. Ultimately, prices in Whitehorse follow national trends closely and food prices have started to catch up.”

With that in mind — and also the reference to the impact of fuel prices on inflation — the *Interim Fiscal and Economic Update* that the Finance minister tabled in the fall said — and again I quote: “Higher fuel prices have been the biggest driver of inflation.” We are concerned about the impact that the increase in the carbon tax will have on the prices of food, home

heating fuel, and other essentials. Does the Yukon government have any estimates or modelling right now on what the impact will be — both on inflation generally and individually — on categories such as food and home heating fuel?

Hon. Mr. Silver: There is a whole world of economists speculating on where we go from here. I had the pleasure and honour to meet with finance ministers across Canada and the federal Minister of Finance and with the Governor of the Bank of Canada, talking about inflation rates — unprecedented inflation internationally and here in Canada — the highest that we have seen since the 1980s. Every jurisdiction has considerations to make when it comes to making lives affordable for the citizens that they work for.

In the Yukon, we have some forecasts for the future when it comes to real GDP growth. We led the country in real GDP growth in 2020-21; 2021 saw an increase of 10 percent, which is the strongest in a long, long time — key indicators showing a tightening labour market highlighted by unemployment rates in 2020 — the lowest in Canada.

These are the good news stories when we are reflecting on the international pressures of inflation. We can speculate where the illegal war in Ukraine will go by listening to the updates from the generals and the political folks in Ukraine, but all of those are speculative at best. We could also have a conversation about — when it comes to fuel and price signal.

We all sat here in the Legislative Assembly and unanimously supported the carbon-pricing legislative change as we knew that the federal government was making a point on price signal, which is extremely important as a long-term strategy to get off of fossil fuels and be ahead of the curve when it comes to the green economy.

When does that happen? Again, there are a lot of factors at play when it comes to what inflation is going to look like. We do also know that the Governor of the Bank of Canada did say that by quarter 3 of this year, we assume — all things relative — that inflation will go back to normal levels. We saw a report from Deloitte that was just released at the same time as the federal budget talking about interest rates and about the United States and their pressures from the banking system when they saw the second and third largest bank failures in the history of their country.

We have been reading quite a bit about the protections that we have as a nation — in Canada — comparatively and how we have been kind of sheltered from that storm. Had we not been sheltered by that storm, then we might have been in a little bit more of a delay. We are seeing kind of like a fox-and-rabbit population go when it comes to the stabilization of interest rates. So, I mean, there is a lot at play here to be speculating on, but I think we could also talk about the inflation and affordability measures that we as a government put in, but I won't belabour that. We have been on the record quite a few times talking about all of those initiatives.

So, I am trying to fill in as much as I possibly can in a speculative — you know, where we go from here with the price signal from fuel and what that means. But we are poised comparatively to other jurisdictions in Canada. We have the \$50,000 contingency in our budget as well, which is very

helpful for rumours or speculations of a recession moving forward in the country. Again, we are making sure that we spend taxpayers' money appropriately as we make a pricing signal with the federal government when it comes to carbon.

Somebody is going to pay for pollution. The polluter-pay system makes more sense to me than all taxpayers paying, but at the same time, knowing that Yukoners are feeling the pinch of a whole bunch of different international issues, we want to make sure that we are there for funding for food and programs in schools, harvest spending — timber harvests — to boost the fuelwood supplies, quarterly top-ups for the senior income supplements, and also other initiatives, including social assistance recipients receiving more money as well.

I hope that's enough for the member opposite. Again, he probably knows me pretty well by now; I don't like to speculate too much. If there is something in that question that I missed, I apologize. I'm sure he will remind me if so.

Mr. Cathers: Just to begin with, the Finance minister indicated that there was a \$50,000 contingency fund. I think he meant to say \$50 million, since that's the number in the budget. I am sure that was just a slip of the tongue.

Since the minister brought up the war in Ukraine, I do want to mention, of course, that we continue to show solidarity with Ukrainians in Canada and around the world in opposing Russia's illegal and immoral invasion. We know that this does have some impact on the world's situation.

But returning to the situation here in the Yukon, the *Fiscal and Economic Outlook* that the Finance minister tabled does include some predictions around inflation. I do appreciate that the predictions, especially in a time of world volatility, are likely to be subject to change. What I was just asking was about the impact of the increase in the carbon tax on food prices and other essentials.

Again, I am noting that, in the documents tabled by the Minister of Finance, it does acknowledge in those documents prepared by the Finance department the impact of higher fuel prices on overall inflation and specifically notes, again, in the one that he just tabled earlier this month — and I quote: "Higher fuel prices in 2022 were a prominent driver of overall inflation...", and in the one that he tabled in the fall, it said — and again I quote: "Higher fuel prices have been the biggest driver of inflation."

So, I was just asking if they had done any modelling on the impact of that on food and fuel prices. If the answer is yes, if they do have that information, I would welcome either hearing it this afternoon or receiving a commitment to share that work that they may have done.

I would also just note that — just to correct what the Minister of Finance was indicating regarding the vote on the legislation regarding the carbon rebate last fall — that our support for that legislation should not be misconstrued or misunderstood as a support for carbon tax. We were told very clearly by the government, at that point in time, that if the legislation wasn't changed, that Yukon placer miners and other mining companies would no longer get a rebate due to changes the federal government was making. So, we voted in favour of providing rebates to Yukoners, not in favour of taxing them.

Though we continue to oppose the carbon tax, since the government is applying the carbon tax, we do support rebates being provided to people and to businesses to return some of the money that they have paid in carbon taxation.

Just to note, the question that I had asked the Finance minister is: Has the Department of Finance or the government generally done any modelling on the anticipated impact that the increase to the carbon tax on April 1 will have on the price of food, home heating fuel, and other essentials here in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I wouldn't say that there would be a report specifically, but our analyses, on a regular basis, do a lot of number-crunching when it comes to what a fuel cost would be, what a fuel price is, what the carbon pricing mechanisms are for the transportation industry as they come up through the provinces, how that applies to maybe business credits there for these industries — those types of things.

I mean, there is a lot of analysis that goes on, on a regular basis. I wouldn't be able to table a report for the member opposite or anything like that — this is just part of the daily work that the amazing department does. Our forecasts are the ones that we put in the fiscal and economic outlook.

We also forecast, in a way, as well, through the Executive Council Office with the *Canadian Index of Well-being*, comparing ourselves to other jurisdictions and quality of life, expenses, and how people fare in the Yukon comparatively. Again, being in a position — working with the federal government so that every dollar that does get spent in the Yukon on a carbon pricing levy, 100 percent of that money going back to the pockets of the individuals, businesses, First Nations, and municipalities. Those are also things that we can do as we monitor and make our evidence-based decisions when it comes to acknowledging that it is expensive — fuel is expensive right now.

Also monitoring the subsidies in the fossil fuel industry and hoping to see some equal federal initiatives — we were seeing what is happening in the Americas with Biden's plan and us trying to, as a nation, compete friendly with our neighbours to the south in battery technology and the amazing potentials for the business industry, especially in Yukon, where we have the critical minerals that are necessary to fuel what would be the seed change, the paradigm shift, when it comes to our economies here in North America and how poised we are with the abundance that Yukon has in the critical minerals sector.

Also, at the same time, you know — so as we forecast and take a look at what is on the horizon, hoping that we have all-party support here for our business sector to weather the storm on a long-term basis, while we give back taxpayer money through incentives and rebates and different models for making lives more affordable for Yukoners and completely understand from the member opposite that — to his words — the Yukon Party is not supportive of our plan, our carbon pricing plan, which does rebate 100 percent of the money back to Yukoners, and as I mentioned earlier today, the numbers of actual money put in there, compared to what is given back, is more than — on average.

Also recognizing, as well, that the Yukon Party did campaign on carbon pricing in the last election, so I would be interested — maybe not now, but in the future — if the member opposite could maybe table what carbon pricing plan they were campaigning on, I would be very interested to see what model that is, compared to 100-percent rebates back to these groups.

Mr. Cathers: I do have to just note for the record that the Minister of Finance seems to be misconstruing a bit what we actually did campaign on and what we didn't, but I am not going to spend a lot of time on that here this afternoon in the interest of moving on to other departments.

I am wrapping up my list of priority questions here, but I did want to ask the Finance minister about — again, in the green sheets on page 11-2, there is a line item: "Interest on Advance to Territorial Corporation". That number was at \$369,000 in 2021-22; it was estimated to be \$905,000 in the fiscal year we are wrapping up; and is estimated to be \$880,000 in the upcoming fiscal year.

Can the Finance minister explain what that relates to and whether it is — which corporation or corporations this relates to and a breakdown on that? Because the government has several corporations, and that line item is not clear about which corporation or corporations it is from, or what it relates to, or what the breakdown of that is in relation to.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that is YDC. Yes, I will just leave it at that.

Mr. Cathers: Okay, I appreciate, Deputy Chair, that the Finance minister indicated that is from YDC, but the amount has changed notably from year to year, and it is just not clear what that is for. Is that for in relation to one loan or multiple loans, and why has there been such a change, compared to the 2021-22 year and the current situation?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Yes, this would be a fluctuation in interest. The debt from the Yukon Development Corporation is \$173.4 million. That number has been talked about before, so that is the current level of the borrowing from the Development Corporation, and you are seeing a reflection of interest fluctuations.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that this was some information, but it still doesn't fully clarify the situation, since some of the larger loans associated with YDC were at a fixed rate, to the best of my understanding, so this fluctuation — are there some loans, or a loan, to YDC right now that are at a variable interest rate?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I believe that the Minister responsible for the Yukon Development Corporation was clear in the ministerial statement about the first of a five-year repurposing, and so now what we have is a situation where we are paying on the principal as well as the interest, whereas the Yukon Party's loan only had an interest — again, getting into the details of a fixed rate or not — I will leave that to the minister responsible, but in the ministerial statement, we talked about our first of a five-year extension, and in that, again, what you're now seeing is \$1 million in interest also being accounted for in this line, I believe. Let me just clarify that.

In a renewal situation, you are seeing a fluctuation, basically, but there are no new loans in that number. If you are

seeing a fluctuation that the member opposite is not used to seeing, it's in a repurposing, and that would be the fluctuation — \$905,000 this year and \$880,000 next year. Again, you will be seeing an extra million dollars per year when we extended this agreement.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciate that information. I thank the officials for their assistance provided to the minister this afternoon. While I could go on for quite a while longer with questions, I have asked all of my high-priority ones. In the interest of moving on to other departments, I will, at this point, thank officials and turn the floor over to the Leader of the Third Party.

Ms. White: I welcome the officials. Now I understand why I have such an affinity for them, because we are all Aries, which is problematic for the rest of you. That means there are three of us in here who are very fiery. Welcome, of course, and thank you for the briefings and the fantastic ability to ask questions during those briefings. To be honest — and no surprise, again — I am not an accountant, and to the best of my knowledge, neither is anyone else in the room, except for those who are actually accountants, so I appreciate that.

Today, I really wanted to focus on the taxation system and how the Yukon government works with the federal government when we want to make changes. Particularly, very specifically, I want to just understand better how the Yukon government is going to work, for example, to get the tax credit that has been committed to in the confidence and supply agreement around fertility treatment. I know there has to be a broader conversation, and I think it would be really helpful for, not only myself, but for people who ask the question: What are the next steps, and what does that look like? I hope the minister can help us understand.

Hon. Mr. Silver: I appreciate the line of questioning from the member opposite. This is an extremely important initiative, not only for the Leader of the Third Party, but also for myself and a lot of constituents — and the member opposite's as well. You know, I have been working on this for a while; I am glad to see this being in the confidence and supply agreement. I have some constituents who are being very gracious — had an opportunity for kids maybe 10 years ago, did not have the ability — the finances — for this; so, happy to see this progressing. We are so close to the work that we are doing right now with the federal government and pre-Management Board. I do have a lot, but I can't really share yet on all that, but you know, it is going to go through a committee process. Regulation changes are coordinated with the federal government.

It is one thing, as well, if the federal government makes a change to a tax system, and then we have the legislative obligation to mirror those things. That is a lot more seamless for Mr. LaPrairie's small shop, up in Finance, but when we are creating something and looking at other models — you know, looking at, for example, Manitoba, looking to see what Manitoba has gone through as well. There is an issue with a federal — the federal government has done some changes to surrogacy as well. There are just so many conversations that are happening right now, and I know that Manitoba is switching

around. So, if we are looking to model the Manitoba legislation, we will serve from a benefit from being late to the game in a bizarre way, right? — where some of the things that they would have to then maybe look at, we might be able to take a look at all three models and come up with something that makes sense in the context of Yukon.

I wish I could share a lot more with the member opposite right now as far as what direction we are going in — what the Management Board direction is going to be; we are just not there yet, but I have to say, this has been — at the bilateral meeting that I have with my team in Finance, this is a regular update, so coming soon to a Management Board table near you.

That's about all I can say at this point, other than to say how thankful I am to see that, as a territory, we are moving forward on something that's extremely important.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. For folks who are listening and can't actually see the actions, the minister had his fingers crossed when he said "coming soon", so I think that is the wishful hope.

Maybe instead of asking specifics, which I did — I just asked specifics — can the minister just walk us through how the Yukon government works with the federal government, if we want to make taxation changes? Is it a matter of working with — how does that work? I asked about a very specific tax change, but as a whole, I imagine that if the territory wants to make changes, there is a process, so maybe he can walk me through what that process looks like, as opposed to specifically what I was asking about.

Hon. Mr. Silver: It would be hard to say that there is one model that would happen. Again, it depends on whether or not this is a federal change that we are mirroring, if this is something that other jurisdictions have done, if we're ahead of the curve, or if it's an increase or decrease in tax. These all have different applications in the regulation world, for example. So, there are bilateral conversations with federal regulators. Sometimes it might have to go through committees as well. Once all of the negotiations and conversations with the federal government have occurred to make sure that we're in line through our financial administration manuals and through their processes, then it would come to us in our CCL, which is our legislative committee, so it would go through that process as well.

That is in general, but I would also just say that fiscal policy works closely with the CRA and Finance Canada on negotiating agreements to administer tax credits for the territory, for example. This would include the cost to set up and administer those programs, the ongoing maintenance, and other details that must be considered as well.

We have definitely had a lot of conversations with the federal government in the administrative world, and again, if there's a jurisdiction that has had issues, problems, or concerns when it comes to CRA and how CRA would be monitoring and even administering programs, we are reaping the benefit of a jurisdiction that might have already gone through those systems to see what those costs would be when it comes to specific things like a carbon pricing mechanism or something like a

specific credit to either child benefits or fertility — those types of things.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I would say, recently — but time all starts to kind of get mashed together when we are in here, but this Sitting, I have spoken about the northern living deductions and how that affects different folk in the territory and have written letters, which I cannot currently find on my cellphone, to ministers asking about that, but is the Minister of Finance working with the federal government in looking at expanding what the northern living deductions do?

So, my understanding, for example, is if someone in the territory earns less than \$40,000 a year, they are not able to qualify for the full reimbursement, as if they made more money. So, the interesting thing is that it means that someone who earns less is not able to claim back, but we know that it still costs the same amount to live here, right? — whether we are talking about heating and food and those things. I just wanted to know if the minister has had any conversations with his federal counterpart about the northern living deductions.

Hon. Mr. Silver: So, we have had the conversation, based upon some of the conversations that we have had here in the Legislative Assembly, and of course, as the member opposite knows, the northern residents deduction falls under the federal jurisdiction. As far as my conversations with federal Finance, the whole gamut of different programs and services to look at the big picture and then a look at what the northern residents deduction is supposed to be, as that credit, right?

So, budget 2020-21, the federal government did expand access to the travel component of the northern residents deduction to make it more equitable. Northerners who do not have employer-provided travel benefits are allowed to claim up to \$1,200 in eligible travel expenses.

Also, in the bigger conversation about pursuing how the federal government can make the federal tax system more fair, they are introducing the enhanced Canadian workers' benefit — they did that in 2019 — to target the low-income workers. They are increasing the basic personal amount to \$15,000. Looking at the context of what is the design of the northern residents deduction — it's not necessarily intended as an income support measure. At the same time, looking at it and making sure that we can do what we can, that the federal government is doing what they can to accommodate northerners, or people in low-income tax brackets, these are the changes that they have made.

I do really appreciate the dialogue in this context, and I do know that there have been agencies here in the Yukon that have been reaching out to the federal government.

I will correct the record. I was not cc'd on that original e-mail from the Anti-Poverty Coalition, I believe, but at the same time, I was aware of the situation.

We have been building some strong relationships with our counterparts in the federal government. We will definitely look to see those partnerships increasing, when it comes to conversations about the northern residents deduction. If there is a specific ask from the member opposite — I mean, if that member wants to have a conversation, I am all ears, and if the

member opposite wants to sit down and have that conversation, I am more than happy to do so.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that and for the correction. I think I could probably call it multiple things and not actually ever land on “northern residents deduction”, so I appreciate that. I think I tried “northern living allowance”. Anyway, I got all the words wrong, but the meaning was the same, and we were talking about the same thing.

There was, indeed, a communication from the Anti-Poverty Coalition to Minister Freeland specifically about it. It was brought to my attention because there are people in the territory who own homes, but who earn less than \$40,000 a year, which means that they can't actually make the full claims.

I want to just put it on the radar because I think that if there is an opportunity to make sure — I understand that it is not an income supplement, but it is to offset the cost of living in the north. When people in the rest of the country wonder why they subsidize Yukon so much, it is part of northern sovereignty. If we weren't here, it would be a lot easier for other people to come on in, so there is that part as well.

Again, it is just people being able to access the tax money that they pay into the system. It is just to put it on the radar, and I will take the minister up on that and look forward to a conversation about it in the future.

Just because I am about to sit down, I thank the officials for being here and thank the minister for the conversation.

Deputy Chair: Is there any further debate on Vote 12, Department of Finance, in Bill No. 208?

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

Ms. White: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried

Deputy Chair: The Member for Takhini-Kopper King has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 12, Department of Finance, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$11,914,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$32,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$11,946,000 agreed to

Department of Finance agreed to

Deputy Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Yukon Housing Corporation

Deputy Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: As Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, I rise today to present our 2023-24 capital and operation and maintenance budgets. Before I begin my address, I would like to introduce the officials who will assist me today: Justin Ferbey, president of Yukon Housing Corporation, and Marcel Holder Robinson, director of finance and risk management at the Yukon Housing Corporation. Thank you both for being here and the preparation work that has led us here.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the team and the board at the Yukon Housing Corporation for their hard work, dedication, and passion to support Yukoners in accessing housing options, programs, and services across the housing continuum.

In January, the Yukon Housing Corporation completed the new 47-unit housing development at 401 Jeckell Street and held the grand opening. One of our first residents to call this home was Ms. Ashley Rose Ferguson. During the grand opening, she delivered a speech, part of which was directed to me, as Minister responsible for the Yukon Housing Corporation, and I would like to share a bit of that speech because, again, she captured the importance of what we set out to do in the corporation — and I quote: “You are affording people the space to belong. The space to breathe. The space to nourish themselves, meet their basic needs, and to rest. Space to find meaning and purpose, to get better and to just be human. Space to meet not only their obligations, but their full potential.”

Ms. Ferguson is right. How can anyone reach their full potential without a safe, stable, and affordable place to sleep at night? If there is one thing that we have learned over the past few years, it is that a home is the foundation of healthy families and healthy communities.

With so many of us facing months-long lockdowns, it is no wonder that so many of us chose that time to renovate or buy a home. Yet far too many Yukoners struggle in precarious living conditions, moving from couch to couch, and more still find themselves just a few strokes of bad luck away from finding themselves in the same position.

We recognize that rental options are limited and often unaffordable to many. Vacancy rates in the rental market have dropped to 0.08 percent — the lowest in years — a reality that influences the Yukon Housing Corporation’s wait-list. This is

an issue that was raised in the 2022 Office of the Auditor General’s report on housing, and we take it seriously. We know that we need to do more to support vulnerable Yukoners, and this commitment is reflected in our Office of the Auditor General work plan. In the face of this, it is essential that this government direct its efforts to ensuring that all Yukoners have a place to call home, and we are working hard to do just that.

It is difficult to save for a down payment, and that is more challenging with rising home prices and interest rates. We have heard from Yukoners, and our government is responding by expanding the home ownership loans program, which provides loans to purchase and build homes. The program will now be available throughout the territory, including Whitehorse.

Even those who own their own home may be vulnerable. A natural disaster, an unanticipated, necessary repair, or an emergency can drastically change a homeowner’s financial future or even leave them homeless.

Through the Yukon Housing Corporation, Yukoners can access a suite of home repair programs. These include loans for repairs of up to \$70,000 and an emergency repair grant for up to \$10,000. Those who find themselves with a mobility disability may find their home no longer accessible. That is why we offer a non-repayable grant of up to \$30,000 with which to retrofit their homes. To these services, we are adding one more stream, complementing the commitments within *Our Clean Future*: the wildfire grant. This provides eligible homeowners up to \$1,500 for air filters to ease the challenges of living in wildfire conditions.

A limited housing supply drives up the cost of housing for everyone, making affordability out of reach for many. We know that the solutions cannot be achieved by government alone, and that is why we have been making significant investments in partnerships, and through five successful intakes, the housing initiatives fund has supported the development of over 500 new homes by First Nation governments, First Nation development corporations, developers, contractors, community organizations, and the public. To date, 361 homes have been completed, 220 of which are affordable. Again, Yukoners residing in the affordable rental units will pay rent below median market rent for 20 years.

We are also supporting housing developers through the developer-build loan program. The Copper Ridge West development in Whitehorse is set to bring 97 lots to market by the end of fiscal year 2025-26. This program has been expanded to include the ability to finance land and infrastructure development necessary to construct residential housing.

The federal government plays an important role in housing in the Yukon. In recognition of the additional needs of northern communities, the \$40 million National Housing Co-Investment Fund was allocated to the Yukon through the northern carve-out.

Under the terms negotiated with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for the northern carve-out, \$20 million will support Yukon Housing Corporation’s community housing projects. The funding will support a number of projects scheduled to break ground this fiscal year, including Korbo phase 2, which is a 34-unit, multi-family housing complex in

Dawson, estimated at \$13 million, scheduled to be completed in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The Watson Lake Housing First, which is a 10-unit complex, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Services, will provide safe, permanent housing options for individuals experiencing homelessness or who are facing various unstable housing. This project cost is estimated to be \$10 million and will address a gap in supportive housing identified in 2020. It is expected to be completed in the 2024-25 fiscal year. A multi-family sixplex in Teslin, with a total project cost of \$4.5 million, is scheduled for completion this fiscal year.

These projects build on our efforts to work with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to enhance our community housing stock to support a full housing continuum. This past year saw an additional 66 affordable homes made available for Yukon Housing Corporation clients. These include: the recently completed 47 new affordable units at 401 Jeckell; 10 units of affordable and supportive housing for seniors through Normandy Living; and three new triplexes in Watson Lake, Mayo, and Whitehorse.

Through our community housing programs, we are also subsidizing rent for approximately 1,000 households through rent-geared-to-income housing, rent supplements, and the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. More than 90 Yukoners are currently receiving support through the rent supplement, including 50 previously wait-listed tenants now assigned housing at Da Daghay Development Corporation's River Bend complex in Whistle Bend. The next phase of the existing River Bend housing development in Whistle Bend will provide 98 new affordable homes, 75 of those available for Yukoners on the Yukon Housing Corporation's wait-list. Our government recently assisted in the expansion of the River Bend development by making lot 120 in the Whistle Bend subdivision available to Da Daghay.

We are also offering support directly to renters through the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit is a portable rental subsidy program that supports eligible Yukoners to meet their housing needs in private market rentals. More than 300 Yukon households have been supported in market rental housing since the program launched in 2020. This benefit, again, builds on the Canada-Yukon bilateral agreement under the national housing strategy and provides \$9.1 million over eight years, with a cost match by the Government of Yukon, so a total of 18.2 million to support affordable housing.

Before I move on, I would like to share a bit more of what Ashley spoke about during the opening of 401 Jeckell Street with regard to what we accomplished by providing people with a safe space to live. I quote: "You are building through every home and person housed a culture of compassion, resilience, reconciliation, and ultimately, respect. Respect for oneself and others and the land we live on and enjoy. Respect for the choices people make for themselves. You are saving people from stigma and from suffering. You are affording people the freedom to thrive in a place they are glad to call home. You are building a culture of peace, that lasts."

We believe that, by empowering people and engaging with our partners in a meaningful way, we can deliver housing that is stable and affordable, forming the foundation of a healthy community. Whether a developer or social housing tenant, we believe that when people have what they need, they will make the right choices for themselves.

I will now provide a more detailed breakdown of Yukon Housing Corporation expenditures and recoveries to highlight the ways we are supporting Yukoners to find housing solutions in 2023-24. In this budget, \$22.9 million has been allocated in operation and maintenance expenditures to provide housing services to Yukon residents. Also, \$54.5 million has been allocated for capital expenditures to assist Yukoners in meeting their housing needs.

Total rental revenue and operation and maintenance recoveries are estimated to be \$12 million, including recoveries from the federal government. We estimate that the total capital recoveries will be \$21.5 million, including recoveries from the Government of Canada. Recoveries from loan programs are estimated to be \$8.8 million. All the recoveries from our loan programs are recognized in the current fiscal year; the cash flow is recovered over the life of the loan or earlier upon discharge. In 2023-24, the net grant receivable from the Government of Yukon is estimated to be \$35 million.

For the operation and maintenance expenditures, under Executive, we have \$1.6 million that has been allocated for the Executive branch, which includes the president's and vice-president's offices and board support services.

Under Corporate Services, \$4.8 million has been budgeted for the Corporate Services division, which includes Finance and Risk Management, Human Resources, Policy and Communications, and Information Management and Technology branches.

Under operations, we have \$6.2 million that has been allocated for the Capital Development and Maintenance branch. The branch provides project management for construction, capital upgrades, and routine maintenance of Yukon Housing's housing units.

And \$10.3 million has been allocated for the Tenancy Supports branch. This branch provides support for our tenants in housing units and the implementation of community housing.

The biggest changes in the 2023-24 operation and maintenance budget include a \$1.334-million increase for rent supplements in support services for seniors in Normandy Living; \$846,000 increase for electrical and heating fuel in response to increased housing stock and inflation; \$399,000 increase for repairs and maintenance as a pragmatic response to the Office of the Auditor General's performance audit recommendation; and a \$73,000 increase for building security services.

For capital expenditures under Corporate Services, \$5 million has been allocated for the developer-build loan program. This program has expanded to include land infrastructure development to support community development partnerships that increase housing supply in the territory. \$2.2 million has been allocated for First Nation residential

energy retrofits. This funding is based on federal funding recovery, and it increases the efficiency of First Nation housing and decreases Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions.

\$5.7 million has been allocated for the housing initiatives fund to qualified Yukon projects, to build affordable housing; \$3 million has been allocated for community housing development — this program supports partnerships with First Nations and community organizations to support an increase in affordable housing; and \$3.2 million has been allocated to the home ownership program — formerly the rural home ownership program, which targeted rural areas in Yukon. This program targets qualified Yukoners who are most in need of Yukon Housing Corporation support and find it difficult to get traditional financing. The revised program, which will be launched this spring, can be accessed by all eligible Yukoners, including residents of Whitehorse.

In addition, we have allocated \$1 million for the municipal matching rental construction program. This is a supply-side incentive to increase the quantity of purpose-built rental housing for apartments and secondary suites.

For capital expenditures, under Operations, there is \$22.4 million that has been allocated to the northern carve-out as part of the national housing co-investment fund launched by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It is up to 75-percent recoverable to a maximum of \$20 million over the life of that program. \$3.8 million has been allocated for renovations and rehabilitation to existing Yukon Housing Corporation units. \$450,000 has been allocated to temporary emergency housing. This program has been redefined to meet emerging needs for temporary emergency housing in the territory.

\$2 million has been allocated for the replacement of aged-out units in line with the corporation's strategic number 2 of community housing renewal and rebalancing. This allocation addresses aging infrastructure and shifts in housing needs, priorities, and programming. \$1.2 million has been allocated for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit, a rent subsidy program to assist Yukoners with housing affordability through funding from the bilateral agreement between the Yukon Housing Corporation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation under the national housing strategy.

From general revenue, \$8.9 million has been estimated to be recovered through rent revenue, support services fees, and earned interest from clients. This includes an additional rent revenue of \$655,000 generated from opening of new housing stock. Under recoveries from Canada, an estimated \$3 million in O&M recoveries is expected from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation under the social housing agreement. From third party capital, we have \$2.4 million that has been estimated to be recovered under the Low Carbon Economy Fund for energy retrofits to existing housing units and our First Nation residential energy retrofit program.

Recoveries from Canada capital, an estimated \$19.1 million will be recovered from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation from several programs under the bilateral agreement and the northern carve-out. For loan programs, as in previous years, the amounts estimated to be recovered under the loan programs mirror the capital expenditures. The

exception is the home repair loan, where an allowance has been made for subsidies and grants shown under transfer payments.

We also have \$619,000 allocated for social housing program subsidies to non-profit organizations. We have \$1.2 million that has been allocated for home repair programs, for which about \$580,000 is allocated for home repair loans and \$1.14 million for grants and subsidies.

\$1 million has been allocated to the municipal matching rental construction program, a supply-side incentive to increase the quantity of purpose-built rental housing for apartments and secondary suites, and there is \$5.7 million in funding for the housing initiatives fund that provides support for qualified Yukon projects to build affordable housing. \$2.2 million has been allocated to increase the efficiency of housing for First Nation members and decrease Yukon's greenhouse gas emissions through the First Nation residential energy retrofit funding. \$1.2 million has been allocated as a rent subsidy program to assist eligible tenants through the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. We have allocated an additional \$1.5 million for community housing development, which results in a total of \$3 million in allocation. Again, this supports continued partnerships with First Nation community organizations to provide additional capacity.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to thank officials from the Yukon Housing Corporation for joining the Premier here today. I have a question on the new homeowner loan program. I have a few questions around the new homeowner loan program, and I have some questions that I asked earlier this month during the ministerial statement that I have not yet received answers to, so I am hoping the Premier may have some responses here in Committee.

So, my first question is: How much money is allocated for the expansion of the homeowner loan program?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, the total amount that has been allocated in the mains is \$3.2 million for the program. The rural home ownership loan program has been expanded to include Whitehorse, and it's now referred to as the "home ownership program". The expanded program provides loans to build and buy homes and is available territory-wide. The program will be launched in April of this year, and all eligible Yukoners, including those in Whitehorse, can apply.

This was just a little bit of background on the program.

Again, this is complementing the federal government's first-time homebuyer's incentive program. We have heard from mostly people who, if they purchased a lot and they wanted to build on their lot, were having a really hard time getting financing. I know that the Leader of the Third Party advocated for this a lot. I heard from some of the same folks, and this was something that we felt needed to be put back in place. It was really around some of the changes in interest rates and how that affected individuals.

The previous rural home ownership loan program supported 22 clients in seven rural communities, and that was for a total of \$8.6 million. This included approval for 12 construction projects.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate that answer. Is it now one pot for all of the Yukon, or do Whitehorse and rural Yukon have different pots of money to access?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: At this point, it is one pot of money, and we are monitoring to see what the uptake will be. We are comfortable with coming back later in the year if it is oversubscribed. We think this is an important program, but at this particular time, it is one pot.

Previously, when Whitehorse was included in it, it was undersubscribed. That is the history of the program, but we want to see what the uptake will be on this moving forward before we allocate more dollars to the program.

Ms. Clarke: Previously, Yukoners have indicated that they were denied because the program was maxed out. Will there be a hard cap on the budget amount, or will the budget be flexible in this first year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry — that is not accurate — from speaking with our lead of Finance. That is not my understanding. The reason that we expanded it to rural Yukon was because it was undersubscribed with Whitehorse included. But in rural Yukon, there was a real need for a financing option where traditional financing options weren't meeting the needs. That was also because it was hard to get comparables to new structures that were being built — to ensure that the process to gain financing through traditional methods could be approved.

If I am wrong, no problem — I would ask the member opposite to please just maybe table some documents or a letter from somebody, but that has not been our experience with this program. Are we going to be at a point where it's going to be fully subscribed based on where things are with interest rates? That is a potential, but it has not been our experience to date.

Ms. Clarke: How many Yukoners do we expect it to serve? Will there be a cap on the number of Yukoners each year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is a difficult question to answer because it's hypothetical in the sense that we don't know what the capital expenditures will be — as per application. Again, we are going to see fluctuations in building costs. So, we know the quantum, but we will not have a sense of how many units are going to be supported until we see the applications. There could be some trending. The member opposite could take a look at some of the trends that we saw — or trend out what could be there. We had 22 applications in the rural areas, and that was with an investment from us at about \$8.6 million. That can give you a sense of average unit support, but it was more expensive to build in rural areas. What we do know is how much money we have put toward it, and that is \$3.2 million at this particular time.

Ms. Clarke: If the Premier could also provide some details on how it will operate — for example, at what stage of the home-buying process will Yukoners access this program, and how much money is required as a down payment?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This would be something where you would go through an application process — officials are stating this and that was my understanding — before a build begins. I believe that five percent is what you would be looking at as a

minimum down payment to undertake this type of debt instrument.

Ms. Clarke: I would like to move on to asset caps. I would like to confirm that anyone in Yukon Housing prior to December 6, 2022 is exempt from the asset cap policy.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to make sure that I get the exact date that was stated by the member opposite.

Ms. Clarke: December 6, 2022.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is correct.

Ms. Clarke: Has the department sent any notification letters to current residents of Yukon Housing that they will be evicted based on the implementation of the asset cap policy?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, not that I am aware of.

Ms. Clarke: Has the department sent notification letters of compliance in error to any Yukon Housing residents who are grandfathered in?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Not that I am aware of. I can potentially help out — we did have a long conversation with the leadership from the Seniors Signpost organization in Watson Lake this week. Of course, I had an opportunity to reach out to Ms. Kearns in her work, and we also had some discussion — one of my advisors had a very lengthy dialogue — and I know that there was some misunderstanding on some communication that had been sent out to an individual, so maybe that is what the member opposite is referring to, but I think that this has been rectified. We have a commitment to meet with the organization. I commend them; I think they represent almost 60 seniors in Watson Lake, and, of course, Ms. Kearns has long been a community champion. It has been good to reconnect with her over this time, and, of course, we got a lot of understanding, but I think that there was one piece of communication that occurred, and I know that one of our team members had a lengthy conversation just to clarify that. That was my understanding.

Ms. Clarke: Is the Premier willing to undertake a review of the current asset cap of \$100,000?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: What we are doing is that we are monitoring the program as it rolls out. As I stated before, I don't think any person who is in a political position wants to have to walk in and limit those supports. This is something that I think probably lots of different ministers who have been responsible for Yukon Housing Corporation have looked at and have seen these pressures on the horizon. Also, when you look and you parallel the work that we are doing in our build-out to the demographic growth in certain areas of population, you can see that there are going to be a lot of pressures over the coming years.

I think that we are really monitoring what's happening with the program. I have asked the president — specifically around communities. We want to make sure that we follow the Auditor General's report. With the OAG's report, it said that you have to house those vulnerable individuals as a priority, so we know that we have to do that. Some of the questions that I have posed are — if we have met the needs of those individuals, do we have an opportunity to have some flexibility? So, we just implemented this. It was driven by the OAG's recommendations. The board made the decision as a board of a

corporation. We have respected the independence of that decision and their ability to try to manage the assets and support clients the best they can. At this time, we are implementing — and I think it would be fair to say that we have so many individuals in different areas, primarily Whitehorse for seniors, and Watson Lake and Dawson are other areas of pressure. I would say that we are always monitoring our programs.

Do we have an interest in a full-scale review of the program? That's not something we are undertaking because we just implemented it. But are we looking to make sure that it works for the best possible needs in meeting our corporate goals while following the direction from the Auditor General and still meeting the needs of Yukoners — yes, that is something we would be definitely following through on.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to developer loans caveats. Many developer loans or grants for building affordable housing have criteria requiring below-market rental rates for the long term. How does Yukon Housing monitor this and ensure that the terms are followed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Our government knows that to improve affordability and availability of housing in the Yukon, the availability of land and stock needs to increase. That's why, again, we are pleased to share that the Yukon Housing Corporation developer-build loan program has been expanded to include the ability to finance land and development necessary to construct residential housing.

I think the question was about the developer-build loan program. Maybe it pertains to something else. The member opposite might not be thinking about the developer-build loan program; it might be more about our housing initiatives fund where we would be offsetting a capital cost, and then you would want to monitor what that asset value would be on a resale. In this particular case, we are not monitoring per se; we are offsetting the capital cost for a project to enhance the ability to have loans out there.

I will finish with this, and then we can pivot back to the other one if that is really what the question was about.

The developer-build loan program provides low-interest loans for short-term construction financing to qualified Yukon developers who are building houses in residential land developments but are not eligible for financing from traditional lenders. Through the developer-build loan program — for instance, we talked a bit about Chu Níkwān Development Corporation, and that was some of the work around Copper Ridge West. This is something where we are trying to enhance not just the lot development commitment that we have put out, but also the opportunity to augment that with even more opportunity for lots and development.

Ms. Clarke: With respect to these loans, who is responsible for following up on contracts and recovering money owing?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This is standard work. We have to go through the Finance department's scrutiny. We work with the Department of Finance, and we bring this through the mechanics of Management Board. We have to ensure that we have accountability in any of our TPAs. You can imagine — we have a number of different debt instruments that are

overseen by the Yukon Housing Corporation, which we talked about earlier — some of those mortgage-style loans. This is another financial instrument. We sit down, and the terms of the agreement have to be brought through to Management Board. We need approval, and we have to follow this scrutiny-of-government process..

In all cases, we do it in a way where we have legally binding agreements, and then there would be a schedule for repayment. Our team in finance would be looking at the oversight of that and ensuring that people meet their terms. There is a series of steps that one would take if anybody who we are providing funds to is not meeting their requirements for repayment.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to 4th and Jeckell — a few questions on the new Yukon Housing facility. Is this still a mixed-use building?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, it is.

Ms. Clarke: What is the anticipated number of units for each type of tenant stream?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, hopefully, I have understood the question properly. First, I will give a breakdown of the unit types. Under this particular structure, we have 14 bachelor, 17 one-bedroom, 12 two-bedroom, and five three-bedroom units, which makes up the 47 units.

I believe that the question was really focused on — in a mixed unit, how many are for seniors, what the breakdown of the demographic is — how many individuals? I believe that is what it is. So, if that is what the question is, two things are at play. First, we are going through our wait-list, and we are giving people that opportunity to come and view and then to work through that — the back-and-forth that we do with potential clients.

There are two things I'm going to endeavour to bring back. One is: Did we have a predetermined goal of different categories within the totality of different demographics? I am going to find that out, which we don't have at our fingertips. That is still driven by not just meeting those requirements. Here we go; we have some of the criteria that we were looking at. We will have 60 percent of units designated for the affordability stream for those who qualify for the RGI program, the rent geared to income. Then 20 percent of units will be designated for the by-name list, which we work with the Safe at Home and Anti-Poverty Coalition on that work, specifically prioritizing people experiencing homelessness. Then 20 percent of units will be designated for the Yukon Housing Corporation's priority stream, which is made up of individuals who have experienced violence, have a medical accommodation, or a mobility need. Within those three different categories, depending on which individuals from each list — that will give us the demographic of who will make up the list.

So, potentially you could have, as an example, one group of individuals in a particular age category, who we are seeing in a number of different areas, so that process is underway right now. That is our goal from the standpoint of where we're finding our tenants and where we hope the distribution of tenants comes from.

Ms. Clarke: I appreciate the Premier interpreting my questions. My questions are very clear.

How many tenants are now in 4th Avenue and Jeckell Street?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Before we move on, was my interpretation correct, or was there other information needed?

Ms. Clarke: I would like to move on to the next question. How many tenants are now in?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that is a yes.

The total units released for tenancy so far has been 36, leases signed and tenants moved in — 14. Again, units, offerings — sorry, view units that are scheduled — units accepted and leased and scheduled to be signed. So, 36 units are ready. We have some deficiencies in, I think, 11 units that are being done. We talked a bit about that. There are some flooring issues and some other things that were at play. We have seen units accepted, leased, and scheduled to be signed — 33 of the 36 at this point.

Ms. Clarke: Has the flooring issue been resolved?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think that, as just stated in the last answer, I think it was 11 units where we still have some work that is being undertaken.

Ms. Clarke: I heard 11 deficiencies. I am not sure if it has been resolved.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: There are 11 units that are not going out for tenancing because there are deficiencies, and so those are still being worked on, and as I stated, 36 of the units are out for tenancing, and 33 of the 36 have been accepted or leases are scheduled to be signed.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to the northern carve-out. What projects will this be used for this year?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will just go back to the opening information. The four projects that we are looking to use that for are the Watson Lake Housing First project, the Dawson duplex, the Korbo phase 2 Dawson project, and the Teslin sixplex.

Ms. Clarke: What does the funding model look like for this money? Does the northern carve-out fully fund the projects, or does Yukon Housing need to fund a portion?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The funding model for these projects is similar to other infrastructure funds, where 75 percent of the fund is from Canada, and then we have an obligation to provide 25 percent of the funds.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to the rapid housing initiative. This was the funding — the Safe at Home access via the CMHC. Does the Yukon government have any access to RHI funding, and what projects has it used it for?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Yes, I believe that the rapid housing money that was allocated previously and the member opposite speaks to — there is another tranche of rapid housing funding that is moving from Canada. That money, again — we received a letter from the City of Whitehorse asking for us to administer, so that will be allocated later in the year. I think there were some terms — they give some flexibility on terms and timelines, and there will be a process of application that will be open to Yukoners who fit within the criteria of the fund, and

the time frame to get projects done for the fund as it is a rapid housing initiative.

Ms. Clarke: Is there any money still available, and if so, what projects will it be funding?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: The newest documentation from the City of Whitehorse, as I said — I think it is \$5 million, I believe — up to \$5 million, and it will go out to application, so we are not sure yet, Deputy Chair, which programs or how many programs will be funded with those dollars.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to tenant allocation policy change. We have heard concerns from NGOs that the government change around the tenant allocation policy is resulting in less spaces being available to vulnerable people, including women fleeing violence. Will the minister commit to revisiting these policy changes in light of the calls by Yukon NGOs?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, this is work that was built around the direction for the national housing strategy. I absolutely have heard the voices of some of the key non-profit organizations — non-governmental organizations — in the Yukon, and we continue to work in concert with them on a number of initiatives.

I think it is important to state that we still have our priority structure, and that is — one of the things I have heard the member opposite speak about is our VOV clients — that is “victim of violence” — and how they are supported.

We are not just using our housing stock to ensure that individuals who are in this particular situation are being supported; we are also working to expand the opportunities for individuals in that particular category. One example I would give is, we have been working very closely with the Council of Yukon First Nations. Right from the beginning of their program, we have been providing financial support for that program, which is actually focused directly on individual victims of violence and individuals who are in these precarious, vulnerable positions.

We are opening up more opportunities through working partnerships. We still have our priority list, and we will always listen to the voices of those on the front lines. We still have to make sure we are following the OAG report, which is about vulnerable populations. We need to do that. We also need to be in a situation where we are trying to align — I think I have shared it here previously — with what we heard from organizations across the country. Many other provinces are undertaking this.

Again, just a bit of a formal response, the implementation of the community housing is based on growing recognition — in the Yukon and across the country — that the previous social housing models needed renewal. By concentrating those with complex support needs in the same buildings, the old way of providing social housing frequently compounded problems for tenants and neighbourhoods and reinforced social divisions.

Fundamentally, our community housing model is about providing better service to all our clients. It's about promoting better outcomes for tenants and healthier neighbourhoods overall. We will do this by tenancing our buildings in a way that makes them more reflective of our diverse society. As we

implement this new allocation model, the population of tenants in our buildings will have a wider range of incomes and will include seniors, families, and those with additional support. Of course, everybody who receives housing under this model has a housing need. To qualify, they must demonstrate that they cannot afford market housing.

Finally, we will continue to prioritize those fleeing domestic violence and those who are unhoused and in need of medical accommodation. In addition, we will ensure that our tenants with complex support needs have better access to housing integrated with supportive services to promote more successful tenancies.

Overall, our goal is to prioritize those in need by providing high-quality housing integrated with services, while ensuring that our tenants live in buildings that are well-integrated with the surrounding neighbourhoods.

Ms. Clarke: With due respect to the minister, I did not hear an answer. Would you revisit these policy changes in light of the calls by Yukon NGOs — yes or no?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Maybe I am having some challenges. I thought I was communicating quite clearly today. I said that we sit down and work with non-profit organizations and listen respectfully to their comments, so if we are in a position where, with some of our vulnerable clients, our programs are not meeting their needs, we will revisit that. In this case, there are two very striking sets of directives that we have seen. One is the national housing strategy, and we have tried to follow that, like many other provinces. I think I have shared with you our thoughts, based on that, in my last answer. Secondly, we still have the Auditor General of Canada's report which explicitly says that we must look after our most vulnerable citizens. Again, those are the things that we are balancing.

We sit down and we work with the groups. There are lots of things that we have done within our relationships with NGOs. This work that we're talking about — this model — was informed by consultation with non-governmental organizations, the Department of Health and Social Services, and the Housing Action Plan Implementation Committee. If the member opposite wants to bring to the floor of the House specific voices, yes, we will continue to work with those organizations that we are seeking guidance from.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to a question from Options for Independence. We have heard concerns about the condition of some of the units at Options for Independence and understand that some are in need of repair. Can the Premier tell us how many units are in need of repairs and provide us with a timeline for this work to be completed?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Just conferring with officials — our latest reports from Options for Independence is that the repair work and maintenance work that was required to be undertaken has been completed and that the organization is satisfied and comfortable with that work. Again, if there is subsequent information that would help me do my job better, I am open to that being brought to the floor of the House, but that is the dialogue and communication that we have had from the organization, as of late.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. We have also heard fire safety concerns, including that the fire extinguishers need to be checked and some are in need of replacement. Can the Premier please provide us with more information on what is being done to address that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I don't have any explicit information concerning the fire extinguishers in the building. What I do know is that the executive director of Options for Independence has had dialogue directly with our team, and they said that they were satisfied. We hear you, and we will endeavour to go back, and we will let the executive director know that maybe there are still some concerns. I am not sure where it is coming from, but I will leave it at that. You can imagine — our sense is that all of that work is completed. I think that maybe the member opposite has outdated information.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move to staff housing. What is the government's policy regarding pets in staff housing units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry, can I just get clarity — I missed one part. I know that it is staff housing, but what — oh, pets — sorry. The policy is one pet per staff housing.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to Vimy. Can the Premier please provide an update on what is happening with Vimy Housing Society?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: At this particular point, Vimy, as an organization — the president of the Housing Corporation and I attended their annual general meeting. During that time, they spoke about the fact that they were looking for funds from CMHC — Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Of course, we had an opportunity to share information with the individuals attending about the supports that we have provided. It is about almost \$250,000 in funding, to date. They reported on the funds that they hold from a number of individuals from the Yukon. We shared with the group that there is a lot in Whistle Bend that we have been holding for Vimy, and we continue to do that.

There seems to be a change in one of the programs — the funding model in one of the programs that they have been counting on — and that has really made a significant change in the money that Vimy can bring to the table. I would rather Vimy state this to you directly, but it was a very significant change. Vimy had gone back into one fund, and the criteria for that fund had changed because it was oversubscribed across the country, and so they have a much different financial need at this particular point. We have supported, we have held the land, and we have provided some comfort language. They have two funds that they have been looking at, this one that has changed, and then they have been working with, I believe, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities on some other funding for their project.

One of the things that we were looking to see, as an organization, was a very strong governance model that looked very sustainable, and they have met that criteria — when you think about overseeing their units — because they have an agreement, an MOU, that they have signed with Grey Mountain Housing. They have been doing a lot of good work — a tenacious group of people. We want to see them get their

project built, but they are looking at one or two different avenues right now for increased funding. They reported that, based on what they thought that they were going to have, they are about \$5.5 million short now compared to what they needed. That's not all they need, but the \$5.5 million is the delta from what they thought they were going to have to bring to the table to where they are now.

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

I am going to move on to Normandy. I understand that the Yukon Housing Corporation was still negotiating a contract for an additional 16 units. Can the Premier please outline the current contract for units in the Normandy project and provide an update in the contract for the additional units?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: That is correct. We do have 10 units, and we are still negotiating on the other 16 units. At this point, I don't have the details in totality because that dialogue is still underway.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on. On May 25, 2022, the Auditor General provided their audit of the Yukon Housing Corporation. One of the many scathing findings is that the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System had not been put in place. In the 2022 audit of housing, the Auditor General found that — I am going to quote: "... the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System had not yet been put in place." Just to be clear, that is from line 78 of the Auditor General's report. The report indicated that the department was in the process of conducting the necessary privacy impact assessments for the new system. Can the minister tell us if the process has been completed, and, if so, is the new Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System now in place?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to leave this to make sure that we have a fulsome answer, because the Department of Health and Social Services is playing such a significant role in delivering on this particular point from the OAG report. We have met with third-party organizations that support this type of work. One organization has come in and met with us, but I think that it's best — what I will do is make sure that we have the information supporting some of the work that we have done, but I will also ensure that the Minister of Health and Social Services is made aware that this likely will come up in debate on some of the work that they are doing and some of the engagement that they have had to make sure that there is a structure and system in place to ensure that we are tracking the appropriate data and, again, using that to understand what our needs are.

HIFIS — it is a program that has been undertaken by Health and Social Services, and so we will make sure that they are prepared to answer that question when they are here for debate in the subsequent weeks.

Ms. Clarke: The Auditor General said back then that action needs to be aligned and that the OAG are hopeful that words can be put into action. When the OAG was asked the top three advice, this is what they said: to work together, cooperate, collaborate, and improve the work together, and the second advice was to ensure that information systems should be accurate and timely and, finally, that action plans should be

transformational changes and should come with dates and timelines and communicate progress and results.

So, how does the minister demonstrate that he has followed and acted on this advice?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I would say that the minister inevitably is responsible for the work of alignment. I think that some of the things that we shared, upon receipt of the OAG report, was the agreement that we put in place between Health and Social Services and the Yukon Housing Corporation, and that laid out a number of ways where we could see better alignment and better communication. There have been subsequent meetings and work together — lots between the departments, but even at the ministerial level, where the Minister of Health and Social Services and I have undertaken work in a parallel format. We just talked a bit about this one element, which was the data collection. So, I think that, when you look at that, both of us going in and meeting at the most senior level with organizations that can help us understand how to do this better, and then being able to take in that information.

In December 2022, the corporation and the Department of Health and Social Services released our work plan, which was built together, to address the OAG recommendations, so I think that shows right away an absolutely new way of doing things together. The plan, again, requires the corporation and the department to work with partners to change the way in which housing is provided for the most vulnerable. The corporation and the department are working individually and together, along with housing partners, to implement the plan, and many actions have either been completed or initiated and, again, with the totality being in motion or complete — and the focus for the winter of 2024.

Some of the things that have been undertaken — as the member opposite is asking about some of those actions: We signed, again, their multi-year MOU to formalize the cooperation and coordination between both departments. Ongoing, within their departments, are the assistant deputy minister meetings to determine long- and short-term housing priorities. One of the things that I requested of the previous president was to bring everybody together, which was then turned into an action and helped — just requested — and sort of helped define some of the policy architecture around the 2022 housing summit. That was really just to solicit feedback from housing partners and stakeholders on how to best address the OAG.

Then, in 2022, the OAG work plan, again, that indicates the corporation's and the department's plan to respond to the recommendations and timelines. Then, we had a subsequent plan — and in both of those works, I had a chance — and I appreciate from the former president — a real opportunity to help shape what that communication — that dialogue — was like and some of the outcomes that we wanted to see there.

So, there was a real opportunity, besides being responsible, to take a role in supporting some of the technical work, and then, again, we are seeing departments work together, and that has been, I guess, an illustration of the things we have been working on to respond to the OAG report.

Ms. Clarke: I have two more questions, and I am going to give the floor to the Leader of the Third Party.

Since May 25, 2022, how many times have the housing action plan and deputy ministers review committees — DMRC — met?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I will come back — I will go back and review the question in Hansard, but we are talking about departments working together, and then it was the DMRC, which — it is not that we are bringing it to all of the deputy ministers — to the review committee — to review all of the policies. So, that wouldn't be the function where this work would be done. It would actually be done in a different place. So, I am a bit confused or the member opposite is a bit confused, but maybe you want to refine the question and ask me again, and I will do my best to answer.

Ms. Clarke: I have one more question on the wait-list. Back in May 2022, the wait-list for vulnerable Yukoners waiting for housing has tripled. What is the current wait-list?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Sorry, Deputy Chair, I just want to make sure I have the most accurate information today for you.

There are 244 people on our Yukon Housing wait-list at this particular time.

Ms. White: Thanks to the minister today and to the officials. I feel like I am going home. I haven't been in housing for a while, but it's a delight to be back and be able to ask questions today.

Normandy Manor is beautiful. It is actually what I wish for all seniors. I wish that they all had the opportunity to live in a lovely place and have so many supports, but that is just not the case.

I did a tour recently, and there were 21 of 84 units subscribed at that point, but my understanding is that the minister paid almost \$50,000 to retain units while the new deal for the new 16 units is being negotiated. Am I correct in that understanding, and is the government going to get that money back, or is that money gone?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We will not receive the money back, but that money will be put against the agreement upon completion of the negotiation and execution of that agreement.

Ms. White: That is fantastic news, so I thank the minister for that.

Similar to conversations we have been having, for example, about being able to block book hotel rooms in Vancouver — understanding that the Yukon government will be renting a third of this building and since the building opened, the price of the units has come down. At what level is the government negotiating their 26 units? I know there are 10 already. Have those prices been lowered to reflect what the other units are, or what is being negotiated for the additional 16?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to have to hold off giving the hard numbers on it, because the negotiation is underway, and I don't want to compromise that dialogue. I will say for the House, and I think the member opposite is aware, that it will be a different model. We can come out with annualized or unit price based on a period of time, but the first one was a

significant investment that gave us the right to those units over a period of time.

We can come up with that unit number. In this particular case, we are now coming back and looking at that core monthly cost and what the term will be. Once we are in a position, we can come back with those numbers.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. Just for clarity's sake, I understand that tenants will pay a portion of their income for both the rent and for the services, but my understanding is that the Yukon government will pay a price for those units. So, what they may recoup may be flexible, but what is paid is solid. I am more interested in those prices, but maybe by the end of the year, we will have an idea of what that is.

Can the minister tell me at this point how much, overall, the Yukon government has spent on the Normandy Manor facility?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have spent \$3.5 million for 10 units over a period of 20 years. That unit number, if you want to track it for later, was at that time \$1,500 per month. Again, \$2,990 per unit was the service cost for the first year, and there's an adjustment for inflation over that period of time. So, to date, those have been the dollars that we've put in place. To be very accountable, I guess it would be the other \$200,000 that we have in supplementary on top of that. We broke that down in the supplementary budget, which was those holding fees, plus the offset on the FTE who is there for a portion of the time — to clarify, only working with our clients, not other clients, and then going to other buildings. I think there were some other side fees as well that were there.

Also, in the building of the building, there was \$500,000, I believe, for the housing initiatives fund, and then the matching offset was \$500,000. So, \$1 million in the front end, plus the \$3.5 million, the \$2,990, and then just over \$200,000 in the supplementary budget in total.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. We recently received, at our office, a phone call from a landlord who actually had a fairly astonishing story to tell. He has a basement suite that they rent out to Yukon Housing. This year, he indicated to Yukon Housing that he would be putting the rent up for the maximum five percent allowable under the rent cap, because that is what is allowed under the law, but the Yukon Housing Corporation told him that, no, he could not raise his rents. So, I am just looking for a point of clarification. Is that a case of, if Yukon Housing goes into a relationship with a landlord, those are viewed as fixed prices, or was it just a misunderstanding between the landlord and the person on the phone?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Like I have always done with my colleague across the aisle, I will work on a challenger issue with our team on something — without having the details, understanding the explicit case and the arrangement, I can't speak to it right now. So, I would just leave it. But I am always committed to working on behalf of anybody's constituents here when they bring something to me with some of these challenging cases. We will bring it to the Housing Corporation and have a look at it.

Ms. White: I thank the minister for that. I am just hopeful that it's not a policy, and my real thought is that it was probably a misunderstanding between the two people on the phone, but I just wanted to make sure that it wasn't a policy that existed.

So, some Yukon Housing units have reported that emergency medical services don't have access to their building. Back in the day, buildings had the little key box — you see a lot of them now for Airbnb — but they had the ability and EMS would have the ability to access that key box to enter the building. We know that now, in some cases, there are buildings — seniors buildings, specifically — where, if a senior calls 911, EMS doesn't actually have access to the building. We are wondering if the department is working with those buildings to make sure that EMS has access when someone calls for help.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think, in some cases, there has been some discrepancy in information. I responded to a letter that was sent by the Deputy Chair on this specific case of some seniors buildings in the downtown area.

I also had an opportunity to personally visit all the seniors buildings over 2022 and meet with the seniors, and this was something that was brought up in a lot of our tenant meetings — the fact that there is a box in the front. Some of the tenants weren't aware of the protocols that are in place with first responders and that first responders do have keys.

I also want to state that there could have been some challenges on one or two of the boxes, and I know that this was among the things that we have undertaken to remedy and fix. I have heard it too because I have been in those meetings, and I am sure that when you are advocating for tenants, you will hear it. I have been in meetings where people have said, "Look, how do people get into your building? Do they have to ring a tenant's buzzer to get in?" I have been there with a multitude of staff — our head of maintenance, our client relations folks — and gone back and said, "Look, the box is here, and the Whitehorse fire, EMS, and RCMP have access, and they have those keys, which are standardized."

Now, if there is an anomaly here — I know that we have just responded to the letter that I received about a number of things in the downtown area. This was one of the things that was highlighted. In reflecting back on my response — if there are any anomalies — we do have an overall structure in place that we believe gives first responders access in a timely manner to those people. If there is a key lost, there has been occasion to replace keys and boxes. I think that's what we illustrated in my letter back to the Deputy Chair.

Ms. White: I appreciate that answer, but I spend a fair amount of time with seniors, and they do have concerns.

In some cases, not just seniors, but Yukon Housing Corporation tenants have not felt safe in their buildings and have asked for different things. I know that there was ongoing work previously to be able to install security cameras. In lots of cases, folks still don't feel safe, and there have been some incidents of violence, unfortunately, in downtown buildings.

Is there any additional money in the budget for new security initiatives, and, if so, are they for specific buildings, or is it across the board?

I will apologize to the minister right now, but seeing the time, Deputy Chair, I move that you report progress.

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

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Speaker resumes the Chair

Speaker: I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.