



Yukon Legislative Assembly

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HANSARD

Monday, April 3, 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

OFFICIAL OPPOSITION

Yukon Party

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

THIRD PARTY

New Democratic Party

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

LEGISLATIVE STAFF

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

Yukon Legislative Assembly
Whitehorse, Yukon
Monday, April 3, 2023 — 1:00 p.m.

Speaker absent

Clerk: It is my duty, pursuant to the provisions of section 24 of the *Legislative Assembly Act*, to inform the Legislative Assembly of the absence of the Speaker.

Deputy Speaker takes the Chair

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): I will now call the House to order.

We will proceed at this time with prayers.

Prayers

Withdrawal of motions

Deputy Speaker: The Chair wishes to inform the House of changes made to the Order Paper.

The following motions have been removed from the Order Paper as the motions are now outdated: Motion No. 652, standing in the name of the Leader of the Official Opposition; Motion No. 334, standing in the name of the Member for Porter Creek Centre; Motions No. 303 and 548, standing in the name of the Member for Lake Laberge; and Motions No. 290, 366, 373, 374, 375, 507, and 654, standing in the name of the Member for Kluane.

In addition, Motion No. 669, notice of which was given by the Member for Pelly-Nisutlin last Thursday, and which is on today's Notice Paper, will not be placed on tomorrow's Order Paper, as it is out of date.

DAILY ROUTINE

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

Introduction of visitors.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Mr. Streicker: We have several guests here who have come for the Music Yukon 25th anniversary tribute. Could we please welcome Matthew Lien, who is one of the founders of Music Yukon; also, the director of Music Yukon, Scott Maynard; and Beth Dart, who is the administrative director and organizes Arts in the Park — if we could welcome them all, please.

Applause

Hon. Ms. McLean: I would ask my colleagues to please help me in welcoming a couple of guests who are here for the ministerial statement a little bit later on the Order Paper. First, Melanie Bennett, who is the executive director for the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate; and Meg Potter, who is the director of finance for the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. Welcome.

Applause

TRIBUTES

In recognition of World Autism Awareness Day

Hon. Ms. McPhee: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Liberal government to recognize World Autism Awareness Day. Yesterday, on April 2, we marked the 16th annual World Autism Awareness Day, which was declared by the United Nations in 2007 to raise awareness about autism and to promote the rights of autistic individuals. We mark this day to celebrate the diversity and the uniqueness of people on the autism spectrum and to raise awareness and understanding of autism spectrum disorder.

Autism is a developmental condition that affects how people communicate, interact, and perceive the world. It is not a disease but a different way of experiencing and interacting with the world. It brings richness to us all. Just like each and every one of us, individuals with autism have strengths and can be faced with challenges. In the Yukon, there are many resources and services available for people with autism and their families.

The Autism Yukon Society offers information, advocacy, and social events for people on the spectrum and their families and their friends.

The Child Development Centre provides assessment and intervention services for children with developmental delays or disabilities, including autism. The Learning Disabilities Association of Yukon provides support for children, youth, and adults with learning difficulties and with disabilities. Health and Social Services' disability services provide support and services to people with disabilities here in the Yukon Territory. All of these organizations provide information, advocacy, education, and social opportunities for people with autism. They also help to create a more welcoming and understanding community for everyone.

I want to say thank you to all the staff, volunteers, and members of each of these organizations, and thank you to all the other professionals, educators, volunteers, and caregivers who dedicate themselves to enhancing the quality of life for people with autism and their families.

In addition to World Autism Awareness Day, I wish to also acknowledge that April is Autism Spectrum Awareness Month. Whether you are a person with autism spectrum disorder or a family member, a friend, a teacher, a co-worker, or a neighbour, you can make a difference by showing respect, understanding, and acceptance of people with autism spectrum disorder.

I stand today to show respect for the amazing contributions and achievements that those living with autism make to our society and to further promote a more inclusive and compassionate society.

Today, I challenge my colleagues and all Yukoners to take some time to raise your own awareness about autism spectrum disorder throughout the month of April and beyond. This is an opportunity to learn more, to read more, to ask questions, or to volunteer and to practise acceptance. Together we can make the Yukon a more inclusive and welcoming place for everyone.

Applause

Ms. McLeod: I rise on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to recognize April as World Autism Awareness Month and April 2 as World Autism Awareness Day, which was designated by the UN General Assembly in 2007.

Today, we celebrate millions of people around the world on the autism spectrum. We celebrate their strengths and their accomplishments and work to raise awareness and to help shape community perceptions around autism spectrum disorder, or ASD.

ASD is most often diagnosed at a very young age through notable absences of usual childhood development markers. These markers can include things like eye contact, speech, social interaction, sensory issues, and unusual interests in stimuli, although parents and caregivers may notice other behavioural patterns or restrictions.

Of course, like many disorders, early intervention is key to providing supports and to help temper the severity of the disorder. I would like to thank some of our incredible non-governmental organizations that work to deliver services to Yukoners on the spectrum and their families. The Child Development Centre offers supports and services to families of children under five, and their work has been crucial to early intervention. I would like to also thank the incredible staff at the Child Development Centre and the board at Autism Yukon for the support and dedication to the ASD community, as well as the other NGOs that work daily to support learning, education, and inclusion for all.

Applause

In recognition of Autism Acceptance Month

Ms. White: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to take a bit of a different path and to pay tribute to Autism Acceptance Month. Autism Acceptance Month was created by and for autistic people to change the conversation about autism. During Autism Acceptance Month, the focus is on sharing positive, respectful and accurate information about autism and people on the autism spectrum.

Autism Acceptance Month promotes acceptance and celebration of people with autism as family members, friends, classmates, co-workers, and community members making valuable contributions to our world. Autism is a natural variation of the human experience, and we can all create a world that values, includes, and celebrates all kinds of minds. In a nutshell, Autism Acceptance Month is about treating people with autism with respect, listening to what they have to say about themselves, and making sure that there is always space for them in the world.

We thank our local organizations that continue to put people at the heart of decisions, advocacy, and self-determination. For those of you who love silent auctions, I would highly recommend taking a look at the online auction that Autism Yukon is having that goes until this Saturday.

So, this month is a time to celebrate the people with autism in our lives and communities and for all of us to commit to building a more accepting world.

Applause

In recognition of Music Yukon

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 25th anniversary of Music Yukon. Formed in 1998, the 100th anniversary of the Yukon, Music Yukon was first called the “Recording Arts Industry — Yukon Association”. Founded as a result of a conversation over a beer, back when it was still called “Chilkoot Brewing”, between Matthew Lien, Michael Brooks, and Rick Lemaire, the organization grew out of the need for a dedicated entity to foster creative development and represent the interests of the Yukon’s music scene locally, regionally, nationally, and beyond. For 25 years, Music Yukon has worked to enhance the presence of local music, both here in the Yukon and around the world, to help artists achieve their artistic expression at all stages of their careers.

In the past decade, Music Yukon hosted BreakOut West twice, including in 2019, which won Conference of the Year. It took part in the national “from the north” tour celebrating Canada’s 150th, showcasing the three territories, and it participated in the Centre for Music Ecosystem’s international project about the role of music policy in remote communities.

Music Yukon represents our industry in the Western Canadian Music Alliance, the Canadian Council of Music Industry Associations, and the Foundation Assisting Canadian Talent on Recordings. Through its innovative territory-wide education partnerships, Music Yukon supports youth and their musical expression, nurturing the creative development of our upcoming artists.

During the pandemic, Music Yukon put well over a quarter of a million dollars directly into the pockets of the local music industry through many programs, including a redesigned Arts in the Park, one of the only concert series in the country that didn’t shut down during COVID. By the way, Arts in Park is heading into its 27th season this year.

Also on the highlight reel of cool community projects, you can listen to a two-hour playlist of Yukon artists at Music Yukon’s website.

I ask the members of this House to join me in extending sincere congratulations and gratitude to the founders, board members, and staff, past and present, as well as the countless organizers, techs, and volunteers who have been involved and have contributed to the success of this fantastic organization.

I also want to recognize the many phenomenal artists and performers whose talents and careers have blossomed in the Yukon thanks in part to the programming and services of Music Yukon.

It is my firm believe that, by supporting creativity and musical ventures in and outside the territory, we will continue to foster cultural and economic growth in the Yukon. Yukoners love music and thus Music Yukon. Our community is richer for your creativity and dedication resonating across the Yukon for 25 years.

Applause

Ms. Van Bibber: I rise today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition to pay tribute to Music Yukon, which has helped — and continues to help — artists to achieve their

full potential. Their statement reads: “We exist to help artists achieve their artistic, career and business goals including musicianship, professionalism, business success, economic self-sufficiency and cultural expression.”

The board and staff of this non-profit association are there to guide their members to funding pots, with reminders of deadlines and all manner of professional assistance to ensure that they can get the mentorship necessary to succeed, as well as opportunities to hone their crafts.

At LePage Park in downtown Whitehorse, Arts in the Park will be showcased again this year from May 29 to July 7. Each day is a different live performance along with a visual artist demonstration, so I encourage you to take your lunch and enjoy the magic of an outdoor, fun noon hour. The variety will astound you. We certainly live in a vibrant artistic community, and they are so willing to brighten our worlds with their talent, making us so fortunate to be given these gifts of music and art.

Congratulations on 25 years. Keep up the great work, and we look forward to many more years of Yukon music.

Applause

MLA Tredger: I rise on behalf of the Yukon NDP to add our voices in tribute to the 25th anniversary of Music Yukon. Arts in the Park is probably their best-known initiative and for good reason. It is a highlight every summer to join people across the city as they leave their homes and jobs and errands at lunchtime on a sunny day and all converge on this tiny but beautiful park tucked away in downtown Whitehorse.

Walking into the park, alive with music and an audience full of friends and tourists, feels like you have stumbled into something a little magical. Going to Arts in the Park always feels like you are in on a secret concert, but at the same time, it is loved by pretty much everybody. I don’t know how Music Yukon makes both of those things true at once, but somehow they do.

As we have heard, Arts in the Park is just one of Music Yukon’s many projects. They do an incredible job of looking for the gaps in the music industry and then filling them. They just wrapped up the professional technical training intensive — a two-week project that built capacity for performances in the territory by training technicians. I particularly loved this project because those behind-the-scenes roles and skills are absolutely critical to live and recorded music that we love so much.

We are all fiercely proud of the Yukon’s incredible artists, and those artists couldn’t thrive without the behind-the-scenes work of Music Yukon making our music scene possible. From training to producing shows, to advocating for and facilitating funding — congratulations to Music Yukon’s board, staff, and volunteers on 25 years of making music happen in the Yukon.

Applause

Deputy Speaker: Are there any returns or documents for tabling?

TABLING RETURNS AND DOCUMENTS

Ms. Clarke: I have for tabling the land tender package for Whistle Bend phases 6D and 8, dated March-April 2023.

Ms. McLeod: I have for tabling a letter from the Yukon Housing Corporation.

Deputy 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

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

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to work with the City of Whitehorse to resolve issues with traffic flow, parking, and snow removal and storage in future phases of Whistle Bend by implementing solutions based on lessons learned in previous phases.

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 meet with the executive of the Yukon Contractors Association to discuss contractors’ concerns with government procurement, process, timelines, and red tape.

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

THAT this House urges the Yukon government to ensure that Yukon’s hospitals have the financial resources that they need by taking actions including:

(1) providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with additional funding this fiscal year to retroactively compensate for the shortfall in Yukon government core operational funding in the 2022-23 fiscal year totalling more than \$14.5 million;

(2) providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with additional funding this fiscal year to retroactively compensate for the multi-million-dollar impact of higher than expected inflation in the 2022-23 fiscal year; and

(3) providing the Yukon Hospital Corporation with additional funding this fiscal year to retroactively compensate for ongoing costs related to COVID-19 during the 2022-23 fiscal year.

Deputy Speaker: Is there a statement by a minister?

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

First Nation School Board funding agreement

Hon. Ms. McLean: I rise today to share an exciting update on the funding agreement established with the First Nation School Board.

The establishment of the First Nation School Board is an historic step in advancing reconciliation and improving the educational outcomes for all students across the territory. It also honours *Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow*, the seminal document presented by Yukon First Nation chiefs to then-Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau 50 years ago.

Our Yukon Liberal government is committed to the sustainability and success of the First Nation School Board. Together with our partners, we are writing a new chapter on education in the Yukon and building a brighter future for the territory. We are committed to ensuring that all Yukon school authorities have the resources that they need to deliver high quality and culturally appropriate education.

We are pleased to have reached an agreement with the board of trustees on a new 15-month funding agreement for the First Nation School Board to receive more than \$35 million. This funding will support the First Nation School Board to implement their vision for education in the schools that they operate and their unique needs as an Indigenous school authority. The funding agreement includes funding for the operation and maintenance of First Nation School Board schools, the establishment of school board organizational capacity, and the development of Yukon First Nation language, culture, curricula, and educational programs. This agreement supports commitments outlined in the framework agreement with the Chiefs Committee on Education, the joint education action plan, and recommendations from the 2019 Auditor General of Canada's report to improve education outcomes for Indigenous and rural students and implement systemic changes that incorporate Yukon First Nation culture and language in Yukon education.

This work will ultimately benefit all Yukon learners and improve outcomes for Indigenous and rural students in all of our schools. I am proud to support the Yukon First Nation School Board in their goal to provide high quality education that is rooted in First Nation ways of knowing, doing, and being.

This funding agreement represents our government's steadfast commitment to reconciliation and our belief that every child in the Yukon deserves access to an education that celebrates their diversity and promotes inclusivity. We will continue to walk together with the First Nation School Board to make meaningful and trailblazing changes for the betterment of all students. Through this work and our efforts with our educational partners, we will make sure that all students have the opportunities to learn about Yukon First Nation history, culture, and languages, as they are an integral part of our lives.

Shāw nithān.

Mr. Kent: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this ministerial statement today.

First of all, I want to congratulate the First Nation School Board on their first full school year of operating eight Yukon schools, and I also want to wish them well with the additional three schools that voted to join the First Nation School Board for the upcoming school year.

Tangible changes are already being made, as we see with the new literacy instruction that will be introduced into First Nation School Board schools this fall, and we hope that the minister follows the lead of the school board and considers making changes to the literacy programs in Yukon government-run schools.

I do have some questions for the minister regarding this statement. Of the \$35-million, 15-month funding agreement, can the minister tell us how much of this is included in the 2023-24 main estimates and how much will be in the supplementary estimates this fall? How much of this funding is being re-profiled from existing dollars in the Education budget, and how much of it is new funding?

The statement says that funding is for "the operation and maintenance for First Nation School Board schools, the establishment of school board organizational capacity, and the development of Yukon First Nation language and culture curricula and education programs." So, can the minister provide a breakdown of how much money is being assigned to each of these categories?

I am also curious: How does this funding model compare to funding for the Yukon Francophone School Board and its schools?

When it comes to operation and maintenance, can the minister tell us if an equitable amount of per student funding will be provided to those schools that have decided to continue under the existing school governance model?

Will there be any changes in the hiring practices at the First Nation School Board schools as a result of this agreement?

Also, will the same program for capital funding, maintenance, and repairs be in place?

I am hoping that the minister can answer these questions today, but if not, I will be following up on this when Education appears in Committee of the Whole for budget debate.

Ms. White: Since the establishment of the First Nation School Board, we have seen steps being taken for real change in Yukon education, and I know that I am not the only one who believes that there will be lessons learned and shared through the First Nation schools that will help Yukon education find a good path forward.

Since the beginning, three additional schools have joined the First Nation School Board, bringing the total up to 11 schools under their responsibility. Students are at the centre of the First Nation School Board-run schools, with families, the land, school teams, administration, First Nations, the school board and the Minister of Education, community and elders all radiating outwards in wrap-around rings of mutual support. All rings come with unique responsibilities and jurisdiction, and no one ring is more important or more powerful than the next. I believe that there is a lot to learn from this holistic world view that will hopefully carry over into the Department of Education-run schools.

I know that the minister will correct me if I'm wrong, but it appears that this \$35 million covers 15 months or five quarters and that this money will cover funding for the first eight schools that sign on until the end of that first quarter. But does that mean that the rest of the money will cover all 11 schools for the remaining four quarters, which I'm guessing is a school year?

In this year's budget, there is a transfer of nearly \$10 million to the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon, Yukon's only other school board, which is responsible for two

schools with similar responsibilities to those of the First Nation School Board, but I am happy to be corrected by the minister if I'm wrong.

So, knowing that this funding will cover the operation and maintenance for the 11 First Nation School Board schools, the establishment of school board organizational capacity, and the development of Yukon First Nation language and cultural curricula and education programs, it raises concerns. One school board represents two schools and one school board represents 11, so how is this funding amount equitable? To be clear, this isn't me pitting equity-seeking groups against each other. The Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon has been and will continue to be a strong and loud supporter of the First Nation School Board, and the First Nation School Board will continue to be a strong and loud supporter of the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon.

So, this is a question of fairness. How are funding amounts decided for individual schools, and does the \$35 million being discussed reflect the previously allocated funding amounts for these 11 schools?

We continue to be in full support of the work done at the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon and the First Nation School Board.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you very much for my colleagues joining in this ministerial statement today, providing some questions and statements that require some clarity.

Our government has long been committed to making and supporting meaningful change in education. Our government has prioritized decolonizing the education system. We recognize that this is a necessary step to meaningful reconciliation. It is a big part of the action we are taking to improve education for all Yukon students.

For too long, we, as Indigenous people, were told that our language, our culture, and our way wasn't good enough. This was wrong. Through education, we have an opportunity to work together to revitalize language, culture, and heritage in our school settings. This funding agreement that I'm sharing with Yukoners today acknowledges the leadership role that the First Nation School Board will play in developing and delivering Indigenous language, culture, curriculum, and educational programs. I am thrilled that we will have three more schools transitioning to the First Nation School Board for the next school year. That will be a total of 11 schools operated and managed by the board. Later this year, we will be updating the funding agreement to reflect the needs of those three schools as well.

While I am on the topic, the member representing the Official Opposition asked if there would be further supplemental budget changes as a result of this \$35-million contribution and agreement that we are talking about today. I can assure the member opposite that the full \$35 million is included in the 2023-24 budget, and I am looking forward to debating and going into all of those details.

I want to acknowledge and really hold my hands up to First Nation School Board executive director Melissa Flynn and the

Interim Governance Committee. Thank you so much for all the work that you did and, of course, the new board of trustees elected in the fall — the whole team at the First Nation School Board and those who guided the path, including the Chiefs Committee on Education and the Yukon First Nation Education Directorate. Thank you so much for all that you do for Yukoners. We share a common goal to provide high quality and culturally rich education based on an Indigenous world view, which is also my world view.

We understand that this is absolutely necessary. Our government's 2023-24 budget continues to invest in the First Nation School Board. The \$35.1-million funding commitment covers the next 15-month period running until the end of the 2023-24 school year and, again, we will be working to include the additional three schools.

I should note for clarity that the funding formula for the First Nation School Board's and the Commission scolaire francophone du Yukon's operation and maintenance are the same.

I am very proud to be sharing this announcement with Yukoners today. I look forward to continuing this important partnership and investing in reconciliation in our territory.

Deputy Speaker: This then brings us to Question Period.

QUESTION PERIOD

Question re: Yukon First Nation procurement policy

Mr. Hassard: Last week, the Minister of Highways and Public Works assured Yukon businesses that in order to qualify for the bid value reductions under the First Nation procurement policy, they must be in the Yukon First Nation business registry.

However, a document that was filed with the Supreme Court of Yukon on March 17 raises some serious questions about the registry, and it says — and I will quote: "The Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce has provided Yukon Government with an official termination notice to cease its administration of the Yukon First Nation Business Registry on March 31, 2023."

So, can the minister tell us who is currently administering the First Nation business registry?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: The Yukon First Nation procurement policy positions the Yukon government as a trailblazer in Indigenous procurement. Our government has built strong, respectful government-to-government relationships with Yukon First Nations to foster reconciliation. This innovative policy brings business opportunities for Yukon First Nations and advances economic self-sufficiency while also moving government procurement policy in a more inclusive direction for all Yukoners. This is a major step forward toward realizing the vision of chapter 22 of the *Umbrella Final Agreement* in achieving equitable and sustainable economic growth and prosperity for the Yukon, and frankly, it is about time.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with respect to the specific question, I understand that notice was given of intention of the

Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce to cease to administer the program on March 31, but I understand that those discussions do continue, and it is the government's intention to have the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce continue to administer the business registry. So, those discussions are going into, I understand — and I will get confirmation of that — overtime, but we certainly do wish them — the Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce — to continue to be involved.

Mr. Hassard: So, the document filed with the court also notes the following — and, again, I will quote: “This is raised as there is the possibility that the Registry may not exist in the coming months, or that the Registry may be in a substantially different form.” So, given that these statements are filed with the court and are publicly available, it is easy to see why some businesses are confused about what this means for current tenders and upcoming bids. So, why has the minister not considered updating the language in tenders that continue to be released by the Yukon government to reflect the changing nature of the Yukon First Nation business registry?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: With the Yukon First Nation industry representatives, we quoted off the terms of reference for the Monitor and Review Committee.

This committee has representatives from First Nations, industry, and government and is responsible for monitoring outcomes of the policy and providing recommendations to the Yukon government for interventions or continuous improvement.

As I indicated in previous appearances before in this Chamber, the report provides over one year's worth of data on the outcomes of the policy and is available online at yukon.ca/growing_together. Some of the highlights include: 6.2 percent of the 7,238 contracts that were awarded went to Yukon First Nation businesses; 7.8 percent of contracts measured by dollar value were awarded to Yukon First Nation businesses; 17 tenders were re-ranked due to the application of bid value reductions; the total dollar value of the contracts awarded was approximately \$48 million, as I indicated previously. During that period of time, the total value of contracts that have been awarded was in excess of \$600 million, so there is certainly still work to be done.

So, we do look forward to the First Nation Chamber of Commerce still being involved with respect to the Yukon First Nation definition.

Mr. Hassard: So, the question wasn't about the committee or about outcomes; it was about updating the language and tenders.

Now, it has become clear to Yukoners and Yukon businesses that there are changes coming to the way that eligibility is determined for the First Nation procurement policy and tenders that are awarded using that system. So, despite this, the government has refused to make any changes to the language, and they continue to insert into tendered documents.

So, is the minister at all concerned about future legal liability as a result of awarding contracts on the basis of tenders that include language that is either currently or soon will be out of date?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As I have indicated previously, the Yukon First Nation procurement policy has been widely praised as a model for other jurisdictions to follow, and it has opened the door for larger conversations between government, First Nations, and industry on how we can make government procurement benefit everyone.

With any new policy or initiative, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is essential to be adaptable and to work toward continuous improvement. As such, we are carefully tracking the outcome of the policy through the Monitor and Review Committee. This committee has representatives from industry, Yukon First Nations, and the Government of Yukon. They are responsible for analyzing data, monitoring outcomes, and providing recommendations to the Government of Yukon. They just released their annual report, as I indicated, that provides over one year's worth of data on the outcomes of the policy.

Furthermore, an independent contractor will conduct a review of the bid value reduction components of the policy this spring. We expect to have the review completed at the end of June 2023. It is our government's intention for the Yukon First Nation procurement policy to be a success to raise Yukon First Nation socio-economic outcomes, and we will continue to do the hard work.

Question re: Whistle Bend development

Ms. Clarke: The Minister of Community Services' inability to get lots to market has made the housing crisis worse. The minister's struggles have resulted in him being unwilling to tell Yukoners how many lots have been released since the 2021 election; however, the government did recently announce that they would be putting out some townhouse and multi-family lots in Whistle Bend phases 6B and 8. The only problem is that these lots are not yet completed.

Can the minister explain why the government is putting lots in phases 6B and 8 out for lottery when people will not even be allowed to build a house on them?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I have to begin my answer this afternoon by respectfully rejecting the premise of the question — the opening remarks.

Right now, budget 2023-24 has \$26 million for land development in the Yukon with an additional \$22.4 million for housing projects in Dawson City, Watson Lake, and Teslin. The member opposite said — I believe she used the word “failed” in getting lots to market. If I may, for a minute — that just simply is not accurate.

In 2022, the Land Development branch advanced the development of 55 rural and 175 Whistle Bend lots. In 2023, it is advancing development of over 75 rural and 130 Whitehorse lots. That's more than 200 lots in each of those last two years.

My predecessor in this role set records for the amount of lot development that the Yukon government has done. Our government is working hard to increase the supply of lots in Yukon communities and in Whitehorse for business and economic development opportunities.

I have more to say on this matter.

Ms. Clarke: With all due respect, the minister did not answer my question. The lottery package for these lots makes

clear that the Liberals missed yet another timeline when construction of these phases was not completed on time last fall.

Now, the government is going to release these lots by lottery, even though work isn't completed and people won't be able to actually build houses on them for an unknown amount of time. According to the land lottery package, development permits for these lots will not be issued until the City of Whitehorse issues a construction completion certificate. These lots also come with a three-year building commitment.

How will the Yukon government enforce a three-year building commitment when it cannot even guarantee when the purchaser of the lot will have access to the lot or start development?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: I will say that there is an awful lot of idle speculation in the member opposite's remarks, but I can only talk to what has happened and what is happening in the land development sphere here in Whitehorse and in rural Yukon. I will continue that answer.

The five-year capital plan shows how we are working in partnership with municipalities and First Nation governments to address the continued demand for building lots. We are working together to put more housing lots together for Yukon people. Here in Whitehorse, my department is leading and supporting feasibility and planning work for sites identified in the City of Whitehorse official community plan. That new official community plan was just signed off, and I was just meeting with the mayor about it this morning. I am very happy to see that the planning will continue to make sure that we don't have a gap. I am hoping that we don't have a gap in land development in the future.

Our government is working hard to increase the supply of lots in Yukon communities. Fixing the territory's housing shortage is not something one government or organization can accomplish alone. We need to work in partnership to increase housing options. That is something that our government has put front and centre in the way it works with our municipalities, our First Nations, and our partners in housing.

Ms. Clarke: Once again, the minister is giving a non-answer answer and ignoring my questions.

Just to recap, the Yukon government originally planned to have phase 6B lots available in July 2022. Well, the minister failed and did not deliver on that deadline. The Liberals are already at least a year behind, and now they are going to put the lots to lottery before the construction is even complete. Despite this, they are continuing to include a three-year build requirement.

Given this minister's track record of missing timelines, what is the plan if there are more delays? When can Yukoners expect construction of housing on these lots to begin?

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Again, I vehemently object to the characterization that we failed or that we are not doing what we said we would do. We are working very, very hard to meet the housing demands of Yukoners through the work that we're doing with our partners and the municipalities — with the municipality of Whitehorse, with our housing partners, with the building community and the contractors — and we have done

just an incredible amount of work in the last couple of years. We have \$26 million for land development across the territory this year.

As I said in my previous answer, we are getting 83 single-family lots released this year in Whitehorse. We have four multi-family lots and 33 townhouse lots being released. Overall, we are going to have 206 lots in 2023 available for Yukoners. Last year, we had more than 200 lots out and available to Yukoners. We are going to do the hard work that Yukoners expect of this government to make sure that they have housing lots available.

Question re: Chronic disease and disability benefits program

Ms. White: Last week, we told the minister about a Yukon family whose baby has a severe food allergy. The parents followed their doctor's advice and switched to a hypoallergenic formula. For this family, it is nearly impossible to afford as the chronic disease and disability program doesn't cover any of it; in fact, the program doesn't cover any medical care related to severe allergies. They don't even cover the cost of an EpiPen, which is a life-saving medication. This story isn't about just one family; we have heard from others that are or have been in the same boat when it comes to severe allergies. This makes no sense. Severe allergies are chronic and sometimes have severe conditions.

Will the minister expand the chronic disease and disability program to include coverage for severe allergies?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Thank you for the question. I think it is something that I noted last week, but I'm happy to address it again.

The chronic disease and disability benefits program in Health and Social Services provides supports to eligible Yukoners to help cover some costs associated with managing their chronic disease or disability. The program provides coverage for approximately 80 chronic conditions, which are determined by regulation. Allergic disease is not listed as a chronic condition under the program at this time and therefore does not technically qualify as a benefit under the chronic disease and disability benefits program.

Again, applying the program parameters — as a result, the nutritional supplements for reasons of allergy and EpiPen are not eligible for coverage under this benefit. EpiPen is covered for eligible Yukoners through the pharmacare and extended health benefits program, with some exceptions, and the children's drug and optical program also covers some of these medications. It is important that we continue to look into the coverage for Yukoners.

Ms. White: So, allergies aren't the only condition not covered by the program. There are several diseases and disabilities missing from the list of what is covered. We have heard from many people being denied coverage for type 2 diabetes to Sjogren's disease, even prosthetics and more. That is why we are asking that the chronic disease and disability program be reviewed. Some folks end up paying thousands of dollars a year for the equipment and medication that they need because they are denied coverage. Sometimes their condition

gets worse while they are trying to get the money to pay for that while they are appealing the decision. So, this program, as it exists right now, is leaving people behind.

Can the minister tell us how many claims were made last year to the chronic disease and disability program that were denied?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We are continuously seeking ways to improve insured health coverage to best meet the needs of all Yukoners. The Government of Yukon is committed to supporting the health care needs of Yukoners through its insured health coverage and benefits that are easy to access, that are equitable, and that are evidence-based. It is critical that we are continuing to improve the services for Yukoners.

The new Yukon dental program is an example of our commitment to expanding coverage to reduce inequities. *Putting People First* recommendations for insured health coverage include an income-tested, payer-of-last-resort public plan for extended benefits and a number of other detailed opportunities for stand-alone disability benefits through permanent disabilities. That work is all underway. I do not have the number that the member opposite is seeking.

I can say that enrolment in the children's drug and optical program — there were 63 people enrolled during the 2021-22 fiscal year, and, to date, there are 54 people enrolled in 2022-23. I do have some other numbers that might be of assistance to the member opposite.

Ms. White: So, even when health care providers fill out the right forms and send long letters of support, this government consistently denies applications because the policies just aren't patient-centred. Patients, health care workers, and chronic condition workers know how difficult it is to get coverage through this program. We have heard from health care workers that getting coverage for patients through the chronic disease and disability program is almost impossible, rigid, and rarely covers what the patients need. Individuals and their medical teams should be deciding what is the best course of treatment — not outdated policies.

So, will this government expand the chronic disease and disability program to include treatments that are recommended by an individual's medical team?

Hon. Ms. McPhee: We are continuously seeking ways to improve insured health coverage and benefits for the needs of all Yukoners. That is not something that can happen overnight.

I can indicate that I don't agree that there is consistent denial. Under the children's program in 2021-22, 1,276 received benefits — so far, in 2022-23, 1,167. Through the pharmacare and extended health benefits program, there were 6,191 people receiving benefits during the 2021-22 fiscal year and, so far, in 2022-23, 6,537 individuals receiving benefits. Up to 8,000 Yukoners will benefit from the new dental program.

We are continually trying to improve this program. It is, and must, serve Yukoners, but I certainly don't agree that there is consistent denial of everyone. When a matter comes to our attention that needs to be addressed, we do so as quickly as possible. The member opposite knows that well; she often brings matters to our attention — the team at my office and at

Health and Social Services — and they are resolved as quickly as we can.

Question re: Yukon Liquor Corporation social responsibility

MLA Tredger: This government speaks often about its commitment to the *Putting People First* report, not to mention the substance use emergency. This includes fighting the harms associated with abuse of alcohol. But the way this government regulates alcohol, compared to cannabis, suggests that they have no plan to reduce the harms associated with alcohol consumption.

The *Putting People First* report notes that since offsale hours of operation were expanded to a maximum of 17 hours a day, hospitalizations caused by alcohol increased dramatically. Yukoners see hours being expanded at offsales and new liquor mega marts being opened, and they are worried about what impacts that it will have on the health of their loved ones.

Can the minister tell Yukoners how they plan to address the issues highlighted in the *Putting People First* report regarding the sale of alcohol?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Again, what we do is what we have been doing all along as a government. We have a whole-of-government approach when it comes to any one of our presentations or reports that we have worked on in collaboration with other levels of government and other professionals. We work very closely with those who determine these policies — whether it be our climate change policies or our *Putting People First* plan, for example.

Also, in that would be a conversation about representative public service, but when it comes to the hours of operation and offsales, I know the department is very aware of the *Putting People First* recommendations and plan. They do an excellent job of making sure that we provide a service while, at the same time, expanding our licensees in the world of cannabis as well, but also paying attention to the harms that alcohol and other substances do have on our population.

We are continuously monitoring and also working with Department of Health and Social Services, including one of the first meetings that I had as the minister responsible — taking these considerations to the department and having those conversations.

MLA Tredger: A licence to sell offsales liquor costs just \$150 a year. For comparison, the application fee for a cannabis licence is more than \$2,000. A quick glance at yukon.ca makes the difference between cannabis and liquor regulations even more clear. To open an offsales business for liquor is a relatively simple process with little oversight or public engagement. The public notice requirement is to place ads in the local newspapers.

The process of opening a cannabis store is held to a much higher standard, including the option for a public hearing if there are objections from the public. Applications can take months and appear subject to much more rigorous oversight. Meanwhile, beds at detox are full almost every night for withdrawal management from alcohol. The arrest processing

unit had almost 2,000 stays for intoxication in the last two years.

Can the minister explain why there is a double standard between cannabis and liquor oversight?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I would disagree that there's a double standard. I think there is one regulation that has been in force for quite some time and a new regulation with cannabis, but to say that social responsibility isn't taken evenly when it comes to how we sell alcohol or how we work with the private sector with cannabis is simply not the case.

I know that there have been a lot of initiatives to make sure that we are conscientious about the sales of alcohol, including the getting home safely program, which is now available on yukon.ca, around drinking safety.

Also, with the substance use health emergency specifically, in July 2022, for example, the corporation, including with Health and Social Services, provided substantial funding to the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Society Yukon for healing camps. I believe that was out at Jackson Lake. The corporation raises awareness for responsible consumption and lower risk drinking behaviours and supports programs that focus on reducing alcohol-related harms. The corporation also sources low-alcohol and zero-alcohol beverage options in response to consumer demand. When it comes to the cannabis side of things as well, there is lots of work that we will do with the industry to make sure that we monitor it.

MLA Tredger: The Yukon has no requirement for any socio-economic assessment when handing out liquor licences. It leaves the job of monitoring for potential harms up to ordinary citizens who may or may not notice the ad in the newspaper. In British Columbia, liquor licences require the approval of a local municipal or First Nation government, which have the option of undertaking a community consultation. Here, the government's commitment to health and wellness seems heavily at odds with its push for more private liquor vendors and greater access to alcohol.

Will the minister consider providing more rigorous oversight for the approval of new offsale liquor licences?

Hon. Mr. Silver: I think what we can safely say here is that everybody here in this Legislative Assembly has the same concerns when it comes to imbibing, whether that be in alcohol sales or in a new nationally regulated cannabis market. The work that we have done as a department, working in collaboration with Health and Social Services, is extraordinary work. The work that we have done, as well, to involve the private sector when it comes to the sale of cannabis — a lot of extraordinary work. Knowing the efforts made by the corporation, by the departments, and by this team, I am very confident that we will continue down the road of making sure that safe consumption is at the heart of the decisions that we make, not only with the corporation, but also the whole of government when working with the Department of Health and Social Services when it comes to *Putting People First*.

Question re: Extended producer responsibility implementation in Yukon

Mr. Istchenko: So, from November 1, 2022 to February 17, 2023, the Yukon government conducted a consultation on the development of extended producer responsibility in the Yukon. During that time, a number of significant concerns were raised about the impact the system that the Liberals are proposing will have on Yukon businesses and, in turn, on Yukon customers.

Here is what the Retail Council of Canada said in their submission to the Yukon government — and I quote: “Although a common misconception of EPR is that the costs are borne by large businesses, the truth is that the costs are passed onto consumers through both eco-fees and higher prices.”

So, can the minister assure Yukoners that the new EPR system they are planning will not increase prices for local customers?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: As the Member for Kluane indicated, public and industry engagement on extended producer responsibility took place from November 1, 2022 to February 17, 2023. This engagement included four public meetings, 14 group stakeholder meetings, more than 10 one-on-one stakeholder meetings, two meetings with First Nations, 313 public survey responses, and approximately 25 written submissions. The department is continuing to evaluate the engagement results with a view to ensuring that Yukoners' voices will be reflected in an extended producer responsibility system.

As you have heard from both me and my colleague, the Minister of Community Services, our existing recycling system in the Yukon is in a vulnerable position as it currently lacks the infrastructure to manage the increasing volume of recycling and the financial stability needed to be sustainable. The financial and operational vulnerability of the Yukon's recycling system was highlighted once again when Raven Recycling recently announced that they would be stopping their public drop-off of non-refundable recycling, in part due to the cost of operating such a system. This is why the Yukon government is working to establish an extended producer responsibility program in the Yukon by 2025.

Mr. Istchenko: I actually asked the minister if this new Liberal EPR system was going to increase prices for local customers.

So, the Retail Council of Canada also noted specific concerns with the proposal from the Liberal government. They said — and I quote: “RCC's primary concern is about the cost per capita of an EPR system in Yukon. Our concern is that it will be high because of low population, low material volumes and significant distances for collection and transportation.”

Instead of setting up a Yukon-specific program, the RCC recommended simply joining a program that is already run by a province like Alberta or BC. Will the government consider changing course from their current plan that will be costly for Yukon customers and businesses and consider working with another jurisdiction to find cost-savings?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: I can advise the House that I certainly have had meetings with both my department and I have met with leaders of private sector industry. I hear them loud and clear: that they are concerned about costs and that we are an islanded territory. That doesn't mean that the significant private business owners in the territory are not prepared to do their part. Are they concerned that a north of 60 program would be significantly more expensive than a provincial program? Yes, they are. I have heard them loud and clear as we work through this process to 2025.

We know that Yukoners are dealing with cost-of-living increases. We expect costs to be passed on to Yukoners at places like the grocery store under an extended producer responsibility approach, which ultimately should be in the order of cents per yogurt container. Most of Canada already has extended producer responsibility in place. As a result, national companies already factor its cost into their prices. This means that the cost of many products arriving in Yukon already includes the fees necessary to pay for an extended producer responsibility system.

Mr. Istchenko: I actually asked the minister if he was considering working with other jurisdictions to find some cost-savings that he was talking about.

One of the biggest concerns that we have heard from businesses about the proposed program is that it will yet again download even more administrative responsibilities, red tape, and cost to small businesses. When that happens, we know that those increased costs simply get passed on to the customers. Here is what the Retail Council of Canada said — and I quote: “In addition, the creation of thresholds for low volume/revenue producers will be extremely complex because an exemption that excludes a small business would likely also exclude many national producers, because those producers sell a relatively small volume to Yukon consumers. This means that customers patronizing a small number of businesses will shoulder the cost disproportionately.” Why is the minister developing a program that will increase the prices that customers pay for a variety of goods in the Yukon?

Hon. Mr. Clarke: *Our Clean Future* includes a commitment to implement extended producer responsibility in the Yukon by 2025. The primary goals for bringing this program to the Yukon are to: reduce the cost of waste management for the territorial government, municipalities, and taxpayers; to provide financial stability for recycling; to increase the amount of waste kept out of landfills; and to help us reach the *Our Clean Future* waste-diversion target of 40 percent by 2030.

In order to ensure that Yukon businesses and recycling stakeholders have the certainty that they need to participate in an extended producer responsibility system, we will continue to dialogue with them throughout this year and in the subsequent year while the new framework and regulations are being developed. As I have indicated, I have started to have these conversations and will continue to have these conversations, but nevertheless, we will implement extended producer responsibility by 2025 in order to meet the goals, and what we have heard from both the Minister of Community

Services and me is that all Yukoners are committed to reducing their waste footprint.

Deputy 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. 24: Act to amend the Coroners Act and the Public Service Act (2023) — Second Reading

Clerk: Second reading, Bill No. 24, standing in the name of the Hon. Mr. Silver.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Silver: It is my pleasure to introduce Bill No. 24 for the Legislative Assembly's consideration. The proposed changes to these two acts will support Yukon government's efforts to be an inclusive employer and remove barriers from our hiring process. The amendments in this bill will do two things. First, the amendment to the *Public Service Act* will remove the requirement for public servants — that they must take an oath of allegiance to the Crown. Secondly, the amendment to the *Coroners Act* will remove the requirement for coroners to take an oath of allegiance as well. Coroners, as you know, are also members of the Yukon government public service.

These changes will bring the Yukon in line with most Canadian jurisdictions. Right now, Yukon is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada with legislation that requires employees to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown when they join the public service. The Crown represents the head of state in Canada and serves an important function to our system of government. However, for some employees, taking an oath of allegiance may conflict with their personal beliefs about the Crown. This could especially impact some Indigenous employees who may have strong-held beliefs about the colonial relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Crown. Removing the oath of allegiance supports the goals of *Breaking Trail Together*, the Yukon government's strategic plan for a representative public service.

Breaking Trail Together is a 10-year strategy for increasing the representation of Yukon First Nation employees within the Yukon government. It addresses the legal obligation in Yukon First Nation final agreements that the Yukon government develop and implement a plan for a representative public service.

The Government of Yukon developed *Breaking Trail Together* in collaboration with Yukon First Nations with final agreements. The two key objectives of *Breaking Trail Together*

are responsive and barrier-free recruitment and culturally safe and supportive work environments.

We have heard feedback from employees and from human resources professionals within the Yukon government that the oath of allegiance sometimes acts as a barrier in our hiring process.

It can also be perceived as inconsistent with the Yukon government's reconciliation journey and other decolonialization efforts.

The Public Service Commission is currently conducting research to understand the barriers that Indigenous employees and members of other marginalized groups experience throughout the recruitment process. It is barriers like the oath of allegiance requirements that we need to address and remove to make Yukon government workplaces inclusive and culturally safe for all employees.

It is also important to note that removing the oath of allegiance does not change the responsibility of public servants to act ethically, keep information confidential, or serve the democratically elected government. Public servants and coroners will continue to take an oath of office in which they promise to do their jobs faithfully and honestly and to keep information confidential.

An oath of office is a standard requirement for public servants in all Canadian provinces and territories. The oath of office is an important component of the ethical framework for public servants and will not change with these amendments. That ethical framework also includes existing laws and policies that guide the conduct of public servants such as other provisions of the *Public Service Act*, the conflict-of-interest policy, and the respectful workplace policy.

Instead of requiring public servants to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown as a symbol of our system of government, we will update the oath of office to be more specific about the loyalties of public servants.

In closing, many of these changes will support our efforts to build a Yukon public service that is truly inclusive of everyone, including Indigenous peoples, Indigenous employees. These amendments will not change public servants' responsibilities to act ethically, to keep information confidential, and to serve Yukoners through their democratically elected governments.

I look forward to hearing from Members of the Legislative Assembly about these proposed amendments.

Ms. Clarke: I am pleased to rise and speak to this bill at second reading today on behalf of the Yukon Party Official Opposition. I would like to thank the officials from the departments for their briefing on the bill.

The intent of this bill is to remove the oath of allegiance from the oath of office for Government of Yukon employees. We do have some questions that we will be raising in Committee of the Whole.

Canada's democracy operates as a constitutional monarchy, and Yukoners and Canadians all have different opinions on the monarchy. So, the current legislation provides options for employees' personal preferences. For example,

employees can currently swear the oath of office or can simply affirm, which removes reference to god. We are wondering how the changes proposed in this bill will provide options for employees in the future, particularly those who may wish to continue to swear an oath of allegiance.

We look forward to addressing these issues in Committee and will vote to allow this bill to advance to Committee of the Whole, where we hope to address the concerns that we have heard. I look forward to further debate on the bill in Committee. *Salamat po.*

Ms. White: Really briefly in speaking about this, we are obviously in favour of the changes. I think we have gone long past the time of swearing allegiance to a monarchy — or monarch, in this case. We appreciate the changes; we hope to see them in other ways. Whether someone pledges their allegiance to the public of the Yukon or swears their allegiance to the public of the Yukon is not the issue for us. We believe that the commitment of the public service is to Yukoners and less so to a monarchy that we don't really have a relationship with. So, we look forward to further conversation in Committee of the Whole.

Deputy Speaker: If the member now speaks, he will close debate. Does any other member wish to be heard?

Hon. Mr. Silver: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues across the way for their comments today. I guess one benefit of being one of the last jurisdictions to the game, when it comes to not requiring our public servants to make this oath, is that a lot of the questions that the members opposite may have — we can take a look at other jurisdictions to see what best practices happen in regards to those particular questions, especially from the Yukon Party.

So, I am happy to expand more upon this in Committee of the Whole, but for right now, we will get to a vote for second reading.

Deputy Speaker: Are you prepared for the question?

Some Hon. Members: Division.

Division

Deputy Speaker: Division has been called.

Bells

Deputy Speaker: Mr. Clerk, please poll the House.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McPhee: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Agree.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Clarke: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Silver: Agree.

Hon. Mr. Mostyn: Agree.

Mr. Dixon: Agree.

Mr. Kent: Agree.

Ms. Clarke: Agree.
Mr. Cathers: Agree.
Ms. McLeod: Agree.
Ms. Van Bibber: Agree.
Mr. Hassard: Agree.
Mr. Istchenko: Agree.
Ms. White: Agree.
MLA Tredger: Agree.

Clerk: Madam Deputy Speaker, the results are 17 yeas, nil nays.

Deputy Speaker: The yeas have it.
 I declare the motion carried.

Motion for second reading of Bill No. 24 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.

Deputy 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

Deputy Speaker leaves the Chair

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Deputy Chair (MLA Tredger): I now call Committee of the Whole to order.

The matter now before the Committee is continuing 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 recess for 15 minutes.

Recess

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

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

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

Yukon Housing Corporation — continued

Chair: Is there any further general debate?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I just want to welcome the officials here today: our president, Justin Ferbey, and Marcel Holder Robinson, our director of finance. With that, I think we were deep into questions. I will hand it over to the opposition to begin questions.

Ms. McLeod: I want to welcome the official here today to help us out with our discussion.

I would like to go back and review some comments that the minister made in debate on Thursday last week. Of course, it has to do with the letter that was sent out by the Yukon Housing Corporation dated February 2, 2023 — a copy of which I tabled today.

Last week, the minister said that he was not aware of any evictions or indeed how many letters were sent out. I wonder if the minister has new information on that today.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Madam Chair, I don't know if this pertains exactly to the budget; I think it's a broader question. I was very open last week. It feels like I'm in some sort of courtroom drama that is going on.

So, if the Member for Watson Lake wants to get up and clarify what we are talking about — I spoke very honestly to this last week. There is a new critic, but the critic who was there last week — the Member for Porter Creek North — asked me if I was aware of a letter, I believe, and I said that I wasn't aware of the letter. So, instead of drawing it out into a big drama — please, just ask me and I will do my best. We don't have a copy of the letter; there was a letter tabled today earlier on. If this is to do with activity in Watson Lake — I know that ministerial advisors spent a long time on the phone with the president of the Signpost Seniors last week. We are dedicated to dealing with any issues. If there was a misinterpretation of language in a letter, we will deal with that. If not, drawing it out to try to throw mud at me is not helping with the situation. We will look at the letter; we will sit down with the individuals. I am not aware of all communication that goes from Yukon Housing, but, again, let's continue on with the movie of the week.

Ms. McLeod: I don't appreciate the dismissive discussion coming from the minister, and, quite frankly, the minister doesn't get to decide what questions are asked on the floor of this House.

I asked a very valid question. I wanted to give the minister an opportunity to say if he had some updated information, and I am guessing that he does not. All right — let's move on.

So, the issue regarding the citizen that this letter was sent to has been resolved, and they are happy to hear Yukon Housing tell them that this letter was sent in error. It was a mistake. So, I hope that there is a letter of apology going out to this citizen who suffered a great deal of emotional distress as a result of this letter.

One of the questions that I was asked was: How many of these letters went out? To hear the minister — which is why I was asking for a clarification — this maybe was the only letter that was sent out in the whole territory — and I question that. I question it because it took effort on behalf of the department to compose this letter, to edit it, to ensure that the proper wording was in place, and, of course, to mail the letter to the citizen. I just say that as an observation, let's say.

Now, the minister said — and I will quote him here: "I know that there was some misunderstanding on some communication that had been sent out to an individual." All right — I am wondering where the misunderstanding came in. I am going to read a part of this letter: "As a part of this new policy, we have reviewed all applicants' assets to ensure they meet the new eligibility requirement. This is to inform you that

after careful review of your application, your assets are over the threshold and you no longer qualify for the Rent-Geared-to-Income program.”

I would like to know how that could be misinterpreted.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Again, I saw it coming. We are in a position here — you are picking out one particular paragraph and then trying to connect that to a comment I made last week. I will be respectful to the question about how many letters are sent out. We can look into that. We will find out where letters were sent out. We have had one interaction where there has been concern. Again, I think that there was good advocacy from the community concerning this situation. I want to dig into it a bit more because it depends on what particular part of the letter — I mean, at one point, we received it back and there were question marks under where it said “Sincerely, Yukon Housing”. There were question marks because whoever put the question marks was asking if there should be signature of a person that should have been there. And it was — no, the board had made a decision, and it’s Yukon Housing Corporation that it’s coming from. It wasn’t being signed off by a particular person. So, there are a number of different blue marks on that letter that I saw.

I sincerely apologize to anybody who has had any anxiety about what played out because of this particular letter. We will again look into the letter. The president can speak to our team and will find out. I will come back to the House and identify anyone else who has received a letter that has provided them with any concern.

But to go back again — where it is about this paragraph and how can you do this — there was a letter sent — an individual. The situation has been identified as something that caused anxiety. The Member for Watson Lake has now asked us to send a letter of apology. I hear that. There is a question about how many letters have been sent.

Right now, I have received one that we would call an issue or a complaint — one. We will look into it. I would love to talk about numbers in the budget.

But again, I respect the fact that you can ask any questions you want, and you are absolutely correct — I am here to do my best to answer.

Chair’s statement

Chair: Before we continue, the Chair would like to remind members that questions and comments need to be directed through the Chair.

Ms. McLeod: Can the minister tell us whether or not the asset-cap policy dated December 6, 2022 is being applied retroactively?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think this was asked by the Member for Porter Creek Centre last week. The policy is being applied on the date that it has come in — as we stated in Hansard, not retroactively.

Ms. McLeod: I actually couldn’t hear what the minister was saying, so I don’t know if he answered the question.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I think it’s best if we get an interpretation from the member opposite — a proper understanding of the question.

As it pertains to “retroactive”, is the question that we would retroactively apply the asset cap, or is it that we are going to go back — and is that how it’s being applied? Is that the question, or is the question that individuals who were previously on the list would stay on the list? I just want to get to the heart of the question.

Ms. McLeod: My question is about whether or not, for people who are already in Yukon Housing — I am just looking at this letter — the asset cap is being applied to them now, which may result in them having to get rid of any assets. I am unclear how this policy is being applied to existing tenants who were here before December 6, 2022.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for the clarification. No, if you are currently in Yukon Housing, the policy that has come into place is for future analysis and not to be applied to anybody who is in Yukon Housing at this time.

Ms. McLeod: I want to thank the minister for his participation today.

MLA Tredger: I will start by thanking the officials for being here today as well as everyone listening in online and on the phone and who put a lot of effort, I am sure, into getting everything ready so that we can have this conversation today.

I am going to start by going back to the debate that we had in the supplementary budget of this Spring Sitting. There are a couple of things that the minister had said that he would follow up on, and I am going to ask about those.

The first was a question about the wait-list and if it could be broken down by how many people on that wait-list are in priority groups and what those priority groups are and if it is possible to get how many of those applications represent families as opposed to individuals.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We have some of the data since the question. The question about how many applicants — we talked about the wait-list a bit. I don’t have the breakdown, but I am going to answer some of the questions that were asked at that particular time. As of March 16, 2023, there were 244 total wait-listed Yukoners: 108 were seniors, 131 were non-seniors, and five were employees.

The next question was: Can you break down the number of seniors and the number of families and, if possible, by the number of people by priority? I don’t have that. I have 108 seniors with 92 in Whitehorse. So, I still have to gather further data for you. We will do our best to do it in a return.

How many people didn’t submit a notice of assessment, and what is the number of people taken off the list? There were 204 removed from the wait-list at that time and nine reapplications as of March 2023.

The next question was: If removed applicants — I can hold or I can go through them for you if you want me to put them on the record, or I can hold until you ask.

MLA Tredger: I think the minister actually had the information about the notice of assessments in the supplementary; I think it is already on the record. I really

appreciate him bringing that back, and I look forward to the breakdown by priority group and families versus individuals.

The other thing I wanted to follow up on from the supplementary debate — we were discussing the Canada-Yukon housing — let me make sure I get the right name here — the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. In particular, I brought up the situation of a single person who was told that they couldn't access that benefit because they only qualified for a bachelor unit as a single person. But the problem, of course, is that, in Whitehorse, there are very few, if any, bachelor units available to rent. The minister had said that he wasn't sure if this was a criterion that came federally or was a more local decision to have it. I am wondering if he has had a chance to look into that.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We did look into it, and I know that — I just want to make sure that I am providing the most accurate information. What we found from the corporation was that it is not tied to a unit per se. The information — I think it was that the individual couldn't rent a one-bedroom; they had to use a bachelor because, I think, through the process, that is what they were informed.

We have gone back on criteria, and we were informed — eligibility for the Canada-Yukon housing benefit is based on the income of the applicant, not a bedroom size of the unit that they choose to live in. Singles who receive the benefit are certainly permitted to live in either bachelors or in one-bedroom units. Again, the eligibility requirement is that \$200, \$400, \$600, or \$800, pending the scenario for that individual.

MLA Tredger: I am going to try to dig into this a little bit. I have a letter here that someone received when they were being denied the benefit.

The way I understand it is that a single person who qualifies for a bachelor unit — which means that their household income level, at least according to this level, has to be a maximum of \$51,480 — whereas a couple would qualify for a one-bedroom and therefore their combined income level would have to be \$59,320. So, there is about an \$8,000 difference there. The point that I am trying to make is that a single person still needs to rent a one-bedroom functionally in Whitehorse, so they might have an income that is above the maximum for a bachelor, but it is still below the maximum for a one-bedroom, but because they have been assessed by this metric as only needing a bachelor, they don't qualify at all. I realize that it is getting a little technical here, but that is what this letter says.

Can the minister respond to that?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am going to sit down again — just to walk me through one last time because I want to make sure — I know that it is based on income versus unit, but let me just break down what that question is exactly — what that dealt with in between both —

MLA Tredger: I will try to explain it as clearly as I understand it. So, there are maximum household income levels that are tied to what size of unit you qualify for. For example, if you qualify for a bachelor, the household income level has to be \$51,480 or lower, whereas if you qualify for a one-bedroom,

your household income level can be \$59,320 or lower. So, this particular person has an income level that is above what is needed to qualify for a bachelor but below what is needed to qualify for a one-bedroom, which would be fine if she had bachelors available to her and she could go rent a bachelor with the income she had. But in practice, in at least Whitehorse, there are very few, if any, bachelors available, so she has to go rent a one-bedroom — and she doesn't qualify because her income is above that level. I don't know if I made it any clearer or not, but I will cede to the minister.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Thank you for the clarification. That is not the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. That is why I wanted to get that re-read. The housing benefit does not have a direct connection to the size or units — I think that we are talking rent-geared-to-income, which is a different program, which I can speak to. I can look into that. I mean, if there is a discrepancy in what service is provided, we certainly can.

The rent-geared-to-income is a different program. That is the one where the Housing Corporation works with federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and First Nation partners to address our pressures on availability.

This work includes the provision of community rent-geared-to-income housing, which provides affordable rental housing to Yukon families. Eligibility is based on household income limits, which we touched on, but rent is calculated at 25 percent of gross household income. So, on average, this program provides housing — we have about 700 clients for this. The Canada-Yukon housing benefit — right now, we are sitting at just under 150. Our max-out is about 200 clients. On average, this program provides housing, as I said, for 700 clients, and it also supports housing options like the Da Dagahay partnership in Whistle Bend.

The rent-geared-to-income housing program provides non-market rental housing and supportive housing in line with the housing action plan pillar 1, "Housing with services", and combined with the corporation's Canada-Yukon housing benefit. This program makes affordable housing available to Yukoners.

We can look into that challenge with this. The rent-geared-to-income — so, it is part of our bilateral agreement with CMHC.

I see now some more detailed data that I can share.

To be eligible for the rent-geared-to-income, the client must be a Yukon resident, have a household income below the housing income limits, and be in good standing. A client's income is assessed based on line — \$15,000 with the notice of assessment. As of January 2023, the housing income limits threshold that a client's income must fall below are — the bachelor is \$51,000; a one-bedroom is \$51,500; a two-bedroom is \$64,540; and a three-bedroom is \$76,500. So, to apply for the rent-geared-to-income housing in a Yukon community, in a rural area, your yearly household income must be under — it's a much bigger threshold — \$95,968.

Yukon Housing programs that are complementary to rent-geared-to-income include — so, the Yukon housing benefit is a rental subsidy program that has helped over 300 households in private market rental housing.

We have talked about — maybe I have missed again. We will go back to your question, and we will see if there is anything in the language around if that is being defined by the bilateral agreement, based on their analysis of the housing market, or if we have flexibility on our side to look at how we define the policy.

MLA Tredger: I am just going to read a little bit from this letter because it does specifically say “Canada-Yukon housing benefit”. I am not quite sure how it lines up with what the minister is talking about, but I think we have taken this conversation about as far as we can by talking to each other. I think it’s going to be a lot easier if we could just sit down together, or maybe I will put it in a letter to the minister and we can try to hash out some of the details.

Here is what the letter says: “Dear applicant...” — by the way, the letter is dated February 14, 2023, and it’s from the Canada-Yukon housing benefit administrator. It says: “We have reviewed your application for the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit and determined that you do not qualify for the program based on your household income.

“The Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit is for households whose before-tax incomes are below the program’s maximum levels. The maximum income levels are indexed to the number of bedrooms your household needs based on National Occupancy Standard.” Then it goes on to explain what those standards are, and then it has a table with income levels per unit size, which are actually a bit different from the ones the minister mentioned, which makes me think that it’s a different program that we’re talking about.

What I will do is check with the person whom this letter is to, and then I will either table it or send it to the minister so that we can have a conversation where we can both look at the same numbers rather than try to talk him through it this way. I appreciate that he is looking into it, and I appreciate that he is going to look at what we have flexibility on and what we don’t have flexibility on as a territory.

I want to shift gears and zoom out a little bit to the big picture. With the federal budget coming out last week, I am wondering what the impact of that is going to be on some of the long-term projects for Yukon Housing. I am thinking of projects like the northern carve-out fund, which I think we are anticipating getting for several years into the future, helping with projects like the Watson Lake Housing First project — and I am thinking of the Ryder apartments. These projects that are into the future — could the minister talk about if anything changed based on the federal budget that came out last week, or if there are any impacts on those programs, or if that money had already been set aside through CMHC and won’t be impacted?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Most of the projects that we have identified — ones, of course, in this year’s budget — and then, for some of the subsequent years, we have identified the funds that are going to be used to execute that work. I think that we still want to get better visibility on the bigger announcement that came out around this \$4-billion fund, which is a significant amount of money, and how it’s going to be allocated across the country. This will give us a sense of how we could apply that

to some of our future projects and if this gives us flexibility on some of the tranches that we’re looking at spending funds on now.

I am concerned about what numbers are going to come in on some of our tenders. It is the cost of building. I know that wood has gone down. I talked to some contractors over the weekend, and wood has gone down, but some metal has gone up. We are going to have to see what is happening from community to community based on their activity. It is a good time right now where there is some flexibility to have contractors do the work that they need to do. To be very clear, with Watson Lake, looking at Dawson, looking at some of those other pieces, I feel like we are in a good position.

Vimy is one that has come up a number of times in the House, and I would say that, on Vimy right now, they have a shortfall for their project budget. One of the funds that they were looking at, which was the co-investment fund, has changed their criteria. It’s a fund by CMHC, and they find themselves in a shortfall. So, how we look at projects like Vimy — what’s the magnitude of a rebuild at Ryder — some of those pieces, I think, as we move forward — we are going to have to figure out how some of those project proponents bring more money to the table or their sourcing money from other entities, and at the same time, we are going to have to take a look at what they will cost.

What we are focused on building right now — we have funds in front of us. There is one thing that we have been working on, which is that we have been trying to put together a consortium of — we announced it in our last housing summit — which was really around working with a number of First Nation governments. The federal minister had asked us to look at a cohort of community leaders and First Nation governments — bring them together. The idea was to put in one bigger proposal. It was in response to the OAG report, and it was really about folks who are very vulnerable — not just about housing opportunities in Whitehorse, but housing opportunities in our communities. We are still trying to identify what funds could be used for that, and this new larger announcement could be there.

I think the other thing that we have to watch, though, is — I did a consultation that I shared with the Assembly last Monday. If there is a federal consultation going on now, my sense would be that the policy framework around that fund is still, of course, under development. When those funds that were announced — when they are going to be available to apply on, or when they are going to be allocated for provinces and territories, or how they are allocated — maybe it’s First Nation governments; maybe it’s entities. I am not sure how they are going to do that. So, that would be some stuff that we still seem to have to work on, but overall, I feel like, yes, the duplexes, the triplexes, and some of the other work looks good. We are just kind of making final decisions on some of our own investments in working with the private sector and NGOs — looks good on the build-out that we have in front of us.

So, I think it is really about subsequent projects. I will just check with our officials. The officials are just saying that they

are meeting with CMHC to get a better sense and clarity about all of the dollars in the budget.

There is also this \$4-billion accelerator fund, which is really going to provide support and opportunity to municipalities versus us — to speed up zoning processes, planning processes, and things such as that. So, if there is further information that comes from those bilateral discussions with CMHC, I will share it with the House. But, again, I feel pretty good about where we are now. I think some of those other projects that now have some shortfalls — we are going to have to be more creative on what a model looks like — if we are going to get them done or if they are still going to go forward, depending on what the proponents want to do.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I am wondering if he has any updates on what is happening with the Northern Community Land Trust. It might be with EMR right now; I'm not sure. But if he has any updates, I would love to hear them.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: On the floor — I have to clarify on one of the previous questions. So, we have gone back to get information on that letter from the Canada-Yukon housing benefit. Madam Chair, it was not rent-geared-to-income. Now I see the discrepancy between the \$51,000 versus the \$59,000. We see the inequity. We are going to look into seeing if the adjustment on those criteria can be made on our side or if it can be made on the other side. So, thank you for that one.

Concerning the Northern Community Land Trust, our government pledged in support of this affordable housing project through a letter of intent in December 2022, committing to provide the Northern Community Land Trust Society with a lot in the Whistle Bend subdivision in Whitehorse. The society is proposing to develop a 32-unit affordable home ownership option. Yukon Housing Corporation is currently working with the departments of Energy, Mines and Resources, Community Services, and Justice to ensure that the model being proposed for ongoing affordability will be effective.

Again, the government heard from the Northern Community Land Trust Society during the October 2021 summit. They provided some models, and I know that a number of members from the Legislative Assembly stopped in to take a look at their open house at NorthLight Innovation centre. The Housing Corporation is meeting with them in the next week to review the status of the project. I know it is something that we feel strongly about — the individuals who are there working on this project have a great project. I know the member opposite probably is aware of that, and it is just really making sure that the legal framework is there, alongside how you continue to lock down that asset over a series of multiple ownerships, but still ensuring that the affordability benchmarks are in place, especially because you want to ensure that any offset you have on an investment does continue to have affordability in place over the life of the project.

MLA Tredger: I am glad to hear that it is moving forward, and I look forward to the next updates on it because it is a really exciting project.

I want to talk a little bit about, I guess, the experience of tenants in Yukon Housing. I wrote a letter to the minister last

month based on some concerns from tenants at 207 Alexander Street. I got the reply today, and I really appreciate that. I just want to follow up a little bit on some of the things he said, as well as get them on the record. So, one of the concerns that I actually hear a lot from tenants is that, when they try to contact Yukon Housing, the phone isn't answered or their messages aren't returned or they can't even leave a message. It is a source of frustration for a lot of people because whenever someone comes to me, my first question is: Did you call Yukon Housing and tell them this? That is what I often hear: "I tried, but I couldn't get through to them."

So, the minister, in his reply to me, mentioned that they are looking at reviewing the system for answering calls, and I was just wondering if he could elaborate on that a bit.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: Last week, I had mentioned that the response had gone out, and it didn't; it was today. I reviewed the letter and approved it, so, thank you for touching on that.

I have heard this — I am going to be very open with the House. I have heard this issue come up a number of times, and I know that you have been advocating. I have been out at meetings with tenants, primarily seniors, around Whitehorse who have identified this as an issue. The president just mentioned to me that it is something that we need to improve on. As the House can imagine, we have a tremendous number of tenants, and I know that I could go back right now — we have 900 tenants.

So, you are in this position where some of the things that play out are — it is the front number, or the main number, that is sometimes called. Other times, it is individuals who work hand in hand with tenants, so it might be a call to a cellphone. It is — at other times, you can imagine that, even if you have a couple people manning the lines, at our reception or within our team, there is a challenge.

So, I would say: Do we want to do better? Absolutely. Do we have to remember that we have to be client-centric? Absolutely. On all of these issues — how we communicate, how we are interfacing with clients, and remembering that right from my office to our front-line people, right from our front-line people to my office, our job is to serve all of those clients and we need to remember that we are working on behalf of the public and to have the patience and the focus to do our job as best as we can. I know that they are looking into it. What that is going to look like — I would say, for the House, that I want to see a scenario where we have people getting back to people — especially when we are working with seniors versus a scenario where there is more of a push toward automation and folks not being able to talk to somebody.

I think the member opposite knows, upon advocating for those folks, that just the human connection to a lot of people — when you talk to them about what the challenge is — means a lot. I don't think we can ever discount that. We have people right now working as advocates, and they are connecting and coordinating with our tenants, especially our seniors. I think that having the other FTE associated with Normandy — but more or less working there with those clients — but also with other buildings is important. I think we can come back to the House and have a discussion. It might not be until the fall; it

could be in written communication. You can imagine — I am stating my position on this today — not only so the officials who are here — there are officials who are listening. This is something we need to improve on. My support will be there — to the officials — and if there are potentially more resources required to make sure we have a system where individuals have that ability to talk to folks — or if it's late at night and they call, we will have the ability to get back to them as soon as we can when we are back into hours.

I just want to clarify for the House that we do have that ability to deal with emergencies. We do have an ability for first responders to access buildings. We did touch upon the fact that we want to make sure that all those lockboxes in all of our buildings are working properly and that maintenance is done to them, because that is where the keys are located for first responders to get into all our buildings. Of course, we have some other staff that are supportive.

I agree; it has been an issue. I wouldn't be coming to the House in a sincere way if I said that there wasn't, because I have heard it in all of my meetings with a series of individuals over 2022. We will let you know what our approach is and how we are going to improve on that as soon as we have updated information.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister. I really appreciate that he has identified that as an area for improvement. I look forward to hearing more about the next steps, whether that is in a letter — that would be great. I will also follow up the next time we are discussing this.

Just before we leave the phone line question, I am wondering about the after-hours emergency line. I am wondering how it works. Is it something that the Yukon Housing Corporation does in-house or do they contract it out? What is the system?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: We are going to endeavour to get that answer right away here. If not, it will come back in a written answer. I think that if the member opposite is comfortable going on to the next question, I will endeavour to get that information back here before we finish up today or tomorrow, depending on how long this debate goes.

MLA Tredger: I am happy to.

I wanted to talk a little bit about repairs. There was money — and I can't remember if it was in the supplementary budget or the mains — to address the backlog of repairs from COVID. I was wondering if the department has an estimate of how long it will be until that backlog is cleared. I am also curious if the department has target timelines for making repairs and if they collect data on the actual time it takes to get a repair.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: To be fair, I don't think that we are going to have that information for you here today, and I can state that because these are some of the questions in my role, over the last year and specifically now, that I am focused on. First of all, we came out of the Auditor General's report, which really talked about us keeping up on our maintenance and the work that we have to do.

There are two things. We have, of course, our line items on maintenance in our mains budget. Part of what I am trying to understand is: Where do we best allocate our resources when it

comes to repairs? We just talked a bit about a new capital build, so do we want to be building brand new buildings, or do we want to go into communities where there is stock?

Watson Lake — there were questions today and the other day about Watson Lake. I have, in my role, listened very clearly to what the community is saying. One of the things that the community of Watson Lake has said — the president of the Signpost Seniors said — is that there are a number of buildings here, and they are not being used. They need to be repaired, and you have people on a wait-list — a few — but you have other seniors now who are looking for spots, and how are you going to address this? We know that Dawson and Watson Lake are two spots.

So, what I have asked our team is — I want an entire inventory of: Where are we focusing our repairs now? What are the other buildings that we have that need to be repaired? What is the level, potentially, of repair? Does it make more sense to be investing in retrofits and repairs based on the current per square footage of a new build, and what is our time frame on that?

I think our last numbers that came in — and I think it was up to almost 100 units, sort of, across. So, those are things we are looking at: What is the quantum for the entire build? We are not going to have that in finite until you go out and get work tendered, but what is our estimate? How long would that take? I think that is a different one, too, because it depends on which community. If we are going to do work in communities on some of that stock, my expectation is that we do our very best to make sure that it is people in that community — contractors — who are getting that work. I know we have a process, but that is what I want to see here. If it is Watson Lake, I want to see people in Watson Lake doing the work. Part of the challenge has been — in my conversation with leaders from Watson Lake — that some of those folks now have been busy doing work in Whitehorse because it has been busy here. How do we make sure that they are in the community, whether it is Haines Junction, Dawson City, or wherever it may be?

So, I am identifying our total number of buildings and units that have to be repaired. We have some retrofit money right now for energy retrofits that we have had allocated to First Nation governments. I have asked our team to go out and make sure that it gets out into the communities — and even to the point where you want to make sure that some organizations have gotten their allocation and already used it. It has already been expended, they have done their work, and they are probably looking for more. So, how do we reallocate if other nations aren't interested or if it's not a priority for them?

So, some big questions for the member opposite that are tricky because you have to take a look at how long the process takes to get folks out there. We are not going to do that work in-house, all on our own.

So, great question — we are digging into some information. I don't think the information that I will have will give all of the detail that is being looked for in the question, because it's hard until you get a hard and fast RFP done and you get a sense of what capacity is available to undertake such

a significant overhaul of units, but I will come back to share as best I can.

MLA Tredger: Yes, I do understand that it is a complicated issue. I think what I am trying to get at is a sense of what the goal is for this backlog of repairs and then what normal operations look like.

So, if someone's sink breaks, how long is it supposed to take for them to get that repaired, and how long does it actually take? Because I think it is really important to have this data so that we know whether we are succeeding or not, we know whether we need to hire more people or not, and if we know if it's working. I will just leave that with the minister.

I wanted to come back to another thing from my letter about 207 Alexander, and that was the EMS access to seniors buildings or emergency services in general. I am really happy to hear that there is a system in place, because I had heard some really distressing stories, actually, of people being in medical crisis and trying to get to their phone, having called 911 and then trying to figure out how to use the buzzer while they are in considerable medical distress and waiting and EMS not being able to get in. So, those stories, I think, are really hard stories, and who knows what — I don't want to drill down into any particular story, because I don't have all the details, but I am just really glad to hear that there is a system in place for EMS getting into Yukon Housing buildings.

I wanted to talk a little bit about bedbugs. It is an ongoing really, really difficult thing. I was wondering — I am going to come back to data again — does the department have timelines for how long it should take to get bedbugs treated and then retreated, if the first treatment isn't successful, and do they have data on what the actual timelines are around those treatments?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I am just going to go back to one of the previous questions. I do have information. This is concerning the after-hours emergency line, and then I will go into the question concerning bedbugs. So, the after-hours line goes to an answering service that is — the contact is an on-call staff from Yukon Housing. The on-call Yukon Housing employee would then respond to that call, and on call, there are four people on a rotational schedule who are Yukon Housing, versus that being shopped out, and if urgent, they could respond immediately or the next day. So, that's the service system we have.

Bedbugs. So, of course, this is a significant nuisance, and it has been a topic here in the House on again and off again, but it is a significant, significant issue. For anybody who is having to deal with that, it is tough. From our standpoint, with Yukon Housing, we want to go in and get this situation remedied. We certainly don't want to under-serve anybody. Right now, basically, what we have been doing is conducting monthly checks in common areas to take steps to mitigate infestation.

There is a set of procedures in place. So, as soon as the corporation is made aware of a bedbug issue in a unit, the tenant is provided with a pre-treatment checklist, and a treatment is scheduled with a certified pest control contractor. First follow-up occurs within two weeks, followed by an additional inspection two weeks later. That is our goal, to get it completed. Again, Yukon Housing Corporation, I can tell you, has treated

50 units since January 1, 2022. As of March 2023, the Housing Corporation has treated four units and inspected all units and common areas at 600 College Drive.

So, that has been a real challenge. You know, look, you have clients who have really gone through a difficult situation, and they have had repeat scenarios with this. I can go through these prepared remarks, but it is not going to give you the full story. We have some clients whom we work with and support, but they tend to hold lots of different items in their units — maybe things that — they stockpile things, and so you are in a position where you want to work with a tenant who is dealing with something that is a challenge — you are supporting them — and they could be, in some of these buildings, causing some of the infestations. So, you are working with those individuals. Like, it is a difficult, difficult scenario, what we are trying to do, and I have sat and listened to folks around this issue, received documentation from you, received documentation from the Member for Takhini-Kopper King.

So, right now — the president and I have had this discussion. Yes, I think that when it comes up, we are all — sometimes it is a tough discussion to go into, but anyway, we are very alive to this; it is a significant situation. Beyond the fact that we go out to contractors to go and help somebody in their units, there are lots of things that have happened. One, there has been documentation and letters back and forth. That's because normally we would say, "Please bag your stuff up and prepare." We do understand that some of our clients have mobility issues or they don't have supports externally from family members, so they are trying to pack up their clothes and their belongings so that we can do the treatment, but they need help with that. We are trying to work through the fact that we do have a policy that normally doesn't offset all of those costs, but we have offset costs in some scenarios, because we want to try to support the clients, and then there is the cost associated with that, which is pretty extensive.

You are right: We are trying to just do the regular repair work. I am not talking about the more extensive portfolio of repairs, but making sure you manage that within your staff. Those are some of the challenges that we are dealing with right now, but we are going to have to continue to monitor this closely. Is it potentially going to take more extensive investment and a more extensive approach? Maybe. So, what does that mean? How do we make sure that we support our clients, and how do we make sure we remedy this? We don't want to get into a scenario where we do two or three units and then we find out that there are two or three units two weeks later and it's back and forth.

I think it's just tough, mentally, for anybody, once they have dealt with it. Then they are trying to understand that things have been eradicated, but then there's concern and an anxiety with that. So, it is difficult. We try to get it on the first two weeks. We go back. If not, we will treat again. We are trying to make sure that we have the ability to support clients so it's done properly the first time. I have heard from clients; I have heard from advocates; I have heard from opposition members that it is still significant. That's the way we are looking at it. Some of these buildings, we are really focused on, and that is why I share

with you 600 College Drive. Over the month of March, that has really been an area and place that we have tried to focus our work on.

MLA Tredger: Just to make sure I understand this, it's two weeks from the date that a tenant reports that they have bedbugs. Within two weeks, the initial treatment should happen for the bedbugs? Does the department collect data on the actual amount of time it takes to respond?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I can check on the data to see if there is any lag time. I would say that, as soon as we are made aware, we are trying to deploy the proper resources. We do our first treatment, and then there is a follow-up in two weeks. I can find out if there have been delays in place and if we track that. We should be able to. We can pull the data. It's from when we called the contractor — when we communicated with the contractor — probably to the date they're invoicing us, and we can figure out what that date is, and then we can try to pull the data.

I'm thinking part of it will be what is the capacity that currently exists in the Yukon to do pest eradication, because we have contractors whom we deal with. Then, if there are multiple units at one particular time, is that causing a delay? So, we can dig into the data. I think it does two things: It drives the ability for a business to make an accurate decision on expansion, and it gives us a sense of if we are going to have to look at other strategies again and choices. Yes, exactly, so it's as soon as the contractor is available, but we will go back and see if we can pull some data about when we are reaching out and when the actual work is beginning — and if there has been any increase in lag time on that.

MLA Tredger: I think that would be really helpful, and I will just explain a little bit of my thinking. When I hear that it's two weeks from contact until the first treatment, that feels like a really long time — like, 13 or 14 nights seems like a very long time — but in reality, perhaps it's happening very quickly most of the time and occasionally up to two weeks. I think the data would be very helpful for figuring that out. Is it that most people get a response in a few days and then, once in a while, there are extenuating circumstances? Or are most people taking up to those two weeks? Are there people waiting longer than two weeks? That can drive decisions like: Does Yukon Housing Corporation need an in-house extermination service? Are the contractors able to keep up in the territory?

That's why I'm asking about this data and what I think the conversations are that I think they could help to drive, because I know that we all agree that nobody should be living in a unit infested with bedbugs. It is a horrendous experience in every possible way. I also know it's not an easy problem to solve. So, that's where those questions are coming from.

Actually, maybe I will just see if the minister has any additional information, and if not, I will go on to my next question.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: No, I just wanted to clarify our process a bit. I might have misspoken. As soon as we are aware that there are bedbugs in a unit, we reach out to a contractor and get them to deploy services right away — right away. There is not a two-week delay; it's right away. If there is a lag time in days,

that's probably due to the fact of the demand on the contractor. We do have a tracking system. We are going to pull some data, and we can kind of see what that looks like on our response time or the response time of the contractors.

The two weeks was — and then two weeks later, after that initial treatment, we go back to make sure the work was effective. Then, we also are looking to see if we need to make a decision on a second treatment.

So, response right away, based on availability of contractor, two weeks later, another look to see if there has to be a second treatment in the process — but we will look to pull that data.

MLA Tredger: I will ask another question about Yukon Housing buildings, and it is related to *Our Clean Future*, which commits the Yukon government to reducing emissions from buildings. I am wondering if the Yukon Housing Corporation's stock is part of that commitment, and if so, are they tracking their own emissions — I assume through fuel usage — or is that done by Highways and Public Works or Environment? I will start there.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: So, Yukon Housing continues to make significant progress in the implementation of *Our Clean Future*. In September of 2022, we released our second annual report, again with government, and that is — again, it outlines some of the progress that has been made in taking action on climate change through our reports here.

At the Housing Corporation, the work that we are doing is really just focused on the retrofit units. So, we are tracking after we retrofit what our emissions reduction is, and that is really a part of our reporting process. Our new builds that we are putting out are really looking to be energy efficient, and you will see that. That is part of our — I will come back with some better data — or some better information — on what those tenders look like. I can pull some stuff from our Watson Lake tender, as well as some of the other work on duplexes. For our new builds, they have been very well-built, with strong energy efficiency — so, new stock, and then the stock that we are repairing is where we have been tracking.

Again, I can come back and see if we have any other information on other activities that are taking place within that stock.

MLA Tredger: So, the minister said that they are tracking the emission reductions of their retrofits. What have the emission reductions been to date?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: A bit better information for the member opposite — part of the government's approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions is to make government-owned housing more energy efficient. So, between 2019 and 2023, Yukon Housing Corporation allocated \$8.4 million for energy retrofits for community housing to help decrease energy use and to make our tenants more comfortable. So, from 2019-20 to 2021-22, Yukon Housing Corporation reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 40.35 percent in 34 units, which is significantly higher than the 30 percent that we targeted for reduction. So, it has been not bad — only 34 units — but still great, great work. This is in addition, again, to the near completion of eight more energy-efficient units, and that is

from this last fiscal period, so we will have better and more information to report there.

Again, the Government of Yukon secured funding under the Government of Canada's low carbon economy fund to help Yukoners live in energy-efficient housing. Then, as I touched on earlier, all 14 First Nations also can access additional funding to support reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the First Nation. I am quite happy — we are shooting for a 30-percent reduction but coming in at around a 40.35-percent reduction in that work.

MLA Tredger: That is great to hear about that 40-ish-percent reduction for those 34 units, I think it was.

I am wondering if the minister can tell me whether that puts them on track to have an overall 30-percent reduction by 2030, because I think that a 40-percent reduction on 34 units out of — I don't actually know how many units Yukon Housing has — is great, and I think that it is a great start. I am wondering if we are on track to meet an overall 30-percent reduction by 2030.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I understand that the question is: Are we on track for a 30-percent reduction across all the housing stock? There are a number of things happening. First, our new builds are far below what we have seen in the past. Again, they are contributing greatly to that calculation. I think that part of it, as well — which is going to help us in that — will depend on what the build-out looks like for future build-out and also what the next round of funding looks like, which helps us to undertake this work.

We have the low carbon fund, which was part of ICIP, which was really the larger infrastructure package that was being used over the last six years, with a couple of years left in it. I think we are going to have to pick up a bit of pace, but that really came down to the fact that we couldn't get into units for two years to the same extent. We had concerns for our clients; we had the concern for the team at Yukon Housing Corporation that they stay healthy. So, it was very difficult for those two years during the pandemic to get access and to do the work in the same way we were. With that being said, I think we are trending in the right direction. I think that our newer buildings will help, and I think that being able to use our retrofit money on some of the stock that has been underutilized is going to put us in a good position — happy in the fall if there is a supplementary budget for housing or through a written response after we finish the last of those next eight units, and then we will see what this year's build season will look like to give you a sense of how we feel. We are looking at that 30-percent reduction over the life of future units and of the units that we are modernizing.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. The pandemic definitely threw a wrench in a lot of things, and so I am glad to hear that there are plans to accelerate the pace and, of course, I am hoping that this action in *Our Clean Future* will be updated to a higher reduction in line with the Climate Leadership Council recommendations and the revised overall 45-percent target for reductions for the Yukon.

Before we leave Yukon Housing, there are two things that I wanted to go back to in terms of tenants that I forgot to ask at

the time. I wanted to follow up on the answering-service question. If I understood this correctly, there is an answering service that Yukon Housing tenants would leave a message with and the service would then decide if it was actually an emergency that needed to be dealt with that night and would then call the on-call staff person. I am wondering if Yukon Housing then reviews the calls from the answering service to make sure that they are being categorized correctly as to whether they are an emergency or not.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I just want to go back to the last conversation around emissions reduction. We are focused on this 30-percent reduction. I know there was a conversation about ensuring that we move from a 30-percent to a 45-percent reduction. Then the conversation about the commitment of government on the reduction — but, of course, that is in totality. So, there will be some places where we are going to see significant savings. Part of that will be new builds and other areas, and, of course, there is a focus on what that number should be in all of the activities of government. So, we haven't changed. Again, we have it at 30 percent, but our new builds will be much more significant. There are areas in government where you can really make dramatic change, and there are areas that we need to focus on. Some of this new build will be part of that.

Just to clarify — the question at hand was really about the answering service. The after-hours calls go to an answering service, and our staff have access to that. That is the contact. We have on-call housing employees who respond. We have four individuals who do that on a rotational schedule. If the message that has been left is urgent, they can respond immediately, pending that, or the next day.

MLA Tredger: Thank you for that answer.

Just before we leave greenhouse gas reductions, I just want to point out that when we add a new build, that increases our greenhouse gas emissions no matter how efficient that new build is. Absolutely, we need our new builds to be extremely efficient, but adding a new building is still going to be creating a certain amount of emissions, so our other buildings have to have their emissions reduced even more to compensate. I just want to make sure that we're understanding that the same way.

One last question I wanted to ask on behalf of tenants is: With regard to bedbugs, does Yukon Housing Corporation have bedbug ovens that are available to tenants to treat their belongings?

Hon. Mr. Pillai: I want to clarify one item concerning emergencies so I am giving you the appropriate, accurate information.

For people on rotation who work for the Yukon Housing Corporation, no matter what the call is that goes through, the answering service calls our employee. The on-call employee determines the urgency, so it isn't a third party that does that. We determine, based on the message and the call at hand. I wanted to clarify that.

The Housing Corporation has two heat tents. I believe that they are being used at 600 College Drive. So, we do have bedbug ovens that can be used.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for both of those answers. Those are really helpful.

I have a question about a line item in the budget. I am on page 20-10 of the budget. It's under capital expenditures, so Vote 18-2. There is a line for temporary emergency housing, and that has been consistent this year and last year, but it wasn't in the 2021-22 budget. I am wondering if the minister could tell me what that temporary emergency housing funding is used for.

Hon. Mr. Pillai: This has been created based on our experience coming out of last year. Some of the work that we had to do and, really, hearing from organizations — one organization being Safe at Home, and another is the Anti-Poverty Coalition. So, we put money toward — of course, Safe at Home has been a hot topic here in the House: What is going to happen? Where is the project going? But, in the interim, Health and Social Services has been using it as a spot for some temporary units, and it was sort of a winter rapid housing response. It is 22 units being used. So, we expended some money, and we knew that we need to have money put aside going into the winter months in case we have other situations that occur. If we get a significant cold snap, what does this look like?

Yukon Housing made 17 units available for emergency temporary housing response — that was to COVID-19 — and then in 2022-23, we made an additional five units available. So, those are units that we had that needed to be repaired, but we essentially allocated them at different times; we fast-tracked the process. So, there is \$450,000 that we put in. We haven't made a final determination on how it is going to be deployed. We will wait and see — the budget has to pass — but we thought of a number of different things. It has been conversations with organizations either about securing units that could be used in a really bad cold snap — do we go out? Is it something where we need something that is safe and secure? Is it a scenario where we have what most people call "ATCO trailers"? Do you put something else aside and just have it at the ready? Do you use buildings that are here? We haven't made a final determination. We have looked at different things, but it is really about having a backup — a really significant backup, if required — because of any individuals who are experiencing homelessness and were in a scenario where we have a significant weather event or a significant set of pressures. That is where we would look to start — potentially either renting or investing in some options. So, that is what that item is for in our budget this year.

MLA Tredger: That is very helpful.

The last topic that I want to talk about today is the new tenant allocation policy. I know this has already been discussed pretty thoroughly between the Public Accounts hearing — and I know my colleague from the Official Opposition also brought it up.

I do want to share some thoughts on it. My understanding is that this policy came about because of a desire to have more integrated buildings. That makes sense to me. I appreciate that intention.

We heard in the Public Accounts Committee that tenants coming from the priority groups were not staying in their tenancies as long, but there wasn't actually any data to support that. During the Public Accounts Committee meetings, we heard that there was anecdotal data that it was true, but there was no real, solid evidence that it was actually the case.

That led to tenants coming in from a priority group, or the by-name list, requiring a support plan before they could be housed in Yukon Housing. I am sure the minister will correct me if I'm wrong on any of these points.

A couple concerns about that. One is that it feels discriminatory. It seems discriminatory to me that, depending on whether you have identified yourself as a priority group or just in financial need, you suddenly have an additional requirement to be housed. I am absolutely all for people having supports in place to help them stay in their tenancies, but doing it as a requirement, saying, "You can't be housed unless you go out and get the support plan", I think is discriminatory.

Another piece of it is that I don't think the by-name list is a good indicator of whether someone needs support in order to be in their tenancy. People go on the by-name list for all sorts of reasons. That really means that anyone who accesses Yukon Housing after they have accessed support from a non-profit — even if it's as simple calling and saying, "Hey, how can I access housing? Because I am in financial need" — suddenly gets into this group where they require support plans. I think that is just not a very accurate way of deciding who needs support.

Then, of course, the final problem with it is it means that people who are in priority groups have access to fewer units than people who are not part of a priority group. I do understand that the previous allocation system to try to prioritize people also wasn't working. I do appreciate that there is a desire to do something better and differently, but I don't think this is it. I think it's discriminatory. I think it's not actually targeting the people we want to target, and I think it is ultimately reducing access for the people who need it most. I wanted to share those comments with the House today.

I don't know if there is a specific question there, so I will finish by saying thank you to the officials for coming today. Thank you to all the officials working behind the scenes, and I very much appreciate the conversation we have had today.

Chair: Is there any further general debate on Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation?

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

MLA Tredger: Pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, I request the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Unanimous consent re deeming all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried

Chair: The Member for Whitehorse Centre has, pursuant to Standing Order 14.3, requested the unanimous consent of Committee of the Whole to deem all lines in Vote 18, Yukon Housing Corporation, cleared or carried, as required.

Is there unanimous consent?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

Chair: Unanimous consent has been granted.

On Operation and Maintenance Expenditures

Total Operation and Maintenance Expenditures in the amount of \$22,921,000 agreed to

On Capital Expenditures

Total Capital Expenditures in the amount of \$54,500,000 agreed to

Total Expenditures in the amount of \$77,421,000 agreed to

Yukon Housing Corporation agreed to

Chair: The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Do members wish to take a brief recess?

All Hon. Members: Agreed.

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

Recess

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

Request for Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole

Chair: At this time, I will ask if any private member wishes to volunteer to be Acting Chair of Committee of the Whole.

Member for Takhini-Kopper King rises

Acting Chair (Ms. White): Order.

The matter now before the Committee is general debate on Vote No. 11, Women and Gender Equity Directorate, in Bill No. 208, entitled *First Appropriation Act 2023-24*.

Women and Gender Equity Directorate

Acting Chair: Is there any general debate?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Thank you, Acting Chair. I would like to first start by welcoming our officials from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate: Acting Deputy Minister Mary Cameron and acting director Clare Daitch. Welcome. Thank you very much for being here today.

It is my pleasure to present the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's budget for 2023-24 today in Committee of the Whole. This upcoming fiscal year will mark another significant year for the directorate, which is both leading and partnering on several major initiatives, including advancing the work of the sexualized assault response unit — also known as "SART" — and the LGBTQ2S+ action plan and the Yukon's missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls strategy.

All of these initiatives, as well as the directorate's ongoing policy work, support equity for women and gender-diverse individuals with the ultimate goal of one day having a territory where all Yukoners enjoy equal status, personal safety, and access to opportunities.

The work underway at the directorate right now is truly exciting and full of potential to effect real change in our

territory, and we are seeing similar exciting movement at the federal level. In particular, the Women and Gender Equity Directorate has recently welcomed Ottawa's commitment to provide funding to provinces and territories that will support efforts to implement the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* with bilateral negotiations now underway and the federal appointment of a special representative who will work toward establishing a national Indigenous and human rights ombudsperson and the federal all-party committee on the status of women report on addressing violence against Indigenous women and girls, in the context of resource development.

In 2023-24, Yukon's Women and Gender Equity Directorate's total budget is \$3,672,000. The directorate's work is focused on three main areas. First, the directorate staff research and analyze issues related to gender equity. This work includes researching and advising on key policy issues and developing legislation. It also includes leading the integration of gender-inclusive and diversity analysis within the work of all Yukon government departments.

Second, the branch provides strategic leadership to other departments and partner organizations on major equity-related initiatives. This work includes such initiatives as the sexualized assault response team, the LGBTQ2S+ action plan, and Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls strategy. Finally, the branch advances equity in the territory through its funding of equality-seeking community organizations.

With equity in mind, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the importance of using inclusive language that affirms diverse gender identities. In 2021, we released the LGBTQ2S+ action plan and we continue to use that title to refer to this document. Language continues to evolve and we are now using 2SLGBTQIA+ to inclusively describe communities and organizations in the Yukon.

I am excited now to highlight some of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's work for you and the budgetary decisions that we have made for 2023-24 that will support it.

We are incredibly grateful for Yukon's non-profit, equality-seeking organizations. These organizations play a critical role in supporting women and the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Yukon. Their advocacy also helps ensure our territory remains on the path to equality for all Yukoners. Their programming is essential; it is also as diverse as the populations they serve. It includes advocacy programs, hot meals, skill building and training, on-the-land healing camps, cultural supports, and providing safe spaces for communities to gather. Such organizations are vital in supporting community-driven health and well-being, and we are proud to offer them support through operational or project-based funding.

This fiscal year, equality-seeking organizations are receiving a total of \$2,190,500 from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate in operational and/or project-based funding. This includes \$197,000 from the women and gender equity fund in ongoing operational funding for four non-Indigenous women's organizations, being Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre, the Yukon Status of Women Council, Yukon Women

in Trades and Technology, and les Essentielles. It also includes \$600,000 through the Indigenous women's equality fund for operational and capacity development funding to three Indigenous women's organizations, being Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

In this coming fiscal year, we will also continue to support Queer Yukon. In 2023-24, supports include \$375,000 for operational funding, as well as \$15,000 for the gender gear program.

As we continue to recover from pandemic impacts, we recognize the increased demands for service and a clear request from NGOs for sustainable and appropriate long-term funding. We are committed to continue this work with the community partners and the Government of Canada, as we negotiate a bilateral funding for the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence*.

In 2023-24, \$1,151,000 will go toward the directorate staff salaries. As I mentioned at the outset, a key area of work for the directorate staff is strategic leadership on major initiatives from other YG departments, as well as non-governmental partner organizations. These relationships are critical in helping move forward key initiatives in partnership with NGOs. Staff are also involved on a daily basis in ongoing policy and legislative work.

I would like to take some time now to bring to your attention some of this work that will continue into the coming fiscal year. Directorate staff are continuing to lead the integration of gender-inclusive diversity analysis, or GIDA, into the government's decision-making processes. Integrating GIDA is a shared mandate letter commitment led by the Women and Gender Equity Directorate and supported by the Executive Council Office and the Public Service Commission.

The GIDA action plan, launched in 2022, outlines clear actions, outcomes, and indicators to guide this work over the next two years. Three of the 10 action items in the plan for 2022-23 were completed and six are still underway. In the upcoming fiscal year, the directorate will play a key role in ensuring that progress on GIDA continues with the Government of Yukon.

For 2023-24, this may include: facilitating tailored training for interdepartmental committees and key units; integrating GIDA into other Yukon government training, such as arts and crafts and public policy and evaluation 101; creating guidelines and best practices on government's collection of gender data; integrating formal accountability mechanisms for GIDA in government decision-making processes; collaborating with Major Projects Yukon in integrating GIDA into the YESAA process.

In addition, in 2023-24, the directorate staff, in partnership with the Yukon Bureau of Statistics, will continue to update and improve the new indicators of a Yukon gender equity webpage and associated data on yukon.ca. The directorate, bureau, and e-services launched this content on yukon.ca in early 2023 after moving it from its previous boutique website.

The content now on yukon.ca includes several themes, with data broken down by age, education, indigeneity,

ethnicity, faith, gender, language, and migration status. This data is an important tool for many researchers and non-governmental organizations. It is also critical to support the integration of GIDA in our own work.

We are committed to the vision of Yukon as a place where everyone feels safe, welcome, valued, and celebrated, including 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

In addition to funding we provide to Queer Yukon, directorate staff is continuing to lead work on the implementation of the government-wide LGBTQ2S+ inclusion action plan. As many of you know, the Government of Yukon released this five-year action plan in the summer of 2021. This plan is focused on making government programs and services more inclusive and accessible to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and two-spirit-plus community. The plan includes over 100 action items representing programs and services in several key departments across government.

Since 2021's release, we have made progress in several areas. This work has not been without its challenges. Despite some of the hurdles over the last few years, we are continuing the path forward for 2SLGBTQIA+ equity in programs and services.

In the summer of 2023, we will be returning to the community, as promised, to conduct targeted stakeholder feedback. This feedback will allow us to check in on any shifting priorities. The stakeholders' feedback on the action plan is an important aspect of our commitment to "nothing about us without us". Some highlights of the inclusion work underway or completed include insured health coverage of gender-affirming care, an agreement with Queer Yukon to help fund a health care navigator position, funding for the Pride Centre, a variety of new or updated training for Yukon government staff, new design standards for gender-inclusive washrooms, and a new internal peer group for Yukon government employees who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ advocates.

The directorate is excited, of course, to keep building on the momentum in partnership with the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. In the coming fiscal year, directorate staff are also working toward significant movement on Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy. This strategy is Yukon's path forward to creating safe and healthy communities in the territory where women, girls, and two-spirit-plus Yukoners are valued, respected, and treated equitably with dignity and justice.

As you may know, I am one of the three co-chairs who sit on the Yukon Advisory Committee on MMIWG2S+, alongside former Chief Doris Bill and Elder Ann Maje Raider. Together, in December 2022, we released the action plan to move the strategy's 12 most pressing action items forward. We are now reviewing the priority action items document released in December 2022 to determine related work underway, remaining gaps, and where the government can play a role.

It is a priority for the Yukon advisory committee to complete the remainder of the implementation plan. A technical meeting of partners and contributors in the spring of 2023 is planned, and the directorate will also play a key role in

organizing the strategy's second accountability forum, which will take place later in 2023. I will continue to work with my co-chairs, in partnership with First Nation governments, Indigenous women's organizations, the RCMP, communities, and most importantly, the families and survivors, as we continue to move forward into the full implementation of the strategy.

The fiscal year's key initiatives for supporting Yukon's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-spirit+ Strategy includes: \$100,000 for updating the record, which is a key action item of Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy; \$217,000 for the Yukon's MMIWG2S+ accountability forum, including a transfer payment agreement with an NGO to coordinate involvement with families and survivors; and \$20,000 to have ongoing discussions with partners and contributors in regard to the strategy. We remain committed to moving forward on this critical initiative in the spirit of decolonization and truth and reconciliation.

The last area of work I would like to touch on is the directorate's ongoing work to support the implementation and expansion of the sexualized assault response team, or SART, program. The statistic is grim. Yukon has one of the highest rates of sexualized violence in the country. Another grim truth is that the vast majority of assaults are not reported to the police.

The Government of Yukon launched the SART program in 2020 to offer victims of sexualized assault wrap-around emotional, medical, and legal support. SART is based on the core principles of: victims' choice; dignity and respect; preventing system retraumatization; cultural safety; and access, equity, and inclusion.

Implementation of the program continues to gain momentum. Since its launch, the directorate has worked closely with the departments of Justice and Health and Social Services, as well as partner organizations such as the RCMP and the Yukon Hospital Corporation, to increase coordination of existing services, while also building public awareness of new services for victims of sexualized assault.

Recently, the Whitehorse SART agency approved the first SART protocol for the Yukon, and work is now underway to expand SART to other Yukon communities. The Department of Justice is leading this work with support from the directorate and the Department of Health and Social Services. It is anticipated that engagements will take place in the spring and summer of 2023 to ensure that expansion happens in a way that responds to the needs and priorities of our communities. Engagement will happen with First Nation governments, Indigenous women's organizations, service providers, as well as victims.

Our staff remains committed to working closely with all partners to help support victims so that they can access the services they need and want. Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss some of the highlights of the Women and Gender Equity Directorate's budget with you. With that, I would be happy to answer questions that you may have.

Ms. Clarke: Thank you to the officials for joining us here today. I have a few questions for the minister, some of

which I touched on during the briefing that was offered from officials.

So, my first question: The letter from the eight women's organizations indicates that five of the organizations received core funding from the Women and Gender Equity Directorate. Could the minister please confirm which line items they access for core funding?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are two funds that are accessed. We have four organizations that are funded through the women's equality fund. It is under "Government Transfers" if you are trying to locate that in the budget. The total amount of our government transfers is \$2,190,500; \$197,000 comes from the women's equality fund. There are four organizations that receive funding from that fund. Then we have the Indigenous women's equality fund, which is a fund that our government established to move toward core funding for Indigenous women's organizations that didn't exist prior to us coming into government in 2016. That fund is \$600,000 that we share responsibility for through Canada, and the funding for three Indigenous women's organizations comes from that fund.

Ms. Clarke: How much funding has been allocated to YG for the national action plan from the federal government for this coming fiscal year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: We are very excited that we now have a national action plan that includes a lot of work that has been advocated for, for decades, I think. The vision of the national action plan is a Canada free of gender-based violence, a Canada that supports victims, survivors, and their families no matter where they live. There are five pillars to support: support for survivors and their families; prevention; promotion of a responsive legal justice system; support for Indigenous-led approaches and informed responses; social infrastructure and enabling environments.

The total for this fund that has been announced is \$529 million that will flow through bilateral agreements to provincial and territorial governments, including base per capita amounts. We are in the process right now of negotiating our bilateral agreement with Canada, and we will be happy to bring forward that information once it becomes fully available.

Ms. Clarke: Is there a plan to decide who gets this funding and how it is divided?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yukon was very proud to endorse the *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* at the 40th annual federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for the status of women that happened on November 9, 2022. I attended remotely and was happy to be part of that very significant meeting. We are very aware of the need for additional funding and capacity to address the high rates of gender-based violence in the Yukon.

Bilateral negotiations are underway with Canada to determine the details of the funding agreement, including territorial priorities for investment, especially those that align with Yukon's MMIWG2S+ strategy.

Again, this is work that has been underway for a very long time. Yukon was the first to respond to the national inquiry's final report, and we have done a tremendous amount of work to look at the priorities of Yukon. We look forward to working in

partnership with the Government of Canada in preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

Again, our Yukon priorities will be reflected in our bilateral agreement.

Ms. Clarke: Does the minister know when that is going to be decided?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, we are working with the Government of Canada. As soon as that information becomes available, I will ensure that Yukoners are made aware of it immediately. Of course, all of our equality-seeking organizations will certainly be part of the communication around the final agreement that we reach with Canada.

Ms. Clarke: How many organizations are funded by the women's equality fund? I heard eight, but I may be wrong.

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are a number of funds that the Women and Gender Equity Directorate administers. The majority of our funding does go to equality-seeking organizations. \$2,190,500 goes to equality-seeking organizations through a number of funds. The question is specifically about the women's equality fund, which supports four organizations: Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre; the Yukon Status of Women Council; the Yukon Women in Trades and Technology; and les Essentielles.

The Indigenous women's equality fund provides funds to three organizations, and that is a total of \$600,000, which is a shared contribution between Canada and Yukon.

Ms. Clarke: How do organizations access the funding, and how are they assessed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The women's equality fund was initiated in 2007 by — at that point, it was the “Women's Directorate” — as a funding program to support Yukon women's equality-seeking organizations.

In 2013, the fund was restructured from an applicant-driven fund to a targeted program with pre-identified women's organizations. It is delivered through three-year transfer payment agreements. Currently, we have from 2022 to 2023 to 2024 to 2025. In 2018, three Indigenous women's organizations were moved out of the women's equality fund to an Indigenous women's equality fund. The last increase to the women's equality fund organization was in 2022-23 when the annual transfer payment agreements increased by between \$4,000 to \$5,000 per organization.

It was our government that established the Indigenous women's equality fund, and we were able to move those organizations to a fund that would allow them core funding, which is not something that they had prior to our government coming in, in 2016.

Ms. Clarke: Is the fund fully subscribed each year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The women's equality fund is a set fund, so, yes, it is fully subscribed every year. There is also the prevention of violence against aboriginal women. That is another fund that is available and is application-driven. It targets work that is to have outcomes to prevent violence against aboriginal women. That is another fund that we administer through the Women and Gender Equity Directorate, and I would be happy to talk more about that if the member wishes. The fund annually has \$200,000 for prevention of

violence against aboriginal women. Again, that one is application-driven, but the women's equality fund is a set — and it has four organizations that seek funding through that fund, and it is fully subscribed each year.

Ms. Clarke: Could the minister briefly define the difference between the women's equality fund versus the Indigenous women's equity fund?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, two distinct funds. The women's equality fund provides funds for four organizations. Again, I have given some history about when that changed and when it went to no longer being a proposal-driven fund to being available for specific women's organizations. When we established the Indigenous women's equality fund, this was a commitment that we had made in the 2016 election. It was a platform commitment to establish funding that would support Indigenous women's groups. There are three: Liard Aboriginal Women's Society, the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle, and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council. Programming supported by the Indigenous women's equality fund includes culturally relevant community supports and healing programs, programs for residential school survivors and those suffering intergenerational effects, Indigenous-centred gender-empowerment programs, programs to address addictions and lateral violence, food security programs, and education, research, and advocacy programs. Again, it has not always been equal in terms of support for Indigenous women's organizations. It is not something that existed before our government came into power in 2016. When we were elected, this was one of our campaign commitments. It was a platform commitment that we made to Indigenous women's groups.

Acting Chair, when you go back and look at what was happening around that time, the organizations, advocates, and individuals were seeking the inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls to happen. Thankfully, when the government changed at the federal level, the inquiry went ahead. I think that the need is great in the entire territory. Women in the north experience violence three times higher than the national average. We, as Indigenous women, experience violence three times higher than that. So, we know that the work of the Indigenous women's organizations and all of our equality-seeking organizations is incredibly important. These are very grim statistics that we want to change. That is why we are very pleased that we supported the federal government's *National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence* in Canada and that these new dollars will be flowing to all jurisdictions to really, in fact, change the story for all women in Canada. In our circumstance, we know that Indigenous women face higher risks and higher rates of gender-based violence than anyone else in the north. This new fund that was established, again, was in partnership with Canada and is funded as such.

Ms. Clarke: Can the minister please confirm how many organizations are funded by the Indigenous women's equity fund?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Three.

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

How do these three organizations access the funding and how are they assessed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: There are three Indigenous women's organizations in the Yukon that have been in existence. I think that the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society is probably the youngest of the three, but these organizations have been in place for decades, and they didn't experience equitable funding up until the establishment of the Indigenous women's equality fund in 2018. They provide important services, as I have outlined, in terms of the type of services that they provide.

Again, we support and uphold all of our equality-seeking groups and we know that they work very hard on behalf of Yukoners. We will continue to support them, which is why we are very pleased that we will be doing the negotiations with Canada to establish a bilateral agreement on a new national action plan commitment of \$529 million, where new funding will flow to Yukon and other jurisdictions in Canada to end gender-based violence.

Ms. Clarke: I may be hard of hearing, because I did not hear an answer about the three organizations that the Indigenous women's equity funds. How do they access the funding and how are they assessed?

Hon. Ms. McLean: The Indigenous women's equality fund has a total of \$600,000 in operational and capacity development funding for three Indigenous women's organizations. Those are: the Liard Aboriginal Women's Society — they have received \$200,000; the Whitehorse Aboriginal Women's Circle — they received \$200,000; and the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council — they received \$200,000. It is divided equally among the Indigenous women's groups. There are only three in existence.

Ms. Clarke: Is the Indigenous women's equity fund fully subscribed each year?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Yes, it is fully subscribed, as I have stated a few times today. It is a fund that is not proposal-driven. It is based on the organizations that we fund.

Ms. Clarke: I am going to move on to the Whitehorse affordable family housing project. The funding for the program coordination and delivery — what is that supposed to provide for residents?

Hon. Ms. McLean: This is through the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition as part of our government transfers for the Whitehorse affordable family housing program delivery coordination. The Whitehorse affordable family housing complex has a program coordinator through the Anti-Poverty Coalition. The total of that transfer is \$76,500 to enable the delivery of supportive family programming at the Whitehorse affordable family housing complex.

Ms. Clarke: I thank the minister for that answer. I am going to move on to A Safe Place. Last spring, WGED — the Women and Gender Equity Directorate — received notice to terminate the A Safe Place program from Victoria Faulkner. Can the minister provide an update on this?

Hon. Ms. McLean: A Safe Place program for women and children is also known as "Sally & Sisters". This is an important program. The Sally & Sisters program is currently operated by the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council to address

the immediate food security and support needs for women and children in Whitehorse, offering them a place to gather, get support, and enjoy a healthy meal in a safe and sober environment.

The member is correct that for six years of its operation, A Safe Place was run by the Victoria Faulkner Women's Centre as a very valuable resource for women and children experiencing insecure housing, food insecurity, and mental health issues in Whitehorse. It is now, as I have stated, run by the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council.

Ms. Clarke: I have one more question and then I am going to give it to my colleague.

The Pride Centre — can the minister please provide a status update on the Pride Centre? What is the forecasted support from government moving forward?

Hon. Ms. McLean: Queer Yukon is an important partner with Government of Yukon. Currently, in the 2023-24 budget, \$375,000 is being provided for operational funding, with an additional \$15,000 to support the gender gear program in partnership with Health and Social Services. Programming supported by Queer Yukon includes: providing community pride gathering space in three Yukon communities, drop-in programming, gender gear, health navigation services, peer support programs, education, advocacy, and research programs.

The Women and Gender Equity Directorate is entering into its third year of a three-year TPA with Queer Yukon Society. The funding allocated under this TPA is \$515,000 in 2021-22, \$440,000 in 2022-23, and now is at \$390,000 for 2023-24. These amounts include that allocation of \$15,000 for the gender gear. I will just stop there.

MLA Tredger: I will start by thanking the officials for being here today and all the other public servants who are listening in and worked hard to get us to this conversation today. I really appreciate their work.

I don't think we will get through all my questions today, so I am going to prioritize a little bit. I do hope that the department will come back and I will get to ask them on another day. I really want to start by asking about the priority action items on *Changing the Story*. I was really excited to see this document come out and see the action items there because I think that those tangible items really help move us forward, and that is really important. I had a couple of questions that I wanted to ask.

On page 7 of that document, it talks about that one of the commitments — "milestones", I guess, are what they are called — is dedicated counselling services and supports for family members of MMIWG2S+ people. There is a similar milestone on page 8, which is for dedicated counselling services and supports for families affected by unmarked graves. I know that those two are separate, but I am talking about them together because I wonder if those will be done together or separately. I wonder if the minister can talk about what those dedicated services and supports are going to look like and if she knows when those will start.

Hon. Ms. McLean: As folks are aware, of course, I have been very involved as a co-chair to this process of helping to

support the inquiry to happen and then supporting it throughout and then replying to the national inquiry report. We are now in the process of this detailed planning.

Again, it's not a Yukon government strategy; it's a whole Yukon strategy and includes a lot of folks from many different organizations that have committed to the implementation — some being partners and some being stakeholders with different levels of responsibility. This has been a unique project in terms of how we have approached it.

There are 31 strategic actions that we are now unpacking and developing into this type of document. We will be finalizing it this spring. It will outline a number of milestones and desired outcomes. There is still work to be done in terms of the leads on these important actions and milestones.

As you have indicated, there are some similarities around the commemoration, and this was one of the first priorities that was identified by the advisory committee on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, which is made up of a lot of different organizations, and I am one of the co-chairs within this.

But, again, it remains not specifically a Yukon government strategy, but we are a partner in it. Currently, the family support is coordinated through the Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council, and that will be further determined through the action plan for the specific area. I do see those two items being very much linked. We have taken much of our lead — all of our lead, really — from families and, of course, the Indigenous women's organizations that are best positioned to provide that type of coordinated support, and they have been the ones who have been providing that coordination from the beginning.

In my opening comments, I talked about a few things that are underway right now. It is a priority for us to continue to get the whole implementation plan done because I think that there are pieces of this for everyone to either lead or support, and we have a lot of partners, allies, and stakeholders involved. We are in the process of planning a technical meeting with partners and contributors this spring to really talk more in-depth about who will be leading certain areas, how we see that unfolding, and then we are also working toward our second accountability forum for families in the fall of 2023, which will bring families and survivors who wish to be part of that accountability forum — our partners and contributors. This year, we have added a third day so that we can have more in-depth discussion, and folks from this Legislative Assembly are certainly invited to be part of that, as they have been signatory to the strategy as well.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I suspect some of my other questions about this document are going to need to wait until after that technical meeting for answers, and that is fine. I will come back with them the next time we are talking.

I did want to ask a little bit — and, again, the answer might be after this technical meeting, but I did want to ask a little bit about — on page 12 — the items around UNDRIP. I am asking about those specifically because in year 1, which is 2023, there are two items that are supposed to happen this year, so I imagine they need to happen pretty quickly.

One of them is government funding to support participation of families and survivors to inform the application of UNDRIP — the “UNDRIPA” I guess is how you would say it — and the second is to establish a specific Indigenous women's engagement forum to examine the UNDRIP act in an Indigenous women's context.

I am wondering if the government funding — if that is referring to looking to the Yukon government for that funding or to Canada for that funding and if this government is planning to provide that funding. Again, this might come after the technical meeting — but if there are any details about when that forum is expected to be or what it is going to look like.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Again, yes, the member is correct in terms of — there will be a lot more discussion around this in terms of working at that technical partners meeting. There are organizations that I am aware of within Yukon, particularly Indigenous women's organizations, that have already received funding from Canada to work on areas involving the act — the UNDRIPA — the actual act for Canada. So, that is a really clear and very focused distinction here — and more to come, of course. As this information becomes available, the Yukon Advisory Committee will be happy to share those updates. Again, that is really what the technical working group will be about — in terms of really defining how we move forward, how that is led, and how it gets reported back to the accountability forum — because the accountability forum really is about accountability to families and survivors, but also accountability to each other as partners, contributors, and allies within this work.

MLA Tredger: Thank you to the minister for that. I will save the rest of my questions until the next time we are up after that meeting on this topic. But also, before we move on, I did want to thank the minister for her work on this — as a chair — as well to the other chairs. I am really grateful for their work.

I want to ask a quick question about the sexualized assault response team. I am wondering whether the employees for that are full time or if they are auxiliary-on-call employees.

Hon. Ms. McLean: This has been a really important initiative that I have worked closely on with my colleagues from Justice and Health and Social Services since early days, coming into these positions in 2016-17 and taking on these important roles. We know that only a small percentage of victims of sexualized violence seek formal supports or services. The sexualized assault response team is working continuously to lower barriers so that more victims can access services when they need them.

After more than three years of collaborative work, the Whitehorse SART agencies have signed — I want to say it is really exciting — we have signed the first SART protocol in the Yukon to make these services sustainable and permanent. We have committed to expanding services to Yukon communities outside of Whitehorse and to expand these services in a way that responds to communities' needs and priorities. Engagement will be taking place this spring and summer with First Nation governments, Indigenous women's organizations, service providers, and of course, victims. Those two roles within the work that will be underway will be

separated by a contractor, because we know that those folks who are victimized — we really want to have a very specific process for them to go through so that we can provide more information about that.

In terms of the specific question that was asked, those are staff members who — again, I mean, the principle is to make this permanent and not, as I have already stated here today — that sustainable, permanent, not easy to change in terms of an approach for Yukon. The staff members who are assigned within Government of Yukon are part of other departments, and I know that you will have a chance to talk to the ministers of Justice and Health and Social Services. I can also bring back that specific information, if the member wishes that I do that, or we can have that part of the debate at a future time with the other minister.

The intent of SART is to really ensure wrap-around services for victims of sexualized violence and ensure that they, and all of the organizations that are involved, have staff and/or service providers who are specifically assigned when SART-type matters come to their board for services through their organization, whether it be the hospital, the RCMP, the courts, or Victim Services. There are specific folks who are trained to do that, and I am really excited about the first-ever protocol around all of this work that was recently established and signed off on.

MLA Tredger: If the minister could round up that information, that would be really helpful, just because it is a little bit hard to pull it from different departments — it's probably Health and Social Services and Justice.

The reason I ask about AOCs versus full time is because that is a tough job. It's a really important job and a really hard job. I think it's really important that the people doing that work have access to benefits, like counselling, to support them as they do that work.

Just noticing the time, so I am just going to ask one more question. We may or may not have time to answer it today. If not, I will hopefully be able to pick it up when this comes back.

I wanted to ask a bit about the taxi safety report. That came out just over a year ago, in January 2022. It had a number of recommendations for a number of organizations, but it had some that were specific to the Yukon government. There were four of those. The first was to review criteria that YG uses when selecting taxi companies to transport vulnerable individuals. The second was for funding to support municipalities to adopt changes to transportation, which was also touched on under the national action plan and the Yukon's Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls calls for justice. The third recommendation was to make legislative changes to cover taxi users in the Yukon *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and the fourth was to refine the Yukon *Human Rights Act* to better address systemic issues, like gender-based violence in taxis.

I am wondering what work has been done in order to make those recommendations happen.

Sorry, not to interrupt — I just wanted to add, because I expect that will be my last question, thank you to the officials for today.

Hon. Ms. McLean: Definitely, transportation and communication, I think, are very high priorities when we are looking at safety for women and vulnerable people. We definitely have included some very specific work within the priority document that the member has referenced today under the priorities for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

It definitely calls on all levels of government to work on it and references specifically a number of areas for implementation considerations, such as the Highway of Tears initiative in 2016, which specifically gives a tremendous amount of information about that area that is close to us in Yukon. It also references a Yukon First Nation Chamber of Commerce and a Yukon community travel project final report that was from June of 2021. It also references *Putting People First* recommendation 5.9, working with First Nation governments and Government of Canada to "... determine how to coordinate the delivery of non-insured health benefits to all Yukoners to ensure consistency of benefits..." It has a high reference, of course, to safe travel and also the Yukon women's coalition taxi safety report of 2022.

I would be happy to bring back more information. It certainly has been a major topic, working toward partnership with other levels of government to address the safety issues that women and vulnerable folks are faced with. We know that this is definitely a factor in preventing violence against vulnerable people.

I thank my officials for being here today and for the thoughtful questions of the members opposite, but seeing the time, Acting Chair, I move that you report progress.

Acting Chair: It has been moved by the Member for Mountainview that the Chair report progress.

Motion agreed to

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

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

Motion agreed to

Deputy Speaker resumes the Chair

Deputy Speaker (Ms. Blake): I will now call the House to order.

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

Chair's report

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

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

Are you agreed?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

Deputy Speaker: I declare the report carried.

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

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

Motion agreed to

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

The House adjourned at 5:27 p.m.